

Gervasio Luis García / Emma Dávila Cox

La correspondencia de los cónsules
norteamericanos, franceses e ingleses, 1869 > 1900



PUERTO RICO
en la mirada extranjera

Centro de Investigaciones Históricas
Decanato de Estudios Graduados e Investigación
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PUERTO RICO EN LA MIRADA EXTRANJERA:
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Gervasio Luis García
Emma Dávila Cox

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ADVERTENCIA

Los documentos que siguen son una selección de los despachos consulares confidenciales enviados desde San Juan a las sedes de gobierno de los Estados Unidos, Gran Bretaña y Francia entre los años de 1869 y 1900.¹ Eran, en esencia, informes comerciales que desmenuzaban las balanzas mercantiles, notificaban los cambiantes aranceles que pesaban sobre las mercancías, destacaban las oportunidades para los productos nacionales, o las amenazas de sus competidores, y, a menudo, colaban críticas sobre la corrupción en las aduanas. Mas, en ocasiones, los cónsules rompían el formato y opinaban libremente sobre la sociedad, la política y el gobierno español, y la economía en general. Al deteriorarse las relaciones entre España y los Estados Unidos a comienzos del 98 y al estallar el conflicto armado, los cónsules también registran sus impresiones, particularmente sus temores y esperanzas.

Al publicar estos testimonios, buscamos divulgar unos documentos que hasta hoy sólo han sido consultados por algunos historiadores profesionales. Esperamos que también sean provechosos para los profesores y estudiantes de los cursos de historia de Puerto Rico. En vista de que la función primordial de los cónsules extranjeros era velar por los intereses comerciales de sus naciones, sus despachos fueron, primordialmente, áridos informes económicos. Pero su lectura de conjunto muestra zonas que rebasan la curiosidad del especialista. Para paladear con más gusto y orden el fárrago documental, hemos organizado las cartas consulares en tres territorios principales: economía y sociedad, política y la guerra del 98.

En cada sección incluimos, yuxtapuestos, los informes de los cónsules norteamericanos, franceses y británicos. Así, el lector podrá constatar el amplio abanico de opiniones. Las fechas de los despachos no coinciden siempre pero son cercanas. Las presentaciones seccionales no son resúmenes del contenido sino pistas que subrayan lo más sobresaliente de las fuentes exploradas por los cónsules y por los paisanos de la época.

Hemos modernizado la ortografía original para evitar confusiones, de ahí el uso discreto del *sic*. Por otra parte, los números que aparecen en los documentos individuales no siguen una secuencia porque obedecen al criterio ordenador de los cónsules particulares. Los dejamos para facilitar su localización a los interesados en consultar las colecciones originales. Las cartas de los cónsules norteamericanos y británicos aparecen en el idioma de sus autores. Las de los franceses han sido traducidas

¹ La correspondencia de los cónsules norteamericanos y franceses puede consultarse en micropelículas en el Centro de Investigaciones Históricas del Departamento de Historia, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras. Las cartas consulares inglesas proceden de la Public Record Office de Londres y de los British Parliamentary Papers. Citados en adelante como PRO y PP, respectivamente.

admirablemente por María Eugenia Hidalgo y Blanca Paniagua. La introducción general que precede los documentos es una síntesis del Puerto Rico que el extranjero encontró. Los editores confían que ayude a entender mejor el país real que despertó las opiniones extranjeras.²

Por último, este volumen debe mucho al apoyo y al estímulo sin límites de la profesora María Dolores Luque de Sánchez, Directora del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, quien desde el principio se empeñó en ofrecer todos los recursos necesarios para salvar los obstáculos previstos o inesperados (anímicos y materiales) encontrados en el camino. La profesora María de los Ángeles Castro leyó críticamente la introducción y aportó valiosas opiniones. Igualmente agradecemos mucho la cuidadosa labor de Benjamín Bernier, Miriam Lugo y Juan Luis Martínez, responsables de levantar la tipografía y de diseñar el manuscrito. En la tarea de revisar y reproducir los informes también colaboraron, muy generosamente, los integrantes del equipo de trabajo del Centro, especialmente José Cruz Arrigoitia, Margarita Flores, Julia Ríos y Magalis Cintrón. Sin la ayuda de todos ellos este volumen sería impresentable.

² En 1982, el Centro de Investigaciones Históricas publicó los *Despachos de los cónsules norteamericanos en Puerto Rico (1818-1868)*. Río Piedras, Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico.

PUERTO RICO PARA EXTRANJEROS: CARTA DE PRESENTACIÓN

En 1878, el cónsul británico C.T. Bidwell aconsejaba al visitante extranjero que no consumiera licores “espirituosos” (sobre todo el ron nativo) porque sobrestimulaba “el sistema de los europeos, ya demasiado robusto para el clima tropical”. También les sugería que evitaran exponerse al duro sol y al denso sereno nocturno y que salieran a la calle no sin antes tomar una taza de café o té caliente. Los nativos y los de larga residencia en la Isla podían ignorar estas precauciones, pero ningún recién llegado lo haría impunemente.¹

Ante esta mezcla de ignorancia e indefensión de un europeo ilustrado — sumada a las versiones criollas contradictorias de ese trecho histórico — es legítimo preguntarse ¿quién descifra y cómo se conoce mejor un país que todavía esquiva las explicaciones fáciles? Los representantes consulares de los tres principales centros imperiales del siglo 19 analizaron la colonia española con las ventajas y las limitaciones que les daba el contraste de experiencias y conocimientos adquiridos en los centros metropolitanos. Los lectores de sus informes constatarán que muchos de sus juicios fueron atinados y, a la larga, pesaron en el desenlace del 98. Al coincidir en la crítica de la incompetencia, las injusticias y los dislates del dominio de España, ayudaron a justificar la adquisición de la Isla por una metrópoli más moderna y más democrática.

Por otro lado, repensar la Isla un siglo después, despierta la tentación de ver la historia decimonónica de Puerto Rico como un desarrollo que conduce inexorable y fatalmente a la invasión y captura del país por los Estados Unidos. En consecuencia se podría concluir, apresuradamente, que el pasado boricua parece presidido por la mano del “destino” que impulsa nuestra historia por una avenida de un solo carril, sin caminos secundarios ni veredas en dirección contraria. Supondría, además, que los resortes principales de la sociedad puertorriqueña (economía y política coloniales, estructuras sociales y culturales) giraban al unísono y se orientaban exclusivamente hacia el Norte, por encima de la voluntad de criollos y peninsulares.

Al respecto, Emma Dávila-Cox advierte con gran fuerza que no está

... de acuerdo con la importancia que se le ha adjudicado hasta el presente a las relaciones de Puerto Rico con su gigantesco vecino del norte. Los Estados Unidos... no controlaban el comercio de Puerto Rico, ni mucho menos su economía antes del 1898. No se puede explicar la invasión de Puerto Rico por los Estados Unidos como una consecuencia natural de la realidad económica del país. Para explicar el supuesto ambiente de fiesta que encontraron las tropas norteamericanas a su paso, habría que hacerse varias preguntas: ¿quiénes estaban celebrando? ¿los habitantes de la costa quienes dependían aún de la ya menguada industria azucarera o los habitantes de las regiones cafetaleras de la montaña? ¿Cómo comparaban los favorecedores del cambio de soberanía con aquellos que resistieron la invasión en

¹ Report by Consul Bidwell on the Trade and Commerce of the Island of Puerto Rico, and on the Produce and Trade of Province for 1878, with Reference to Preceding Years, PP [C. 2088] LXXIV, 361 (xref 244).

cuanto a su habilidad para hacer públicos sus sentimientos a través, por ejemplo, de la prensa local? ¿No serían acaso los primeros descendientes de aquellos que habían logrado hacer su fortuna en los años del apogeo del azúcar?²

Junto a esta salvedad está el hecho inequívoco y contundente de que fueron los Estados Unidos, y no otra potencia, los que conquistaron la Isla en el 98 y que a los conquistados no les repugnó la invasión sin invitación ni la permanencia de los invasores. Para entender ambas realidades, proponemos, de entrada, una ojeada corta de los territorios principales recorridos por los cónsules extranjeros (economía y sociedad, política y la guerra del 98), no para descubrir en cada huella la pista del inevitable final sino para precisar más los factores que nos hicieron “acomodables” al nuevo patrón imperial, sin recurrir a condenas morales estridentes o a reclamos de falsos patriotismos.

ECONOMÍA Y SOCIEDAD

Puerto Rico tuvo una metrópoli política y tres metrópolis económicas (España, Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña) que ejercieron su supremacía intermitentemente en diferentes tramos del siglo 19. Roto el exclusivismo comercial español de siglos anteriores, la Isla se estrenó como colonia que no dependía del centro político imperial. Al igual que muchos países independientes de economías agrarias, el país cambió productos de la tierra por manufacturas y alimentos británicos, norteamericanos y españoles, principalmente. A menudo las balanzas mercantiles anunciaban que vendíamos más de lo que comprábamos en las economías industriales y en la misma España.

Estas señales halagüeñas acompañaban la creciente tendencia a importar lo que consumíamos y a exportar lo que producíamos. En el contexto de una economía dinámica y autónoma esa inclinación no era, necesariamente, negativa. Mas el atolladero del coloniaje español y el extraordinario desarrollo del capitalismo de las zonas templadas, dificultaron la promoción de una industria autóctona y determinaron la dependencia y la flaqueza ante los colosos externos. Este molde caló tan hondo que hasta la quinta década del siglo 20, exportamos los productos de la sobremesa de europeos y norteamericanos (azúcar, café y tabaco) a cambio de sus artefactos y sus ideas. Y hasta los ingredientes primarios del plato nacional (el arroz y las habichuelas) exhibieron etiquetas foráneas.³

LA MODERNIDAD A MEDIAS

En la década de 1870, la abolición de la esclavitud y el trabajo obligatorio (1873) parecían anunciar la entrada de Puerto Rico a la modernidad pues desaparecieron los principales obstáculos legales al desenvolvimiento de una agricultura y una industria

² Emma Dávila-Cox, *Este inmenso comercio. Las relaciones mercantiles entre Puerto Rico y Gran Bretaña, 1844-1898*. Río Piedras, Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1996, pág. 346 y ss.

³ Luis Muñoz Marín, “Porto-Rico: The American Colony”, *The Nation*. vol. 120, núm. 3118, 8 de abril de 1925, p. 379. Para una visión de conjunto ver Fernando Picó, *Historia general de Puerto Rico*. 2^a ed. revisada y aumentada, Río Piedras, Ediciones Huracán, 1986, capítulos 10 al 13, págs. 151-248 y de María de los Ángeles Castro Arroyo y María Dolores Luque de Sánchez, *Puerto Rico en su historia. El rescate de la memoria*. San Juan, Editorial La Biblioteca, 2001, capítulos 6 al 9, pp. 153-243.

nuevas.⁴ Mas la liberación de la mano de obra fue insuficiente en el seno de una sociedad rica, pero descapitalizada por la fuga de las fortunas exportadas por los grandes terratenientes y comerciantes peninsulares, franceses, ingleses y otros fueños. Luis Muñoz Rivera señaló con gran tino en 1893 que el fenómeno obedecía a que:

... los productos de la campiña feraz toman, año tras año, el camino de Europa; [...] los ingenios permanecen junto al Portugués, y el Inabón y Bucaná, pero las rentas se consumen en París, en Londres, en Madrid, o en Barcelona; [...] los capitales emigran y acuden a fomentar el lujo de otras ciudades en que se alzan palacios y jardines que llevan en sus sillares y en sus invernáculos el jugo amargo de nuestros cafetos y el dulce jugo de nuestras cañas.

Entretanto que los hijos de Ponce y los que en Ponce labraron sus riquezas, arrastran sus carruajes en la Rambla, en el Bosque de Bolonia o en la City, Ponce echa de menos la savia que le extraen y la vida que le roban.⁵

Por otro lado, eran muy débiles los incentivos internos para animar a los inversionistas del patio a fomentar manufacturas de uso diario o de exportación con tecnologías avanzadas. No sólo eran bajos los salarios del campesinado sino que a menudo no se cobraban en moneda contante y sonante sino en productos o en fichas y vales, aceptados únicamente en las tiendas de raya de las haciendas. Al bajo poder adquisitivo de los clientes potenciales, se sumaron los riesgos, los temores y los altos costos de producir mercancías capaces de competir en calidad, cantidad y costo con las de origen extranjero. Cuando los agricultores necesitaron máquinas — como las usadas en la industria azucarera — las importaron y no esperaron por otras de origen puertorriqueño. En este gesto, el capital invertido terminó mundo afuera y no estimuló el desarrollo paralelo de industrias locales.⁶

Al respecto, la industria azucarera decimonónica ilustra los extremos y los flancos críticos del intento de estar a la altura de los tiempos. Seducidos por los altos precios del dulce en los mercados internacionales, algunos azucareros radicados en la Isla apostaron a la revolución técnica de la fase fabril. Así, se inauguró la primera central azucarera en Vega Baja, en el mismo año de la abolición de la esclavitud y el trabajo servil (1873).⁷ También fue la primera en fracasar antes de terminar la década. Esta derrota temprana no desalentó a criollos y extranjeros a fundar establecimientos azucareros modernos. Pero el deseo de apropiarse de la tecnología más avanzada, los obligó a mirar hacia el Norte (Estados Unidos, Inglaterra y Francia) para obtener los aparatos, los créditos y los mercados

⁴ La dura transición de esclavo a liberto es estudiada por Raúl Mayo Santana, Mariano Negrón Portillo y Manuel Mayo López, "Esclavos y libertos en San Juan pre y post-abolición", en *Cadenas de esclavitud y de solidaridad*. Río Piedras, Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (UPR), 1997, págs. 59-120. Ver también de Andrés A. Ramos Mattei, "El liberto en el régimen de trabajo azucarero de Puerto Rico, 1870-1880", en Andrés A. Ramos Mattei (ed.), *Azúcar y esclavitud*. San Juan, s.e., [1982], págs. 91-124.

⁵ Citado por Andrés A. Ramos Mattei, "Las haciendas del litoral sur: 1880-1910" en *La sociedad del azúcar en Puerto Rico: 1870-1910*. Río Piedras, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1988, pág. 82. El grupo mallorquín, por ejemplo, lo practicó asiduamente, según Astrid Cubano, *Un puente entre Mallorca y Puerto Rico: la emigración de Sóller (1830-1930)*. Tremañes, Archivo de Indianos, 1993, pág. 152.

⁶ Astrid Cubano, "Sugar Trade and Economic Elites in Puerto Rico: Response to the Sugar Crisis in the Region, 1878-1898", *Historia y Sociedad*. Revista del Departamento de Historia, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recint ode Río Piedras, año II, 1989, pp. 70-89.

⁷ Teresita Martínez-Vergne, *Capitalism in Colonial Puerto Rico. Central San Vicente in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1992.

del producto final.⁸ España se autoexcluyó por su atraso tecnológico y le cerró el paso a los azúcares cubanos y boricuas, pues al no poder absorber el grueso de la producción antillana, optó por proteger a los azucareros canarios y andaluces mediante onerosos aranceles sobre el azúcar de sus colonias. Así, el estado español prefirió seguir explotando sus posesiones a través de las aduanas, principal fuente de ingreso y sustento del gobierno colonial, y favoreciendo a los peninsulares con ayuda de concesiones fiscales y empleos burocráticos.

EL PRECIO DEL PROGRESO

Su majestad el azúcar no reinó sola a fines de la centuria. La sonada caída de sus precios la destronaron y le dio paso al café que, contrario a su hermana, encontró las puertas abiertas en la Península. Sin embargo, crisis azucarera y auge cafetalero provocaron un resultado común: pauperización del campesinado, deterioro de la naturaleza, reducción de cultivos de subsistencia, alimentación precaria y fortalecimiento del poder en pocas manos, sobre todo las mercantiles y extranjeras.⁹

En las zonas cañeras, el vagabundaje, el aumento de los delitos y la emigración a Santo Domingo, eran señales de desesperación.¹⁰ En las montañas cafetaleras, el aroma del grano era de desnutrición, enfermedad e ignorancia.¹¹ Mientras en la caña, la revolución técnica acrecentó la gran propiedad a expensas de los pequeños y medianos agricultores. El nuevo latifundio era condición necesaria para justificar los enormes costos de la acrecentada capacidad productiva de las centrales modernas. Pero muy pocos sembradores de caña tenían el dineral para instalar la tecnología azucarera más avanzada. De ahí que soñaran, como Santiago Mc Cormick, con los capitales extranjeros para fundar las centrales mientras los agricultores del patio sembraban la caña para alimentar los molinos.¹² En la práctica, una mezcla de capitales isleños (mayormente, de comerciantes españoles) e inversionistas de afuera aceptaron el reto.

Sobre esa movediza base económica descansó la sociedad presidida por comerciantes peninsulares y extranjeros de diferentes nacionalidades. Estos controlaban el comercio de importación y exportación, el crédito y la moneda circulante.¹³ En la sociedad preindustrial, el capital comercial domina al capital agrícola, pero el prestigio social lo daba la tenencia de tierras. En realidad, la frontera se diluye al coincidir ambos intereses en el comerciante agricultor. A fines de siglo, muchos ingenios y centrales azucareras fueron adquiridos mediante compra o ejecución de deudas por comerciantes de los principales puertos del país.¹⁴

⁸ El análisis pionero del desarrollo azucarero de la época es de Andrés A. Ramos Mattei, *La hacienda azucarera. Su crecimiento y crisis en Puerto Rico (siglo xix)*. San Juan, CEREP, 1981.

⁹ Fernando Picó, "Deshumanización del trabajo, cosificación de la naturaleza: los comienzos del auge del café en el Utuado del siglo XIX", *Cuadernos de la Facultad de Humanidades (UPR, Río Piedras)*, núm. 2, 1979, págs. 53-70. Ver también Libia M. González, "Agricultores y comerciantes en la última frontera del café: Ciales 1885-1898", Tesis de Maestría, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, Facultad de Humanidades, Departamento de Historia, 1988; Laird W. Bergard, *Coffee and the Growth of Agrarian Capitalism in Nineteenth Century Puerto Rico*. Princeton, Princeton University, 1983.

¹⁰ Ramos Mattei, *La sociedad...*, pág. 73, y del mismo autor *Azúcar...*, pág. 123.

¹¹ Fernando Picó, *Libertad y servidumbre en Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX*. Río Piedras, Ediciones Huracán, 1979, pág. 95 y ss.

¹² Santiago Mc Cormick, *Factorías centrales en Puerto Rico*. San Juan, Imprenta del Boletín Mercantil, 1880, págs. 23-25, 27 y 97.

¹³ Ver la amplia muestra estudiada por Astrid Cubano Iguina, *El hilo en el laberinto: claves de la lucha política en Puerto Rico (siglo XIX)*. Río Piedras, Ediciones Huracán, 1990.

¹⁴ Ramos Mattei, *La sociedad...*, pág. 50

En una isla encabezada por militares nombrados a distancia, y en una economía en manos de marchantes extranjeros, el criollo sobrevive al costo de la complicidad, la protesta riesgosa o el silencio. Por consiguiente, los puertorriqueños —propietarios, profesionales o trabajadores— tuvieron que maniobrar en un espacio político y económico fuera de su control, hasta cierto punto. En algunas regiones cafetaleras del centro y en los predios azucareros del sur, y del norte, los extranjeros alcanzaron y conservaron las posiciones de poder a lo largo del siglo.¹⁵ Aun así, los propietarios criollos hicieron la lucha y algunos llegaron a destacar. Pero toda conquista económica estaba en precario mientras no tuvieran acceso al poder político, reservado a los peninsulares, que abría y cerraba mercados e imponía aranceles y tarifas a sus espaldas y, sobre todo, les vedaba el control de los empleos públicos.

POLÍTICA

Sin querer, España promovió la autonomía para Puerto Rico y Cuba desde el siglo 16. Al regirlas, como al resto de América, con leyes y decretos muchas veces distintos a los vigentes en la Península, nutrió la idea de que eran diferentes y ameritaban moldes jurídicos, económicos y políticos especiales. Abandonadas las islas, a veces a su propia suerte, el gobierno español propició la búsqueda de la autosuficiencia, el contrabando o la orientación hacia otras metrópolis más avanzadas y más cercanas. Así, el control de las esferas internas del poder local fue una meta preparada por la desesperante tradición multiseccular del gobierno ejercido desde España.

A mediados del siglo 19, señala María de los Ángeles Castro, los puertorriqueños tenían dos caminos: “el de la insurrección armada que algunos intentaron y fracasaron... y el de esperar con relativa paciencia las coyunturas propicias para reanudar la crítica al régimen y las luchas reformistas”.¹⁶ Pero después de la fracasada insurrección del 68, los reformistas y luego los autonomistas no perdieron oportunidad para rechazar la independencia y despojarse de todos los ropajes que los vincularon, real o imaginariamente, a los independentistas.

El autonomismo puertorriqueño, cuyas raíces se hunden en los inicios del siglo 19, descansó en los principios de la descentralización administrativa y la asimilación política. Fue el medio principal de la elite criolla para aspirar a la administración interna del territorio sin renunciar al vínculo con España. En 1887 los autonomistas proclamaron en el programa de su nueva agrupación, que buscaba

...la identidad política y jurídica con nuestros hermanos peninsulares; y el principio fundamental de su política será alcanzar la mayor descentralización posible dentro de la unidad nacional. La fórmula clara y concreta de este principio es el régimen autonómico, que tiene por base la representación directa de los intereses locales a cargo de la

¹⁵ Consultar los ensayos sobre la hegemonía de los extranjeros en Ponce, Arecibo y Lares, en Francisco A. Scarano (ed.), *Immigración y clases sociales en el Puerto Rico del siglo XIX*. Río Piedras, Ediciones Huracán, 1981. El largo alcance de los franceses es estudiado por María Dolores Luque de Sánchez en “Con pasaporte francés en el Puerto Rico del siglo XIX”, *Op. Cit. Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas*, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, núm. 3, 1987-88, págs. 95-122. De la misma autora, ver también “Matrimonios y compadrazgos: la interrelación social de los corsos con la población criolla de Yauco durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX”, *Historia y Sociedad*. Revista del Departamento de Historia, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, año III, 1990, pp. 36-59.

¹⁶ María de los Ángeles Castro Arroyo, “Puerto Rico: las constantes de su historia” en *Puerto Rico 500 años de cambio y continuidad*. Washington, D.C., Institute for Puerto Rican Affairs, 1991, pág. 20.

Diputación Provincial, también directa, de los que tengan a su cargo el ejercicio de las funciones públicas, en lo que toca a la administración puramente interior o local.¹⁷

EL JUEGO SEMÁNTICO

Asimilismo y autonomismo fueron ingredientes centrales de la fórmula autonomista aunque el énfasis en uno y otro dependió de las circunstancias. A veces surge la impresión de que se trataba de una elección táctica como la exportada a Puerto Rico por Rafael María de Labra que recomendó en 1873 que se pidiera la asimilación en vez de la autonomía porque “la primera era más sencilla, era parte de la tradición política y no sonaría a privilegio como la autonomía”. En esa onda, para Julio L. Vizcarrondo la asimilación era una etapa de la lucha por la autonomía (“Hacia la autonomía por la asimilación.”) y para Román Baldorioty de Castro asimilación y autonomismo eran sinónimos (“La asimilación federativa es la autonomía de la provincia.”).¹⁸ Ambos expresaban una realidad inescapable, desde una posición de debilidad: para ser autónomos primero había que ser provincia con todos los derechos.

La acritud verbal entre asimilistas y autonomistas quizás escondió, entre otras cosas, la división entre monárquicos y republicanos, o entre centralistas y federalistas, pleito muy común en la España de fines del siglo 19. La eliminación perpetrada por José de Celis Aguilera del apartado que aludía al autonomismo en el programa del Partido Liberal Reformista, reproducido en su libro de 1866,¹⁹ y la ausencia del monárquico José Julián Acosta (el intelectual más ilustre de su generación) en la asamblea del 7 de marzo de 1887 donde se fundó el Partido Autonomista, son señales de diferencias nada retóricas.

Las grietas del liberalismo criollo fueron explicadas de otra manera por el médico José de Jesús Domínguez, autonomista militante de la época, Según él, la división era entre “filósofos” y “economistas” que no se ponían de acuerdo sobre el desarrollo agrícola del país. Mientras los filósofos “neo-asimilistas” aconsejaban el abandono de la dependencia de la caña de azúcar como base de la economía y proponían la diversificación agrícola, principalmente de cultivos de uso textil, los economistas ripostaban que sin el azúcar Puerto Rico se arruinaría y volvería la época del “situado”. Por el contrario, con el autonomismo se renovarían la industria azucarera y la Isla podría concertar tratados comerciales con los Estados Unidos sin las trabas que empantanaban las relaciones económicas entre España y los mercados norteamericanos.²⁰

En el proceso de elaborar su proyecto político, los autonomistas apelaron a las razones que la experiencia propia les descubrió y, a la vez, se apropiaron de los argumentos dictados por otras vivencias foráneas. Algunos, como Baldorioty, se ampararon en el modelo auto-

¹⁷ Al respecto véase de María de los Ángeles Castro, “El autonomismo en Puerto Rico (1808-1898): la siembra de una tradición”, *Secuencia*, Nueva Época, núm. 31, enero-abril 1995, págs. 5-22. Ver también de la misma autora “Introducción” a *Plan de Ponce para la reorganización del Partido Liberal de la Provincia. Acta de la Asamblea constituyente del Partido Autonomista Puertorriqueño*. Edición facsimilar, San Juan, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, [1987].

¹⁸ Ver algunos ejemplos de estas contorsiones verbales en Lidio Cruz Monclova, *Historia de Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX)*. Río Piedras, Editorial Universitaria, 1952-1964, 5 vols., II, primera parte, págs. 54-67, segunda parte, págs. 581-594.

¹⁹ José de Celis Aguilera, *Mi grano de arena*. San Juan de Puerto Rico, Imp. J. J. Acosta, 1886.

²⁰ José de Jesús Domínguez, *La autonomía administrativa en las Antillas*. Mayagüez, Tip. Comercial, 1887, pág. 21 y ss.

nómico británico implantado en Canadá, mientras José de Jesús Domínguez, se apoyó, además, en el ejemplo de las colonias francesas.²¹

Esos préstamos no devalúan los esfuerzos de los autonomistas por controlar los principales mecanismos de la sociedad isleña. Pero delatan la necesidad de calibrar el peso de los factores externos en las coyunturas más sobresalientes del liberalismo puertorriqueño del siglo 19. Dado que el autonomismo es parte y a la vez reclama ser heredero de ese acervo liberal, recordemos que en los dos momentos cumbres del liberalismo boricua contaron mucho los Estados Unidos, como en la abolición de la esclavitud en 1873 y en la concesión de la carta autonómica en 1897.

A la hora de discutir el futuro, los autonomistas fueron discretos al citar las lecciones atractivas del federalismo norteamericano, aunque ya en 1873 debatían las doctrinas federales españolas desde las páginas del periódico liberal *El Progreso* y en las Cortes españolas por boca de Manuel Corchado Juarbe.²² Pero tan pronto los Estados Unidos inauguraron su dominio en 1898, los líderes de las dos facciones autonomistas demostraron conocer desde hacía rato los pormenores del sistema político de la nueva metrópoli. Concluyeron con prisa que los poderes de los estados norteamericanos equivalían a los de la anhelada autonomía, al *self-government* de la república democrática de los Estados Unidos.²³ Luis Muñoz Rivera lo resumió sin rodeos: “Somos regionalistas de igual manera y con igual derecho que lo son en los Estados Unidos de América las varias partes del conjunto glorioso.”²⁴

LA GUERRA Y LA INVASIÓN DEL 98

...Los puertorriqueños son españoles leales o por lo menos un gran número de ellos. Han aceptado la autonomía y parecen agradecerlo, así como otras cosas que la Madre Patria les concede. Son gente leal a la Madre Patria por lo que Puerto Rico sería un lugar caliente para un norteamericano si surge un conflicto.

Philip C. Hanna, Cónsul de los Estados Unidos en San Juan,
19 de febrero de 1898.

No hay razón para dudar de los informes consulares que destacaban la lealtad a España de los puertorriqueños ni la estampa de una isla apacible donde la vida y la libertad estaban aseguradas, sin la posibilidad de una revolución. Pero fue una fidelidad trabajosa y costosa.²⁵ En muchos puertorriqueños estaban todavía frescos la esclavitud y el trabajo obligatorio abolidos en 1873. Algunas de sus secuelas, como el racismo y la marginación social, no desaparecieron y estaban muy vivos en vísperas de la invasión del 98.

²¹ Ver el contexto político y otros aspectos de las diferencias entre los autonomistas en Pilar Barbosa de Rosario, *De Baldorioty a Barbosa. Historia del autonomismo puertorriqueño, 1887-1896*. San Juan, Imprenta Venezuela, 1957.

²² Cruz Monclova, *Historia de Puerto Rico*, II, primera parte, pág. 321 y ss.

²³ Henry K. Carroll, *Report on the Island of Porto Rico; Its Population, Civil Government, Commerce, Industries, Productions, Roads, Tariff, and Currency*. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1899, pág. 234.

²⁴ Citado por María Dolores Luque de Sánchez, *La ocupación norteamericana y la Ley Foraker. (La opinión pública puertorriqueña), 1898-1904*. Río Piedras, Editorial Universitaria, 1980, p. 81.

²⁵ Salvador Brau hace el mejor balance del criollo leal e insatisfecho, en *Ecos de la batalla*. Puerto Rico, Imprenta y Librería de José González Font, 1886, págs. 3-9 y 42-56. Ver también de Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, “Salvador Brau: la paradoja de la tradición autonomista”, *La Torre*. (Nueva Época), año VII, núms. 27-28, tomo 1, jul.-dic. 1993, pp. 395-414.

En la década del 90, la crisis económica del sector azucarero y la guerra tarifaria entre Estados Unidos y España magnificaron las carencias y las injusticias del orden colonial. En ese contexto, se explican las primeras protestas masivas de la historia decimonónica (1892) y las huelgas generalizadas de los trabajadores urbanos y rurales en 1894 y 1895.²⁶ Así, se paralizó la economía de algunos pueblos como Ponce y la producción agrícola en muchas haciendas. La entrada en escena de los peones del campo y los asalariados de los pueblos no fue revolucionaria, pero sí airada y firme, y obligó a muchos patronos a reajustar los salarios. Sobre todo, hizo letra muerta la ley que prohibía las huelgas, vigente desde 1879.²⁷

En el terreno político, el autonomismo, principal corriente ideológica del siglo, operó contra el telón de fondo de la guerra de independencia de Cuba (1895-1898) y a contrapelo de la política metropolitana y de sus aliados conservadores del patio que siempre los vieron como españoles de segunda y separatistas en potencia. Para legitimarse, los autonomistas tuvieron que demostrar que eran los auténticos españoles, pues el camino medio entre la separación y la cruda colonia garantizaba, según ellos, la permanencia de España en la Isla.

Para los ultracoloniales peninsulares y autóctonos no bastó el largo y consecuente historial de fidelidad de los autonomistas borincanos. Por lo menos desde el Grito de Lares, estos últimos enterraron la vía independentista y tomaron la reformista.²⁸ Y aún en la desesperada coyuntura de los componentes del 87, cinco meses después de fundado el Partido Autonomista, el autonomismo no se despulmonó. En vez, contestó los desmanes con reclamos de derechos violados y con demandas de respeto a las leyes vigentes.

No empece lo anterior (o tal vez por ello), en medio de la guerra hispano-cubana-norteamericana, (1897) los autonomistas llegaron al extremo de pactar con un partido monárquico español que hasta entonces había rechazado la autonomía para las colonias.²⁹ El gobierno español, acosado por los insurrectos cubanos y amenazado de intervención por los Estados Unidos, escuchó finalmente los reclamos autonomistas. Pero aún en el decreto autonómico, la Reina Regente les recordó a los puertorriqueños que seguían siendo una colonia dirigida por un gobernador nombrado sin el consentimiento de los fieles gobernados.³⁰

LEALTADES EN MOVIMIENTO

¿Cómo entender entonces las cambiantes lealtades? Para empezar, la guerra librada por España fue un desastre desde el comienzo.³¹ Mal armados y peor dirigidos, cosecharon sangrientas derrotas en Filipinas y Cuba, de las que los puertorriqueños se enteraron a

²⁶ Las protestas de 1892 aparecen reseñadas en las ediciones de septiembre de 1892 de *La Correspondencia* y los pormenores de las huelgas de 1894 y 1895 en las ediciones de diciembre de 1894 y enero y febrero de 1895 de *La Correspondencia*.

²⁷ *Código penal para las provincias de Cuba y Puerto Rico y ley provisional de enjuiciamiento criminal (mandadas observar por el Real Decreto de 23 de mayo de 1879)*. Madrid, Imprenta Nacional, 1879, pág. 138.

²⁸ José Marcial Quiñones ejemplifica esta visión en *Un poco de historia colonial*. San Juan de Puerto Rico, Academia Puertorriqueña de la Historia, 1978, pág. 212 y ss.

²⁹ Pilar Barbosa de Rosario, *La comisión autonomista de 1896. Historia del autonomismo puertorriqueño*. San Juan, Imprenta Venezuela, 1957.

³⁰ Ver el texto del Real Decreto que regiría los "asuntos coloniales", en Reece B. Bothwell y Lidio Cruz Monclova (eds.), *Los documentos... ¿qué dicen?* Río Piedras, Ediciones de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1960, págs. 185-200.

³¹ Carlos Serrano, *Final del imperio. España 1895-1898*. México, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, págs. 39, 45-46.

medias y tardíamente. Es difícil precisar el impacto en el ánimo de la población de los descalabros militares, la desinformación, y el falso triunfalismo de los partes militares españoles. Pero podemos imaginar el desconcierto y el desaliento ante la inesperada victoria de un enemigo a claras vistas superior.

Al producirse la invasión, las tropas españolas ofrecieron una resistencia formal (salvar el honor sin voluntad heroica) pues sólo tres soldados norteamericanos murieron y cuarenta fueron heridos. La campaña duró 19 días y los puertorriqueños no se involucraron intensa y masivamente en el conflicto ni tuvieron que sanar heridas y odios profundos con el triunfador. Sin dirección ni fuerzas organizadas, ni posibilidad real de triunfo, la gente acató el poderío descomunal del invasor y trató de salvar el reducido terreno político arrancado a la Madre Patria a costa de grandes sacrificios. La autonomía concedida en 1897, después de décadas de duras luchas, fue un logro significativo, pero insuficiente. Por eso los autonomistas calcularon que el dominio democrático norteamericano les daría la oportunidad de culminar el proyecto del 87. Para lograrlo tuvieron que hacer nuevos votos de lealtad (que uno desearía que hubiesen sido más recatados y menos abyectos). Fue el mayor precio a pagar por aliarse con el país derrotado en la guerra del 98.

Las lealtades móviles por lo alto se repitieron más abajo en los pueblos. El caso mejor conocido es el episodio de Utuado donde entre el 8 de junio y el 3 de agosto del 98 los utuadeños expresaron apoyo a España y regocijo por la llegada de las tropas norteamericanas al pueblo de la montaña.³² La invasión, y la desarticulación de la autoridad española, propició la manifestación más neta de las hondas divisiones que la censura de prensa, la represión política y militar y la intimidación del poder económico silenciaron o diluyeron. Era la hora del destape y del desquite, al amparo de los nuevos aliados. El dilema no era escoger entre la “traición” y el “patriotismo” sino expresar, por fin, las aspiraciones propias, con razón o sin ella, con ayuda del invasor que prometía tiempos mejores. Tanta ingenuidad, en medio de un dominio consumado, sólo podía venir de un pueblo hartado de los extremos del orden colonial como demostraron las elecciones de marzo de 1898 en las que los conservadores (base incondicional del colonialismo español) sufrieron una derrota humillante.³³

LAS FRACTURAS INTERNAS

El triunfo rotundo del partido de Muñoz Rivera, en la víspera de la invasión norteamericana, ocultaba las divisiones internas en las filas de los criollos y entre los liberales de diferentes tonalidades. Las inmediatas eran las peleas entre los monárquicos de Muñoz Rivera y los republicanos de Barbosa. Pero las lejanas andaban por los caminos del azúcar, el café y el empleo público.

³² Fernando Picó, *1898: la guerra después de la guerra*. Río Piedras, Ediciones Huracán, 1987, págs. 73-75. Ver el relato de la mudanza de simpatías en Fajardo, en Angel Rivero, *Cronica de la guerra hispanoamericana en Puerto Rico*. Madrid, Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1922, págs 353-378. En Ponce ocurrió algo similar, según describe Guillermo A. Baralt, *La Buena Vista, 1833-1904. Estancia de frutos menores, fábrica de harinas y hacienda cafetalera*. San Juan, Fideicomiso de Conservación de Puerto Rico, 1988, pág. 106 y ss.

³³ Las interpretaciones dispares del 98 y sus consecuencias son puestas en perspectiva histórica por María de los Angeles Castro Arroyo, “El 98 incesante: su persistencia en la memoria histórica puertorriqueña”, en Luis E. González Vales (ed.), *1898. Enfoques y perspectivas*. San Juan, Academia Puertorriqueña de la Historia, págs. 17-41.

En vísperas de la fundación del Partido Autonomista y de la persecución ulterior de sus simpatizantes, el descalabro del azúcar en el mercado internacional destacó las deformaciones del sistema colonial. Acosada por el azúcar de remolacha, el azúcar moscabada puertorriqueña (morena y sin refinar) dejó de ser el “hada madrina” de la que dependía la prosperidad del país, como lamentaba José Julián Acosta. Aún así, el gobierno insistió en seguir cobrando impuestos sobre el azúcar exportada, práctica anacrónica del viejo mercantilismo, y, por consiguiente, llevó a los azucareros hasta la exasperación.

Al disminuir los ingresos provenientes del azúcar fue más audible en la Isla el rechinar de otros engranajes, particularmente el monetario. España, incapaz de suplirnos suficiente moneda propia a lo largo del siglo 19, permitió desde 1879 la circulación de moneda de plata mexicana como medio oficial de intercambio en Puerto Rico. Esta moneda estaba devaluada en el mercado internacional un 15 ó un 20 por ciento, pero el gobierno colonial obligó a los comerciantes a aceptarla por su valor entero.³⁴

En la encrucijada de los precios bajos del azúcar y la moneda devaluada, la estructura crediticia también acentuó los infortunios de la mayor parte de los agricultores. Dada la ausencia de bancos modernos, desalentados por España hasta 1890, los cultivadores cogían prestado de los grandes comerciantes dinero, comestibles, herramientas y mercancías en general, a cambio de sus cosechas. Era una relación desigual en la que el comerciante practicaba la usura mediante el cobro de uno y medio al dos por ciento mensual de interés, además de lo que ganaba en el precio de los productos suministrados y de la comisión recibida de los hacendados para mercadear los frutos endeudados.³⁵

De ahí la insistencia de los liberales criollos, defensores del crecimiento azucarero, en la creación de un banco agrícola con apoyo oficial. Partían del convencimiento de que el capital existente en Puerto Rico era insuficiente y, por lo tanto, tenía que importarse. Así se abarataría el crédito y escaparían del agarre de los prestamistas insulares.

Este proyecto liberal, como bien plantea Astrid Cubano, ponía al estado como garante del banco agrícola y promotor de la infraestructura (carreteras, riego, ferrocarriles) favorecedores de los intereses azucareros. Además, cifraban sus esperanzas en el libre comercio. Todo esto chocó con los planteamientos conservadores y oficiales del momento.³⁶

A la agricultura de la gran propiedad azucarera, el estado español y los conservadores opusieron el capitalismo agrario de pequeños y medianos propietarios. De esta manera ampliarían la base contributiva (al multiplicar los contribuyentes al erario público) y crearían nuevas oportunidades de ingresos en momentos en que la crisis azucarera lanzaba al desempleo a muchos campesinos sin tierra. Además, al no depender de los capitales extranjeros, se protegía de la injerencia foránea en los asuntos internos y le dejaba el campo libre al crédito comercial de los comerciantes peninsulares establecidos en la Isla. En consecuencia, se mitigaría el descontento económico de los sin tierra y de los peones

³⁴ Adolfo de Hostos, *Historia de San Juan, ciudad murada*. San Juan de Puerto Rico, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1966, págs. 298-303. Las consecuencias políticas del problema monetario son señaladas por Astrid Cubano Iguina, “Comercio, moneda y política en Puerto Rico a finales del siglo XIX: una perspectiva socio-económica”, en González Vales (ed.), 1898. *Enfoques...*, págs. 209-220.

³⁵ Annie Santiago de Curet, *Crédito, moneda y bancos en Puerto Rico durante el siglo XIX*. Río Piedras, Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1989.

³⁶ Astrid T. Cubano Iguina, “La paz pública y propiedad territorial: la discusión sobre política agraria en Puerto Rico, 1880-1889”, *Op. Cit. Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas*, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, núm. 5, 1990, pp. 11-36.

desplazados de las haciendas azucareras, otra manera de aplacar las tensiones políticas mediante la garantía del orden y la “paz pública”.³⁷

AZÚCAR Y AUTONOMISMO

Ante el cuadro de una economía postrada, determinada parcialmente por directrices metropolitanas y en la que los propietarios del país no tenían el recurso y el concurso del poder local, el Partido Autonomista trazó un programa de largo alcance basado en el principio de la descentralización administrativa. Esta sería posible mediante el otorgamiento de poderes a la Diputación Provincial para determinar, entre otras cosas, el presupuesto del país y administrar las obras públicas, la educación, la salud, la inmigración, los tratados comerciales, etcétera. La crisis azucarera potenció el anhelo de los criollos de compartir el empleo público, coto casi cerrado de los más allegados al gobierno colonial.³⁸

El azúcar no era el país, pero fue el sector más dinámico y prometedor hasta la séptima década del siglo 19. Además, fue la alianza entre los azucareros, los profesionales y los letrados la que expresó con mayor fuerza y alcance el proyecto económico y político que irritó (a veces infundadamente) a los poderes metropolitanos y sus representantes coloniales. Es cierto que éramos una colonia rara que tenía el mundo por mercado y que los Estados Unidos no fueron siempre el principal destino de nuestro azúcar.³⁹ Pero si examinamos las estadísticas del comercio exterior, vemos que, en conjunto, superaron a otros países durante la mayor parte del siglo. El vínculo entre azúcar y anexionismo fue evidente después del 98, pero no hay razón para dudar de su largo abo­lengo. A algunos les intriga que ese enlace sea una de las razones que explica la acogida favorable de las tropas nortea­ñas en el 98. Tienen razón si se toma como un factor aislado, como explicación unicausal de un fenómeno más complejo. Pero si lo vemos como un hilo conductor, vinculado a otros factores, entonces adquiere su justo peso.

Además, fueron los Estados Unidos la referencia más constante, aunque no la única, de los criollos a la hora de concebir cambios en las relaciones coloniales. Tan temprano como 1865, en vísperas de reunirse en Madrid la frustrante Junta Informativa de Reformas, José Pablo Morales le confesó a José Julián Acosta su gran preocupación sobre la orientación ideológica de los liberales del patio.

Me contrista la idea de que apenas se levante de nuestras cervices la mano que nos oprime, el partido de la reforma se dividirá para debilitarse. Naturalmente, nos dividiremos en dos bandos los liberales: a una parte irán los que como yo quieren conservar todo lo que tienen de bueno las gloriosas tradiciones de la raza latina, y a la otra, los partidarios de la propaganda protestante y admiradores de la civilización norteamericana. ¿Formaremos nosotros dos en unas mismas filas, caro amigo?⁴⁰

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Fernando Picó, “El autonomismo de fines del XIX: perspectivas de su investigación histórica”, en *Al filo del poder*. Río Piedras, Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1993, págs. 198-200.

³⁹ Ver libro de Emma Dávila, *Este inmenso comercio...*

⁴⁰ Carta de José Pablo Morales a José Julian Acosta, 31 de diciembre de 1865, micropelícula en el Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Colección María del Pilar Acosta de Legrand.

Todavía no sabemos las consecuencias posteriores de esas cavilaciones, sobre todo, quiénes y cuántos eran “admiradores de la civilización norteamericana”. Pero sí conocemos las ejecutorias coloniales de los herederos de “las gloriosas tradiciones de la raza latina” al frente del imperio. Sería ocioso hacer aquí esa historia de la infamia. Mas sus ejemplos contundentes, con las persecuciones del 87 como punto culminante, nos hicieron ciudadanos españoles inferiores a los de la Península, fieles pero críticos, resentidos por tantas promesas falsas o mal cumplidas. El papelón caricaturesco y criminal de la Madre Patria en la guerra hispano-cubano-norteamericana deslustró aún más su imagen ante los súbditos.

RECAPITULACIÓN

Flotaba en el mástil de los barcos y en las filas de los batallones la bandera americana, que simboliza la democracia más grande y más perfecta del mundo, y nosotros, los desposeídos de siempre, vislumbramos la certidumbre de una economía sincera, de un derecho garantido, de una prosperidad desbordante en el seno de una nueva nacionalidad... sin resistencia ninguna, antes bien con estruendoso regocijo que la solemne majestad del momento histórico no bastaba reprimir, el pueblo acogió entre vitores y palmas no a sus conquistadores, sino a sus redentores.

Manifiesto del Partido Federal (1899)

Explicar no es perdonar sino comprender. En vista de que no podemos darle órdenes al pasado, al 98, la búsqueda de explicaciones de la recepción regocijada de las tropas norteamericanas no es una manera de justificarla, sino de batallar con un auténtico problema histórico. Si es cierto que la mayoría de los puertorriqueños apoyaba, por diferentes razones y con distintos grados de intensidad al gobierno colonial español, entonces ¿qué se esperaba de los boricuas cuando el poder imperial se rindió sin consultarlos? Si mi aliado depones las armas indecorosamente, después de “una huida hacia adelante”, y a mis espaldas, ¿quiénes eran los verdaderos “traidores”? Desarmados y abandonados en la estacada, fue muy tentador aceptar y pactar con el invasor, muchas veces superior, que prometía el respeto a la vida y la propiedad. Por consiguiente, sería injusto pedirle a los insulares que pelearan hasta “el último hombre” si los que hicieron la guerra se rajaron sin muchos aspavientos y los dejaron — y entregaron — a su propia suerte.⁴¹

Se podría argumentar que en ese hoyo profundo, al filo de los cañones y las escopetas yanquis, se debió lanzar la consigna betanciana de ni con España ni con los Estados Unidos. En esa vena, debieron afirmar la nacionalidad y defender la independencia. Ahora bien, la libertad nacional era defendida por los independentistas cuyas figuras más prominentes estaban en Nueva York, París, Santo Domingo y Cuba, conspirando contra el gobierno aliado de los autonomistas. En teoría, nada impedía que los autonomistas se convirtieran en independentistas en vez de anexionistas, pero esa conversión instantánea era improbable para los que por tres décadas se empeñaron en rechazar y ridiculizar la independencia.⁴²

Por otro lado, exigir una “conciencia nacional” a los obreros y artesanos urbanos, los campesinos y peones agrícolas, es decir, a la mayoría del país, sería subestimar su inteligencia

⁴¹ Este abandono metropolitano es analizado por María de los Ángeles Castro Arroyo, “¿A qué pelear si los de Madrid no quieren? Una versión criolla de la guerra del 98 en Puerto Rico”, *Revista de Indias*, vol. LVII, núm. 211, sept.-dic. 1997, pp. 657-694.

⁴² Cruz Monclova, *Historia...*, II, primera parte, pags. 581-582.

y su olfato de clase, por más crudos que fueran éstos. Sometidos al poder económico y social de los hacendados criollos y extranjeros y a la superioridad cultural de los letrados del país, pocas razones tenían para matarse por los proyectos políticos liberales que les asignaban papeles subalternos. De la misma manera, poco incentivo tenía el trabajador humilde para preferir al criollo sobre el peninsular si el primero podía ser tan explotador y prepotente como el extranjero. No le exigamos, pues, a los de abajo, el entusiasmo patriótico que los de arriba — sus líderes y patronos — nunca exhibieron.⁴³

Igualmente, pedir muestras de patriotismo revolucionario a las elites criollas, hacendados o educados, conlleva ignorar que la dicotomía criollo-peninsular era más manifiesta en el techo del sistema colonial (en la veda de los empleos públicos a los hijos de la Isla), que en los niveles inferiores. En verdad, eran más los intereses comunes de criollos y peninsulares que los antagónicos. Recordemos, una vez más, que ambos estuvieron dispuestos a morir por España en la infausta guerra del 98. Además, en la década del 90 tanto los conservadores como los criollos compartían amargas insatisfacciones contra el orden colonial: desde la moneda devaluada, pasando por los tratados comerciales con los Estados Unidos, hasta los aranceles y las leyes de cabotaje asfixiantes. Quizás esa alianza ayuda a entender mejor la decisiva victoria electoral del autonomismo en el 98.

Por otra parte, al hablar de las fuerzas criollas, en contraste con las peninsulares y norteamericanas, no olvidemos que no eran un bloque sin quebraduras. A las ya conocidas rencillas ideológicas de años anteriores (asimilismo *vs.* autonomismo, republicanos *vs.* monárquicos, pactistas *vs.* antipactistas) se añadían las económicas. En la coyuntura de la guerra podemos imaginar que los que recogían los frutos de los precios altos del café y vendían buena parte de la cosecha en España no tenían tantas urgencias para romper con su cliente principal. No podemos decir lo mismo de los azucareros que por no vender el grueso de su azúcar en la madre patria soñaban con entrar sin barreras al mercado norteamericano. Esto no significa reducir el anexionismo al azúcar y el criollismo autonomista al café. O peor aún, encontrar la clave del recibimiento alegre de los norteamericanos en el hecho único de que desembarcaron por zonas azucareras descontentas con la política fiscal y mercantil españolas.

Es obvio que las ideologías son más complicadas que las explicaciones unicasales y economicistas. Mas eso no significa que podemos prescindir del factor económico. No es necesario repetir la larga lista de insatisfacciones no económicas lamentadas por los insulares. En otras palabras, las zonas azucareras no tenían el monopolio del descontento insular y si los americanos decidieron desembarcar por los puertos del sur no fue necesariamente por ser tierras del azúcar y no del café sino también por razones estratégicas y porque fue la zona que sufrió más los embates del componte. A la vez, un repaso de los programas autonomistas e independentistas de fines de siglo, mostrará que los infortunios de los puertorriqueños rebasaban los intereses agrícolas y mercantiles. Educación, salud, derechos políticos, división de poderes, obras públicas, presupuesto, por mencionar algunas, fueron zonas de debates y reclamos ante las autoridades imperiales. Su naturaleza política, social o cultural era compatible con las aspiraciones económicas de azucareros y cafetaleros. Por eso, después del 98, encontramos azucareros y cafetaleros en los partidos de Barbosa y Muñoz Rivera.

⁴³ Ver el relato anti-heroico de la invasión del 98 de José Luis González, *La llegada*. Río Piedras, Ediciones Huracán, 1980.

En el balance del Puerto Rico de fines de siglo, hemos destacado las principales correlaciones de fuerzas y debilidades de la sociedad puertorriqueña. No son las únicas, pero sí las más útiles para intentar otra reflexión sobre el 98, ayudada por la correspondencia de los cónsules que forman el grueso de este volumen. Sobre todo, para entender el asunto que perturba a muchos historiadores e interesados en el desarrollo de la sociedad puertorriqueña: la continuidad de dominaciones y el intercambio de lealtades.

En la visión magnificada de la Isla entre imperios, queda claro que no estábamos a la venta, listos para el mejor postor. Todo lo contrario, la mayor parte de los electores puertorriqueños deseaba más poderes internos sin dejar de ser españoles. Pero las aspiraciones autonomistas y las fidelidades a España generaron la persecución, la inferioridad política y las suspicacias a las afirmaciones regionalistas. A la larga, la metrópoli española cedió, desangrada en la segunda gran guerra de independencia de Cuba, y amenazada por los Estados Unidos. A la vez, España convocó a los puertorriqueños leales a una guerra perdida de antemano, para luego abandonarlos a mitad de camino, en manos de la primera potencia industrial mundial.

Divididos internamente y derrotados en el campo de batalla, los puertorriqueños optaron por encajar en el nuevo molde imperial para potenciar los poderes y el protagonismo desgajado de la testarudez española. El nuevo dominador no era un extraño, sino su principal socio comercial a lo largo del siglo, quien, además, navegaba con bandera altruista y liberadora. Pillados por su poderío formidable, que prometía ser más magnánimo que el de los españoles, sin exigir todavía el cambio de identidades, los partidos liberales y el pueblo en general creyeron poder amoldarse al nuevo formato democrático y a la incorporación al mercado norteamericano. Así, sin dejar de ser autonomistas, desearon incorporarse a los Estados Unidos: “Porque no existe sobre el planeta autonomía tan amplia y tan indestructible como la que supieron crear, cuando escribieron sus códigos los patriarcas de la América del Norte para sus Estados y para sus territorios”.⁴⁴

Ante esta declaración de fe, como ante los aplausos a los invasores, se podría alegar ingenuidad política o debilidad ideológica. Lo que no es justo es compararnos con los cubanos cuya historia es tan distinta y tan parecida a la nuestra. En Cuba se pelearon dos grandes guerras de independencia y ello puede tomarse como evidencia de la gran conciencia nacional y la combatividad de los cubanos, en contraste con la pasividad y la propensión a transigir de los puertorriqueños. Pero estas comparaciones simples omiten que el independentismo revolucionario cubano coexistió primero con el anexionismo esclavista de mediados del siglo 19 y, después de 1880, con el autonomismo contemporizador. Para complicar el problema, a pesar del acentuado patriotismo cubano, la primera república de Cuba, presidida por el pro-norteamericano Tomás Estrada Palma, fue mediatizada por la Enmienda Platt. Así, los Estados Unidos, el pájaro de las dos alas antillanas, terminó imponiéndose sobre los “patriotas” cubanos y los “pasivos” puertorriqueños.

En la búsqueda de nuevos significados de esos y otros cansados términos, proponemos el repaso de las miradas de los cónsules extranjeros. Entonces, quizás veamos el fin de siglo como punto de llegada y de partida, maduración y epifanía de procesos, persistencia y renovación de aspiraciones añejas.

⁴⁴ “Al pueblo de Puerto Rico. Manifiesto del Partido Federal”, en Luis Muñoz Rivera, *Campañas políticas*. Madrid, Editorial Puerto Rico, 1925, 4 vols., I, págs. 236-237. El documento fue publicado originalmente en *La Democracia*, 7 de septiembre de 1899.

ECONOMÍA Y SOCIEDAD

EL SEÑORÍO COMERCIAL

Durante casi tres siglos, Puerto Rico fue objeto del interés político de varias potencias europeas. Atraídas por su posición estratégica en el Caribe, tanto Holanda, Francia como Inglaterra formularon planes más o menos prácticos para su captura. El aislamiento de los principales centros de administración española en las Américas, facilitaba la participación de la Isla en el comercio ilícito con europeos y norteamericanos, añadiendo mayor atractivo a su posible anexión.

Sin embargo, ya para principios del siglo 19, se empieza a percibir un cambio en las actitudes de las potencias extranjeras hacia Puerto Rico. Los ataques o complotos de las naciones europeas cesan por completo. Estados Unidos, por su parte, nunca mostró hacia Puerto Rico el mismo grado de interés económico, ni mucho menos político, que invirtió en su obsesión con la isla de Cuba. Los consulados estadounidense, francés y británico que se establecen en Puerto Rico durante el siglo 19 corresponden pues a un interés mayormente comercial. En segunda instancia, la mayor preocupación de los cónsules extranjeros era la de asegurar el bienestar de sus conciudadanos residentes en la Isla y favorecer sus empresas agrícolas y mercantiles. Por consiguiente, la mayor parte de la correspondencia consular recopilada en este volumen se relaciona con temas de índole económica y que, sobre todo en el caso de los cónsules británicos, suelen estar íntimamente ligados al aspecto social.

Las cartas recopiladas en el volumen dan comienzo en un punto coyuntural para la economía puertorriqueña decimonónica. Puerto Rico, isla abandonada a su suerte —desde un punto de vista económico— durante más de tres siglos, logra tomar partido de la bonanza azucarera de principios del siglo 19, cierto que ni tan oportuna ni tan intensamente como lo hiciera Cuba, pero lo suficiente como para adquirir mercedamente —ya para mediados de siglo— la reputación de ser una “isla azucarera”, cuyo cliente principal lo fue Estados Unidos durante las décadas del 1820 y 1830. A partir de 1846, se les sumarían los comerciantes británicos.¹ La conclusión de la Guerra Civil en los Estados Unidos señaló un período de gran prosperidad para la industria azucarera puertorriqueña. La reducción de impuestos y el mal estado de las plantaciones de Luisiana significaron un aumento considerable en las importaciones de azúcar extranjero en los Estados Unidos. Pero este estado de prosperidad resultó breve y engañoso.

El término de la década de los 1860 y los primeros años de la década del 1870 coinciden con el final del período de bonanza. No es coincidencia que el cónsul norteamericano Edward Conroy elija enviar un informe tan detallado del comercio puertorriqueño del año 1871: fue éste el año en que el comercio de la Isla con los Estados Unidos alcanzó su punto culminante en todo el siglo. La década del 1870 le presentará una realidad muy diferente a los productores azucareros puertorriqueños, batallando constantemente con la implacable caída de los precios del azúcar en el mercado mundial. La razón principal de este drástico espiral descendente es sencilla: el exitoso cultivo del azúcar de remolacha en Europa desemboca en una

¹ A mediados de la década del 1840, se aprobaron en el Parlamento británico una serie de leyes conducentes a la liberalización del comercio, a tono con la filosofía de la época. El azúcar de las colonias británicas, otrora protegido por aranceles prohibitivos, comenzó a perder su estatus privilegiado a partir del 1844.

sobreproducción mundial. A esta razón principal y *externa* se le suman varios factores agravantes de naturaleza *interna*, pero la caída de precios en el ámbito mundial será la principal piedra de tropiezo de la industria azucarera antillana en general, y puertorriqueña en particular.

Ante este hecho, poco pueden hacer los hacendados puertorriqueños para regresar a la prosperidad de antaño. Ya puede el cónsul francés señalar a la abolición de la esclavitud como la razón principal de la crisis [5 de diciembre de 1880]; ya puede recomendar la instalación de factorías centrales (preferiblemente equipadas por la prestigiosa firma parisina Cail); y su colega inglés Bidwell podrá lamentarse de la falta de frugalidad de los hacendados señalando este defecto personal como causa primordial de la crisis [Informe de Bidwell de 1878]. Lo cierto es que a partir del 1870 y por lo que restó del siglo 19, el mercado azucarero se tornó cada vez menos favorable para el productor.

No obstante, el deterioro de la industria azucarera no sumió a la Isla en un estado de crisis general. Por el contrario, la balanza del comercio extranjero muestra un crecimiento constante en la actividad mercantil de las últimas tres décadas del siglo 19. La explicación de esta aparente paradoja se encuentra en el resurgimiento de la industria cafetalera la cual, alejada de las sedes consulares, practicada en empresas de menor extensión que las características haciendas azucareras y dirigida mayormente al mercado español y cubano, atraerá menos la atención de los cónsules extranjeros. De ahí que éstos le dediquen poco interés a la actividad económica redentora de fines del siglo 19 en Puerto Rico.

Con esta perspectiva en mente, se comprende el poco optimismo que demuestra el cónsul francés [23 de mayo de 1869] en la inversión de capitales franceses en Puerto Rico, ya que estos capitales irían dirigidos a la azarosa industria azucarera. También comprendemos el persistente interés de los cónsules franceses en promover la venta de maquinaria para el refinado del azúcar puertorriqueño. A pesar de que Francia fue un mercado importante para el café puertorriqueño, no comparaba con el mercado nacional (entiéndase español y cubano) el cual acaparaba aproximadamente la mitad de las exportaciones anuales. En la mente de los cónsules franceses quedó grabada de forma indeleble la ecuación que igualaba a Puerto Rico con una "isla azucarera". Por otro lado, como suplidores de artículos de consumo en Puerto Rico, los franceses no gozaron de los privilegios arancelarios de España, ni de la ventaja económica e industrial de Gran Bretaña, ni de la cercanía geográfica de los Estados Unidos. Se distinguían como suplidores de mercancías de lujo las cuales, por definición, tenían un mercado reducido (Véase, por ejemplo, el plan sugerido por el cónsul francés Johann Capellas para ponerle remedio a esta situación [10 de julio de 1883]). El interés de los cónsules franceses por promover la venta de maquinaria refinadora proveniente de su país natal en la Isla es comprensible, como también se entiende el que su correspondencia sobre el estado económico de la Isla se caracterizara por su tono lúgubre y desalentador.

Los cónsules británicos, por el contrario, presentan un cuadro mucho más optimista de Puerto Rico, e invitan, en repetidas ocasiones, a sus compatriotas a invertir sus capitales en esta Isla "tan próspera", la cual a menudo clasifican como "la mejor de las Antillas". Inclusive la comparaban favorablemente con las propias posesiones británicas. Es cierto que ya para fines de la década del 1860, los

comerciantes británicos estaban aprovechando las múltiples ventajas que les ofrecía el azúcar de remolacha de origen europeo, abandonando gradualmente el consumo de azúcar caribeño. Bebedores de té por excelencia, mostraron poco interés por el café de la Isla. Mas, lejos de perder el entusiasmo en el comercio con Puerto Rico, experimentaron un verdadero apogeo a finales del siglo 19, sobre todo durante la década del 1880, cuando sus manufacturas textiles, su carbón y algunos productos alimentarios de gran importancia para la dieta puertorriqueña, como el bacalao y el arroz, acapararon el mercado insular. Gran Bretaña retendría esta situación privilegiada casi hasta el mismo fin de siglo, cuando la competencia de los tejidos catalanes y la presión económica ejercida por los Estados Unidos en las Antillas, socavarían la preeminencia británica en materia de importaciones en Puerto Rico.

Destacan, por último, por lo poco impresionantes —exceptuando el ya mencionado informe del 1871— los informes de los cónsules norteamericanos al Departamento de Estado. Éstos aparecen de manera errática y en un formato cada vez más conciso. La mayoría de la correspondencia sobre temas económicos enviada a Washington se circunscribe a lamentos sobre el mal estado de la industria azucarera y el peor estado de la situación monetaria en la Isla. Lo cierto es que las últimas tres décadas del siglo 19 se caracterizan por un estancamiento, cuando no, decadencia, del comercio puertorriqueño con los Estados Unidos. Es cierto que el vecino norteño acaparó casi por completo el mercado de exportación azucarera de Puerto Rico, pero tratábase éste, para fines de siglo, de un mercado muy menguado, no sólo en términos nominales, sino en cuanto a su relativa importancia para la economía puertorriqueña. El creciente interés de empresarios norteamericanos por invertir en la industria azucarera cubana al finalizar la Guerra de los Diez Años en 1878, contrasta con su relativa apatía por la industria puertorriqueña. Bebedores empedernidos de café de baja calidad, rechazaban el producto puertorriqueño por su alto precio. Como exportadores de manufacturas, maquinarias, metales y carbón, no lograron superar la competencia de Gran Bretaña, la “Gran Nación Industrial”, quien les llevaba ya años de ventaja en el mercado puertorriqueño. No fue sino hasta la última década del siglo, como resultado de la “guerra tarifaria” librada con España por la dominación del mercado cubano, que contados productos norteamericanos lograron desplazar a sus equivalentes británicos en el mercado puertorriqueño. Las importaciones principales de origen estadounidense en Puerto Rico se limitarían, durante la mayor parte del siglo, a ciertas provisiones y artículos diversos. La invasión del 1898 con su consiguiente monopolio del comercio puertorriqueño por el mercado estadounidense no confirmó una creciente tendencia económica del siglo 19. Mas bien, ayudó a rescatar y potenciar la hegemonía perdida en las décadas anteriores.

EN SOCIEDAD

La naturaleza de un informe sobre el estado de una sociedad es necesariamente mucho más subjetiva que la de un informe económico. Depende grandemente de la personalidad del autor cuán informativos y coloridos llegan a ser sus recuentos

sobre la realidad social en cuestión. La visión que nos presentan los cónsules extranjeros del Puerto Rico decimonónico es, pues, de carácter variado.

Indiscutiblemente, el maestro del género es el cónsul británico Charles Toll Bidwell, diplomático verdaderamente enamorado tanto de su profesión como de la Isla, quien lamentablemente duró poco tiempo en su puesto, pero quien nos legara, en 1878, uno de los relatos más descriptivos y completos que produjera un extranjero sobre la vida en el Puerto Rico del siglo 19. No obstante, hay que recordar que Charles Bidwell, como diplomático extranjero que era, no llegó a echar raíces en la Isla. Su condición de extranjero le otorga a sus descripciones, por un lado, cierta ingenuidad y frescura, mas por otro, exhibe el lastre inevitable del prejuicio, sobre todo tratándose del representante en la Isla de la mayor potencia imperial de sus tiempos. Esta extrañeza [“otherness”] también se hace patente en las consideraciones que sobre la sociedad puertorriqueña hacen los demás cónsules, tanto británicos como estadounidenses y franceses, y añádase que, a diferencia de Bidwell, pocos se tomaron la molestia de conocer la Isla a fondo, despachando su correspondencia y sus opiniones desde la ciudad de San Juan, sede de la administración colonial y representante muy dudosa de la realidad isleña. Haría falta la dedicación e integración del inmigrante para recibir una impresión más certera y confiable de la realidad social de la época.

Con esto en mente, no hay que olvidar que la segunda y muy importante misión de los cónsules extranjeros en Puerto Rico era la de estar atentos a las necesidades de sus conciudadanos radicados en la Isla, y es en el cumplimiento de esta función que recibimos la mayoría de las impresiones que sostenían sobre la sociedad puertorriqueña de fines del siglo 19. Mientras mayor fuera la comunidad extranjera en cuestión, y mientras más integrada estuviera ésta a la comunidad puertorriqueña en general, más elocuentes serán los cuadros que nos presentará la correspondencia consular sobre la realidad social en Puerto Rico.

En términos de mayoría numérica, son los inmigrantes franceses quienes llevan la delantera. Según el cónsul Johanns [24 de diciembre de 1883] el número asciende a alrededor de 2,000 en 1883, la mayoría de ellos corsos, mientras que Bidwell nos informa en 1878, que el número de inmigrantes británicos es de apenas 800. Mas, independientemente de la cantidad, hay que tener en cuenta la naturaleza de estos inmigrantes. Según el propio cónsul Johanns, la mayoría de los inmigrantes franceses se establecían en Puerto Rico sin miras a una residencia permanente. En esto diferían poco de los inmigrantes peninsulares, sobre todo los catalanes, muchos de los cuales iban a las Antillas con la intención de hacer fortuna, repatriaban consistentemente el fruto de sus negocios y regresaban a su país de origen una vez les llegaba la edad de retirarse.

Claro que existieron numerosas excepciones a la regla, pero la tradición contrasta con el sentido de permanencia del número más reducido de inmigrantes británicos quienes dan la impresión de haber sentado bases más sólidas en sus comunidades. Los vicecónsules británicos, quienes por sentirse parte de la sociedad a la cual se hallaban ya bien integrados, nos legan descripciones confiables de sus pueblos de residencia.

Consistente con la relativa falta de entusiasmo en el ámbito económico, y en abierto contraste a la situación previa a la crisis de la industria azucarera, los

cónsules estadounidenses comentan poco sobre la sociedad puertorriqueña. Entre sus ciudadanos radicados en la Isla, contaban varias personas quienes habían adquirido el pasaporte estadounidense, no por nacimiento, sino por conveniencia, y si éstos eran de origen puertorriqueño, se convertían en blanco de los recelos de las autoridades españolas. En esto, formaban la excepción a la regla, junto con un número considerable de inmigrantes negros provenientes de las Antillas inglesas, pues existe consenso entre los cónsules de las tres naciones presentadas en este volumen, de que el extranjero, por regla general, era bien recibido por las autoridades españolas en la Isla y acogido con hospitalidad por los residentes locales, si bien se reservaba un grado mayor de cordialidad hacia aquellos de origen europeo.

En la correspondencia francesa también se percibe un cierto grado de alarmismo al relatar detalladamente las cifras con respecto a la criminalidad en la isla [7 de septiembre de 1869 y 12 de diciembre de 1882], mas los propios autores de estos informes admiten que la mayoría de los crímenes cometidos en Puerto Rico eran de naturaleza trivial.

El consenso general es, pues, que Puerto Rico, para fines del siglo 19 gozaba, según las palabras de Edward Conroy, de un estado de “tranquilidad y salud” [20 de octubre de 1869] muy propicio para el inmigrante extranjero.

Por otra parte, esa tranquilidad económica, hermana gemela de la política, escondía una gran paradoja: la isla rica se descapitalizaba al arrullo de los inmigrantes (peninsulares, ingleses, estadounidenses y británicos). Para los extranjeros, Puerto Rico no era una tierra de “duelo y desolación”, sino de cuantiosas ganancias. Así, los productos de la “campiña feraz” y los capitales devengados, tomaban el camino de Europa y de los Estados Unidos.

Esos extraordinarios beneficios se lograron no empujando las trabas burocráticas, la corrupción aduanera y el complicado sistema arancelario español, de difícil ingestión por los cónsules. Y sobre todo, en el fragor de la competencia por conquistar el prometedor mercado puertorriqueño.

Es en los cuadernos de quejas, éxitos y esperanzas de los cónsules que entendemos mejor los desarrollos y las estrategias de las tres potencias que disputaban el favor de los consumidores del mundo. Desde mediados del siglo 19, Inglaterra fue la campeona del libre comercio, predicando con el ejemplo. Su hegemonía industrial y naval planetarias —unida a los mercados cautivos de su vasto imperio— le brindaba el lujo de abrir su mercado y de exigirle reciprocidad a sus rivales. Mientras los franceses vacilaban entre las tarifas aduaneras protectoras y punitivas y el comercio sin trabas, y los Estados Unidos se escudaban detrás de empinados aranceles, Inglaterra acaparaba los mercados de las economías pre-industriales.

Los relatos consulares muestran que el asunto fue más complejo pues el control del mercado puertorriqueño cambió de manos a lo largo del siglo 19. Inglaterra no tenía iguales en el tema de las telas, las salazones y los combustibles pero tropezó con contrincantes serios en el mercado de maquinarias azucareras y de los productos de uso doméstico. Los franceses, cuya industria se orientó, después de las guerras napoleónicas, a la elaboración de objetos de lujo (telas, perfumes, cerámicas), no pudieron superar los productos de “pacotilla” norteamericanos y las imitaciones o falsificaciones de sus marcas renombradas.

Por otro lado, la orientación de las exportaciones hacia el mercado inglés y español, en vísperas de la guerra del 98, no desterró del ánimo de los azucareros y los comerciantes del patio la nostalgia por los compradores estadounidenses. Esa añoranza preparó el camino de las negociaciones y los acomodados con el nuevo imperio.

En conclusión, la sociedad del azúcar y el café, miraba hacia afuera, a veces a través de ojos extranjeros. La constante sintonía con las bolsas de Nueva York, París y Londres, donde se cotizaban los precios del grano y del dulce, la hizo vulnerable a los dictados nerviosos de los capitales ajenos.

Sin embargo, las balanzas mercantiles del siglo 19, sugieren a primera vista una economía próspera que vendía más de lo que compraba. Pero si la agricultura y el comercio, las exportaciones y las importaciones, estaban en o pasaban por manos extranjeras, entonces el superávit mercantil de la Isla terminó beneficiando las economías de otros. Y, en el plano social, el éxito del inmigrante —que se sentía más un “invitado” que un aventurero en tierra inhóspita— significó la subordinación social y económica del criollo.

CARTAS CONSULARES NORTEAMERICANAS

[1] From Alexander Jourdan, Consul at St. John's to William H. Seward, Secretary of State, March 7, 1869²

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy and translation of an order issued this day by the Captain General of Porto Rico relative to a new export duty on sugar, molasses, coffee and tobacco; the said order to take effect immediately.

Sugar will pay three dollars per hogshead; molasses, sixty-five cents per cask; coffee, fifty cents per quintal; and tobacco, twenty cents per idem.

Duties are payable in Spanish money or in United States silver coin at a discount of five per cent.

The attention of Congress having been called lately to the subject of tonnage dues and differential duties upon vessels of the United States in ports of the Spanish West Indies, I consider it my duty to give you notice of the above disposition without delay, because it affects deeply our trade with Porto Rico and it is of a great interest for our merchants to be promptly informed of that alteration in the tariff of this Island.

Last year, out of 1,478,593 quintals of sugar exported from Porto Rico, 1,203,038 were shipped to the United States; therefore, that export duty will fall particularly upon our commerce.

As soon as I heard of the intention of reestablishing an export duty, knowing well how much poor trade was concerned in the matter, I went to see the Captain General who explained me frankly his motives and the imperious necessity to remedy immediately the penury of the Treasury which obliges him to exact that new duty, even before having received the approval of the Supreme Government of Spain.

The employed officers have been without salary, whatever, since three months; the pensions of retired officers, widows and orphans, are suffering the same arrear and, to cover the sums due and the deficit increasing daily, there is no prospect of collecting funds from the custom houses or the income tax, which are already exhausted. The troops only have been paid punctually as far as now [tachado] but the actual receipts of the Treasury will soon be insufficient for that purpose, because the expense is gradually increasing owing to the new arrivals of soldiers from Spain to fill up the vacancies in the Army of this Island.

The only remedy offered to him at present, was a forced loan or an export duty on the principal products and he thought that the latter would be more acceptable to the country, and I understood that to cover the deficiency [sic] after the crop, the import duties on the articles of general consumption, suspended by the Royal Decree of January 5th 1868, will be reestablished; and very likely, in a few days a new order will be issued reducing to three or four months the eight months notice to be given before an alteration can be made in that Royal disposition. On this subject I beg respectfully reference to my dispatch No. 90. (September 21, 1868).

The Captain General told me also that he has proposed to the Superior Government a new system of taxes and duties for this Island, by which the annual revenue will be much increased and that will give him the means to reduce the heavy taxes imposed last year upon agriculture.

² Record 24 Mar.

But if an export duty is charged on every product exported from the Island, then in fact the agriculture will have to pay the same charge or maybe a heavier one, because buyers and shippers will take good care to take off from their offers for the products what they will have to pay on account of the export duty.

I availed myself of my interview with the Captain General to call his attention to the flour imported from the United States. That article was paying formerly three and a half dollars per barrel and the duty was equivalent to a prohibition. Last year it was declared free from duties and a considerable quantity has been imported; therefore, I begged to point out the convenience of a moderate duty which will be beneficial to the Country, as it will allow the American flour to continue to come to this market. The Governor has offered to me that the new duty on flour from the United States will not exceed one dollar per barrel and to insist upon it with the Supreme Government at Madrid, in spite of the Santander people, who will certainly do all in their power to have the former duty of three dollars and a half charged again upon the American flour in the ports of this Island.

This question is of a great importance for our commerce and navigation with Porto Rico and I hope the United States Government will take it into consideration.

A new tariff of import and export duties will be made out and as soon as I can obtain some reliable information on the subject, I will communicate the same to the Department.

In regard to the abolition of recriminating duties upon certain importations into Porto Rico, the question is settled: they must be maintained, since the exemption from duties declared by the Royal Decree of January 5th, will soon be repealed and import duties restored upon cargoes with a differential duty as before. It is clearly explained now that the Spanish Government has never intended to include in the words "Navigation and port dues", the tonnage duty on vessels and the import duties upon the cargoes, since the equalization of port and navigation dues in the Spanish West Indies is offered to all nations under condition of reciprocity, while the differential duty upon cargoes is and will be maintained in the tariff of imports.

Accordingly, the question pending in the House of Representatives is limited to the discriminating tonnage dues on vessels of the United States in the Islands of Cuba and Porto Rico,

I am, Sir, with great respect,
Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] A. Jourdan
United States Consul

[2] **From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to Honorable Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, October 20th, 1869³**

Sir:

I have the honor of enclosing herewith two printed copies (and the translation) of a decree issued by the Regent of the Spanish Government with regard to free religious worship, and ordered by the Captain General of this Island to be observed.

In transmitting this Decree, it gives me much pleasure having no doubt that it will be a great benefit to this Island and holds out inducement for emigration. I feel confident the good effects of this Decree will soon be acknowledged and felt here, and I see in this a step towards the promise made by the present Government of liberal reforms, and gives this Island the same rights which the Spanish Provinces enjoy.

³ No. 13 Record 19 Nov.

The Deputies that were elected by the inhabitants of this Island to represent their interests at the Cortes are making every exertion to induce the present Government to carry out the liberal reforms offered in the September Revolution, and their principal view is to reduce the employees, so that the heavy taxes paid heretofore may be diminished.

The present prospect of the crops for the coming year was never more flattering. The present state of the Island, perfectly tranquil and healthy.

I am, Sir, very respectfully

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[3] From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's, December 15th, 1872⁴

Sir:

I have the honor to submit herewith the commercial statistics (exports and imports) of this Province corresponding to the year 1871. Also the Annual Report of this Consulate of imports and exports to and from the United States during the fiscal year ending September 30th, 1872, together with those of its dependencies.

Commercial Statistics

During the year 1871 there was imported through the Custom Houses of this Island merchandise to the value of \$15,169,318.81, this amount being \$2,034,856 more than in the year 1870. Of this importation, \$3,377,584 corresponds to Spanish Dominions under the Spanish flag. During the same time there was imported the value of \$5,440.563 in merchandise. From Foreign countries in foreign bottoms was imported merchandise to the amount of \$6,432,505.80 which goes to show that only one quarter of the merchandise consumed in Porto Rico comes from the Mother Country.

In explaining the origin of the merchandise imported during the year 1871, it results that there was imported from Spain and the adjacent islands and foreign countries as follows viz:

From the Island of Cuba – value of	\$2,948,039.00
From Germany	\$654,840.00
From St. Thomas (mostly dry goods)	\$723,563.00
From the Argentine Confederation (mostly dried beef)	\$2,944,523.00
From Canada and Newfoundland (Fish, Shingles)	\$264,457.00
From the United States (Provisions, Lumber and Shooks)	\$4,004,227.40
From France (perfumery, etc. etc.)	\$8,316.40

⁴ NE: Carta aparece sin número y no indica el destinatario.

From England (dry goods machinery etc. etc.)	\$2,981,507.80
From Italia (Macaroni, dried fruit)	\$98,912.00
From Santo Domingo (tobacco, timber)	\$4,304.00
From Venezuela (Dried salt fish)	\$4,309.60

By these statistics it will be observed that Spain occupies the third standard with regard to the value in imports to this Island.

The statistics of exportation that have passed through the Custom Houses of this Island for the year 1871 amounted to \$9,047,425.80, this amount being an increase over 1870 of \$942,806. The value of goods or produce exported in Spanish vessels and destined to the National Commerce was \$1,072,185.20 one eighth part of the produce of the Island to be consumed in the markets of Spain and Cuba. For the Peninsula and adjacent islands the exports was [*sic.*] \$438,369. (Sugar, Molasses, Coffee and Tobacco)

For Cuba in value (Coffee and Tobacco)	\$615,638.00
For Germany " " (Tobacco and coffee)	\$152,584.60
For Foreign West Indies (Cattle, Sugar)	\$428,775.40
For Canada and Newfoundland (Sugar and Molasses)	\$138,192.80
For the United States of America (Sugar and Molasses)	\$5,658,272.20
For France (Coffee)	\$44,149.80
For England (Sugar)	\$1,420,916.00
For Italy (Hides, Coffee)	\$114,364.80
For Santo Domingo (Dry goods)	\$2,119.00
For Venezuela	\$500.00

The importations exceeded the exportations nearly six millions and a half dollars. All the principal articles of exportation had an augmentation in 1871, compared with former years, with the exception of tobacco, which was some 569,241 pounds less than the year 1870. The augmentation in sugar was 14,957,041 lbs., in coffee some 3,405,537 lbs. and the most important fruits that was [*sic.*] exported from the different ports of the Island were as follows -

Puncheons of Rum	170
Pounds of Cotton	940,951
Pounds of Sugar	206,606,711
Pounds of Coffee	20,822,299
Dry Hides (lbs)	729,241

Live Cattle	7,479
Puncheons of Molasses	68,670
Pounds of Tobacco	5,381,081

The duties received on importations during the year 1871, amounted to \$1,850,139.80. Duties received on exportations, to \$569,883.80.

Navigation

Inward vessels 2,480 with cargo, of which were entered at the Custom 1,260 having 221,322 tons and 17,000 crew. Outward - 1,220 vessels with 216,235 tons and 14,350 crew. Vessels arrived in ballast 321. Vessels dispatched in ballast 210

In making my Annual Report, I regret having to state the impossibility of procuring all the information of a trustworthy character required by the Honorable Secretary of State with regard to imports from and exports to foreign countries, the continual changes made in the employees in the Custom Houses of the Province, cause much delay in their getting together the statistics of commerce. There is also a certain jealous feeling manifested when a person asks for information that precludes one from receiving anything to be relied upon.

The Recapitulations of Navigation and Commerce herewith transmitted are taken from the Archives of the Agencies dependencies of this Consulate.

Table A- From the agency at Guayama. Shows that during the fiscal year ending September 30th, 1872, 24 American vessels entered with 5,138 tons; value of imports \$180,312.71 from the United States. During the same space of time there cleared for the United States 34 American vessels with 7,341.35 tons; value exports \$623,604.93 and in the same time there entered from the United States 10 foreign vessels; value of their imports \$99,160.26 and cleared for the United States 32 foreign vessels with \$509,161.35 in value.

Table B Navigation and Commerce to and from the United States at Naguabo and Humacao. Entered 27 American vessels, 5,955 tons. Value of imports \$174,774.03. Exports to the United States in same vessels, value of \$400,649.94. At the same time there were dispatched 12 foreign vessels for the United States, value of cargo \$210,103.35.

Table C Navigation and Commerce Port of Arecibo - 28 vessels, tons 6,806.56. Amount of exports \$518,625.42. Imports \$46,962.91.

Table D Navigation and Commerce at Aguadilla entered 17 American vessels with value of imports \$30,219.75, tons 3,674.61. Exports \$189,999.37.

Foreign vessels - 14, tons - 2,552.08. Imports \$47,650 Exports to the United States \$224,025.02.

Table E Contains value of imports from the United States to Ponce during the fiscal years.

The commercial value of produce exported from the port of Ponce during the year ending 30th September 1872 was as follows:

Sugar	39,900,153 lbs at \$5 per 100	\$1,995,007.65
Molasses	1,473,940 galls at 28 cents per gal.	\$375,184.73
Coffee	3,277,898 lbs at \$14 per 100 lbs	\$458,905.72
Tobacco	1,078,644 lbs at \$8 per 100 lbs	\$86,291.52

Cotton	121,510 lbs at \$20 per 100 lbs	\$24,302.00
Hides	31,202 lbs at \$20 per 100 lbs	\$6,240.02
Rum	None exported	- - -

Printed Table F: gives comparative “note” of exports from the port of Ponce for the years 1872, 1871, and 1870.

Statement AA shows the imports at Mayagüez during the fiscal year, which will be seen, amounts [*sic.*] to \$3,009,400 and the duties on said imports to \$450,000.

Statement BB shows the exports from Mayagüez during the said year which amounted to \$3,544,485 manifesting the fact that the value of exports again this year exceeds that of imports.

Statement CC shows the Navigation at the port of Mayagüez, there having entered 105 American vessels, tonnage 19,285 and cleared 103, ditto, ditto, ditto 18,953

The steamers, as shown in this statement, are principally weekly coasting steamers running round the Island.

Table G gives a condensed statement of the exports of the products of this Island with there [*sic.*] destination.

I now come to this District. During the fiscal year there has [*sic.*] arrived 66 American vessels, showing the amount of tonnage to having been 16,564.98. Amounts of imports in American produce \$751,101.00 cents. Exports to the United States in American vessels \$663,429.15 cents. Exports to the United States in foreign vessels as shown by the Archives of this Consulate \$479,302.86 cents.

For the last month we have had a continuance of rainy weather without parallel on this coast, which has frustrated the calculation of planters in making a commencement of their crop operations. Few lots of sugar have been made, and these against obstacles of all kinds. Should there be no immediate change in this District, there will be no further lots of sugar ready for shipment in all the coming month of January. On the south side and west end of the Island, the rains have not been excessive, and at Ponce and Mayagüez the product will be soon in market for shipping. The condensed Statement of Exports in table G of the produce from this Island compared with previous years, shows a very considerable falling off in all staples for the two preceding years, except tobacco which on account of enhanced value has attracted the attention of the laboring class, which takes hands from other cultivation.

While most of the adjacent islands have suffered from hurricanes the past year, this Island has been particularly blessed, there having been no storms or any marine disasters occurred on the coast during the twelve months. The communications have increased with St. Thomas and thereby with the United States, and Europe is kept up with regularity. The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company has a line of steamers running round this Island touching at all the open ports twice per month and during the same time making one trip to Puerto Plata (Santo Domingo) and two to St. Thomas. We have also two regular lines of Spanish steamers touching here, running between Havana, Santiago de Cuba and St. Thomas and have also, not only telegraphic communication with all the principal ports and towns in the Island, but by submarine cable with most of the outside world.

Duties

There was a decree issued in October last by the Authorities here, according to which the six per cent reduction of duties on direct importations will here after be considered on those goods only that come direct from the country where they are produced, which will bare [*sic.*] particularly on East India rice and other imported articles that usually come from the United States and Europe and have hitherto been allowed the above mentioned reduction.

Exchange

Bills of exchange on London at 90 days have been sold from January to March inclusive [from] \$5.10 to 4.95 per according to circumstances and so up to October, when as there was no produce to be shipped bills were very scarce and were quoted sterling at, \$5.20 and 5.30.

Coin

American Silver coin continues to be the only currency used in the Mercantile business in this Island. At the present time it is scarce and worth from 1 to 2% premium. The greater part of this circulating coin being in the Public Treasury, causes a premium to be demanded for it. There is also great export demand for Haiti.

Population

There are no reliable statistics to be found with regard to the population, the census not having been taken for the last year.

Table H: shows the general recapitulation of the existing slaves in the Island, according to the census taken on the 31st December, 1871 classified by occupations, sex, condition and age. The emancipation of slaves is progressing, in many instances by the slaves purchasing their freedom, and on average, taking the whole Island, from thirty to thirty five slaves have been liberated every month during the last year. At the present time it is thought, should the reforms take place (that are proposed by the Radical Party) there will not be a slave in the Island at the expiration of 1873.

The frequent changes made in the Cabinet at Madrid, and there having been three Captain Generals in command here during the last year does not seem to influence in any way the established commerce, only causing a little excitement in the political elements of the Island.

Public Works

With the exception of the terrestrial telegraph communication to three or four of the interior towns, nothing has been done to improve the intercourse in the Island; the question [*sic.*] of railroads, canals, improvement of the roads and building bridges over rivers that are often swelled and impassible for weeks at a time, are things still in embryo.

The political state of affairs in the Island is very unsettled. The short period of time that the three last Captain Generals have been in command and the continual changes in the Cabinet at Madrid, has [*sic.*] caused a great deal of ill-feeling between the creoles and "peninsulares", which is every day manifested not only in the public newspapers, but also in the daily intercourse of the inhabitants, notwithstanding the division of the different political parties and the almost daily changes in the Mother Country. It is to be hoped that the pacific nature of the population will prevent any disturbance of the public peace, which I do not consider at the present time to be in danger. The last Spanish mail brings [tachado] information to the effect, that numerous reforms are to take place in this Island:

Municipal laws and a civil governor as well as a military one, the slaves are to be emancipated within four months from the time the Royal Decree arrives and is published here, the slave holders to be remunerated receiving eighty per cent on the valuation of their slaves. The valuation is to be determined by a committee [*sic.*] appointed by the Captain General of the Island; forty per cent of the amount to be paid by the Mother Country and forty per cent to be bore [*sic.*] by the Treasury of this Island. This report has caused a good deal of excitement, and most of the "peninsulares" are protesting and predicting that the proposed reforms will never take effect, but the Radical Party is very confident that not only all the slaves will be set free before the end of this present year, but also, that all the reforms recommended by the Deputies from the Island to the Court at Madrid will also be granted. By all reasonable and reflecting persons (including some of the most interested slave-holders) it is thought, the emancipation of the slaves even in the space of time proposed, that the agricultural interest of the Island would not suffer for any length of time, free labor is always to be had by paying from fifty to seventy

cents per day, there being five hundred and eighty five thousand six hundred and twenty two free persons in a population of six hundred and seventeen thousand three hundred and twenty seven in this Island that is only ninety miles long and thirty miles wide. It is calculated that there are not more than eighteen thousand slaves employed on the estates in the Island, the remainder some thirteen thousand being employed as house servants, washerwoman [*sic*] and in the cities and towns in the Island. It is also thought that most of the slaves, were they set free, will remain with their old Masters. The females will not be likely to go into the fields to work once made free.

The Official Gazette of this date gives the following statistics of the population of this Island:

Males 315,791. females 301,536, total = 617,327

Of this population there are only 15,608 males and 11,266 females who know how to read. 38,471 males and 24,957 females know how to read and write, remaining 261,712 males and 265,313 [females] that neither know to read or write. The civil state of the population is divided thus: males 229,354 and females 218,075 unmarried: married 71,543 males and 67,634 females; widowers 14,894, widows 15,827.

Summing up the social condition of the population it is thus divided:

Free -males	299,604
d ^o - females	286,017
Total	585,621
Slaves -	16,187 males
d ^o -	15,519 females
Total	31,706
Total population -	617,327

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul (St. John's, Porto Rico)

[4] **Consular Agency of the United States of America, Ponce, Porto Rico, January 25th, 1873, to Edward Conroy, Esquire, United State Consul, Porto Rico⁵**

Sir:

Your letter of 13th instant is in my possession.

I have the honor and pleasure to inform you that the first corner stone of the first Protestant Church in this Island was laid in this town yesterday afternoon by His Lordship W. W. Jackson, Bishop of Antigua.

The imposing, solemn and simple ceremony was done in an orderly quiet way and witnessed by some two hundred and fifty persons.

A clergyman is expected here on the 5th próximo, who will take charge of the congregation and reside permanently.

⁵ Adjunto (1) a carta del 1^{ero} de febrero 1873. Despacho No. 119

Meanwhile the church is being erected, a house will be hired where divine services can be celebrated.

I remain,

Yours very respectfully
[rúbrica] Peter J. Minvielle
United States Consular Agent

[5] From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to J. C. Bancroft Davis, Assistant Secretary of States, March 7th, 1873⁶

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith copy of a letter (sent via Havana) to Rear Admiral Joseph F. Green, United States Navy, commanding North Atlantic Station.

I would respectfully inform the Department that Admiral Green, when at this port in October last, particularly requested me to inform him, should there be any particular changes in the political affairs of this Island and not to hesitate in requiring a ship from his squadron wherever I deemed or judged it necessary. For the last few days there has been perfect quietness through the Island. There have been a large number of natives imprisoned on frivolous charges, and the planters are complaining very bitterly for the want of laborers as the natives are all afraid to come from their homes to work on the estates. The change of government in Spain seems to have taken all parties by surprise and thrown things into a confusion worse confounded. It seems to me that the first thing a modern Spanish politician does is to look out after himself, the last thing he thinks of is the good government of his country. We are without dates later than the 26th último (via St. Thomas) either from Europe or the United States, all kind of conjectures are at loaf with regard to what may have taken place in the Mother Country. I am sorry to say but very few are sanguine enough to expect that there may be a change of abolition being effected or that the Republic will stand.

Very respectfully,

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

Enclosure

[5a] United States Consulate at St. John's, Porto Rico, Rear Admiral Joseph F. Green, United States Navy, Commanding North Atlantic Station, Aboard Flag Ship "Worcester", Havana, March 1st, 1873⁷

Sir:

I would respectfully advise you that the present state of political affairs in this Island is any thing but satisfactory.

As my colleagues, English and French, have communicated with the admirals commanding their respective squadrons in these waters requesting the presence of a naval force at this port, I also would ask if you can spare a ship from your command, that she be ordered here as soon as convenient. I hope and trust there will be no need of the interposition of any armed force for the protection of our citizens or that of their interests here, but I am urged by them and by all my Consular Agents in the different ports of the Island to request the presence of a United

⁶ Despacho No. 125.

⁷ Adjunto del Despacho No. 125. Despacho No. 124

States Naval vessel. Her presence here will not only guarantee the interests of our own citizens in case of serious troubles but that also of others and give much satisfaction and more security than the flag of any other nation.

Trusting that it may not collide with your previous plans in the duty of the Squadron under your command, I shall anxiously await the arrival of one of our ships at this port.

I am Sir,

Very respectfully,
[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[6] From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to J. C. Bancroft Davis, Assistant Secretary of State, April 11th, 1873⁸

Sir:

Since my last dispatch, dated 31st último, although there has been a great deal of excitement here and want of confidence in the regular troops, still there has been no breach of the public peace. The regular soldiers have been replaced by the guardia civil and all the city Gates, Captain General's Palace and other important places are guarded by them.

The troops have been paid three months back pay, one of their complaints and cause of insubordination.

There has been no trouble on the estates where there were slaves. The emancipation act has been received very quietly and in most cases the slaves will remain with their former masters under contract. There is great anxiety manifested with regard to what may be taking place in the Mother Country. Our last dates the 28th último brought the news of a new Captain General having been appointed to this Island. The volunteers and Conservative Party are rampant, but keep quiet hoping the day comes again that they may have their own way in all that pertains to the government of the Island.

The United States Ship "Nipsic" sailed from this [port] on the 16th instant, her repairs having detained her until that date.

Captain Phythian's orders were such I could not, under the circumstances, detain his ship, although our citizens residing here requested me to do so.

Respectfully,

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[7] From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to J. C. Bancroft, Assistant Secretary of State, April 25th, 1873⁹

Sir:

I would respectfully refer you to my dispatch no. 129 in which I informed the Honorable Secretary of State that the law for the emancipation of the slaves in this Province had been received here and was immediately promulgated by order of His Excellency Sr. Don Juan Martínez Plowes, Captain General and Superior Governor Civil of this Island. I now have the satisfaction of advising the State Department that the present Captain General Sr. Don Rafael Primo de Rivera is taking active measures towards carrying said law into effect. Protectors and commissioners have been appointed throughout the Island to see the freedmen employed un-

⁸ Despacho No. 130

⁹ Despacho No. 134

der contract either with their old Masters or wherever they may be hired and that they be allowed all the rights that the law of emancipation grants them. In most instances the freedmen have contracted with their former Masters remaining on the estates where they were born and brought up. In no instance to my knowledge up to the present time, has there been any trouble or disturbance on any of the estates.

In this city and in most of the large towns where the owners of slaves have had them employed as house servants they have left them and are hired out in conformity to the act which obliges them to contract for three years under the protection of the government authorities.

His Excellency Sr. Don Rafael Primo de Rivera has adjusted the complaints and insubordination that existed among the regular troops stationed here and in other districts of the Island, five sergeants are under arrest and on trial for conspiracy and a number of privates for gross insubordination.

The "Guardia Civil" and volunteers have been relieved from guard duty and the regular troops have been recalled to the city and are again performing their usual routine of guard and other military duties. His Excellency the Captain General by stringent measures has brought about a state of confident security and quiet feeling among all parties that has not heretofore been enjoyed or felt for the past six months.

The elections for [*sic*] deputies to be sent to the Mother Country will take place on the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th of May through the whole province.

There is no doubt but all the deputies will be elected by the Federal Party here named "Radicals".

Very respectfully,

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
Consul

[8] **From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to the Honorable John Hay, Assistant Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., October 23rd, 1880**¹⁰

Annual Reports for the Fiscal year ending 30th September, 1880.

General Business - depression

The fiscal year just closed has not been as satisfactory for this Island as I was led to believe it would be.

The failure of several prominent firms of the Capital and some others throughout the island with liabilities amounting to above \$3,800,000 have consequently exercised a marked influence upon the country generally but chiefly to the interest of the most important business houses and proprietors of this city where a long and undisturbed financial crisis has prevailed with a heavy depression in almost every branch of public transactions. It is pleasant to me however to report that in the latter part of the year we have enjoyed [tachado] a revival of commerce and trade, though not enough to restore the reciprocal, and to active and prosperous commerce. Trade generally is not transacted upon a cash basis causing the above mentioned state of things the necessary stagnation of business so far as to embarrassing commerce.

It is, however, said that the principal cause of the general depression is the heavy taxation with which the country is overburdened by the municipalities and Custom Houses and Internal Revenue as well.

The last news received from the metropolis promise that every branch of public wealth will be hereafter attended liberally and it is to be hoped that the necessary equilibrium will be re-established to make amends for the loss sustained heretofore.

¹⁰ Despacho No. 315

Agriculture

This important branch of public resource is year after year sinking more and more to a ruinous end.

Many sugar-plantations in former years prosperous and productive to their owners hardly pay expenses of production today, owing to the powerful competition of other producing countries and the high rate of costumes dues with which said production is overtaxed even in the Mother land. I report for this year a yield of 117,313 quintals shorter for exportation [*sic.*] than for the latter year.

The tobacco culture in the other hand has proved of a very encouraging success. It has abundantly paid labors with an exuberant yield of a very good quality of leaf. I beg to call the attention of the Department that the largest number of the leaf, of the tobacco grown here has been exported to the island of Cuba and thence reexported to the United States in the capacity of real Havana leaf. Dealers in this branch of commerce are so skillful as to disguise its genuine origin to such an extent that the very expert eyes can hardly detect the mis-representation allured to [them] and exacted afterwards to pay for it a heavy price for genuine Havana leaf.

Coffee, rum and livestock have also sustained a heavy decrease in the general yield of the year.

Trade

The trade too has shared a great portion of the unfavorable situation of the island. Both the coastwise and foreign trade have had a marked dullness and lack of energy rather for want of confidence owing to the unsettlement of sound and responsible firms than for a fair demand of goods.

The ruling customs tariff is also a great obstacle for any improvement on the matter with its high rate of duties on the foreign and home productions which are, as it were, prohibitory and without a timely and wise revision of the same with an appropriate reduction, which reduction would in the other hand result in an increase of revenue to Spain as well as in a material and immediate improvement to the country. Should this be realized I do not doubt but to anticipate a prompt and noticeable change worth mentioning in days to come.

Trade with the United States has generally been diminished to a large extent due more or less in the first place, to the non-appearance here of good and energetic agents of the industrial communities of the United States and secondly, to the very unfavorable terms required for payment without allowances to traders.

British, German and French producers send here representatives who attract the attention of wholesale and retail dealers and have every chance to place their production at reasonable prices and at fascinating terms.

Merchants here sale [*sic.*] at 3, 6 and 9 months American ware for which they are bound to pay cash and it is not unwise to suppose that there lays the reason why most of wholesale dealers go to England, Germany or France in demand of their needed stocks.

Imports

As stated above no official statistical returns on the matter have been published yet either by the local officers or through private parties.

The enclosed table number 1 is compiled with as much care as possible from local papers and extracts taken from the record kept by the Custom House and Port Authority, but may at the same time be relied upon as correct.

The records mentioned show that the total amount collected by the Custom House from 1878 to 1879 was \$2,728,071.13 against \$2,620,405.55 collected from 1879 to 1880 giving a decrease as heavy as \$107,765.58 against 1880.

In my last report I alluded to a deduction of 50% on the export duties in the budget for the fiscal year 1879 to 1880 and expressed my opinion remarking that said deduction heavy as it appeared at first would bring but little good, if any, to the community at large. It is with regret that I

have seen my apprehensions realized. The inhabitants of the island have enjoyed but an apparent and transitory benefit for the measure has not bettered the financial depressed situation.

The 50 per cent reduced on exports duties amounted to \$227,000, a comparatively trifling sum, while by the new Royal Decree, which was enforced on the 23rd September last, (1879) the direct commerce still pay the 6 per cent heretofore reduce, [*sic*] a measure that will bring to the Treasury at least \$600,000 and a new burden to the consumers and people, generally.

The Custom House of Saint John's, [*sic*.] Porto Rico collected \$808,338.96 on imports from every foreign country out of which \$172,299.15 were on imports from the United States.

I have not succeeded in obtaining a descriptive record of the imports during this year and therefore am unable to enter into any comparison between other countries and the United States' Commerce at large.

Yet, I estimate that the United States ranks the fourth place, England the first, Spain the second and France the third and so on for the other countries according their industrial and agricultural resources but the United States no doubt can still claim the first place among the other producing markets in their imports to this island in machinery, provisions, clocks, furniture, hardware, printing materials, types, railroads and masonry implements and machinery, and [coin] and carpenters and art tools; kerosene oil [petroleum] plug tobacco and agricultural concerns. See statement Number 2.

Exports

Under this heading I learn [*sic*.] that the total exports of the principal articles of the production of this island during the fiscal year 1879 to 1880 as compared with export of 1878 to 1879 were as follow:

Sugar	146,747,200	pounds
Molasses	4,550,579	gallons
Coffee	26,804,200	pounds
Tobacco	4,123,800	do
Hides, raw	408,400	do
Livestock	7,179	heads

The total export during the fiscal year 1878 to 1879 were as follow:

Sugar	158,478,500	pounds
Molasses	5,322,496	gallons
Coffee	28,687,300	pounds
Tobacco	4,634,500	do
Hides – raw	42,500	do
Livestock	9,161	heads

Comparing the figures of both periods there is a decrease in exportations against 1880 of:

11,731,900	pounds sugar
77,191,700	gallons molasses
1,883,000	pounds coffee
500,700	do tobacco
16,600	do hides, raw
1,982	heads, livestock

Comparing now the exportations of sugar realized in 1880 with that of 1871 which reached to 206,606,700 pounds, there appears a decline in the exports of this sweet as heavy as 59,859,500 pounds.

If to the general figures of the decrease sustained in the value of sugar as well as in the quantity exported this year are summed up those exported for the five preceding years (from 1874 to 1878) being for the former of 3,694,397 decrease and 89,337,900 pounds sugar, we learn that the general decline in the value of sugar exported is as high as \$4,049,547 and 95,142,000 pounds.

Statement number 3 shows the amount of declared "exports" from Saint John's, [sic] Porto Rico to the United States as follows:

\$497,926.39	For sugar
38,719.09	For molasses
41,210.75	" coffee
2,956.39	" hides
87.77	" oranges [tachado]
<hr/>	
\$580,900.39	

Customs

There were collected at the Custom House of Saint John's Porto Rico \$172,299.15 from a value of importations amounting to \$808,338.96 from the United States as shown in tabular statement number [].

Navigation

As regards navigation there arrived at this port 1,451 vessels with cargoes representing 520,549 tons and there sailed 1,302 vessels with 378,113 tons cargoes.

There arrived 394 vessels with 80,090 tons in ballast and cleared 218 with 39,783 tons also in ballast.

Freights

I regret to say that the greater part of the imports to and exports from the island have been brought to and gone from in foreign bottoms as of eighty invoices during the fiscal year only one has gone to in one American schooner.

The total of imports through the Custom House of Saint John's, [sic.] Puerto Rico, during the four quarters of the year representing an amount of \$808,338.96 have been brought

in foreign bottoms as of 60 vessels from the United States only 6 American schooners have brought some parcels unworth [*sic.*] mentioning.

The exports during this year above alluded to any through the Custom House of Saint John's, Porto Rico, represent a capital of \$1,080, 893.42.

I beg to call once more the attention of the Department to the fact that American shipping has proved to be run over by foreign ships or steamers. This discouraging activity may be easily checked with wise and prompt measures on the part of American speculators.

[9] From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to the Honorable J. C. Bancroft Davis, Assistant Secretary of State, Washington, D. C., April 3rd, 1882¹¹

Sir:

Herewith I have the honor of transmitting some reliable information regarding the present state of the sugar crop in this Island compared with former years, which I trust may be found of interest and satisfactory, also a report (of) the Exportation of sugars from this port during the month of March last past.

I am very respectfully

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

Enclosure

[9a] The sugar crop in the island of Porto Rico. Report from the United States Consulate at St. John's Porto Rico for the month of March 1882¹²

I have the honor to give herein some information regarding the present state of the sugar crop in this island compared with former years.

The news from all the sugar districts are very satisfactory with regard to the yield of this year's crop, as a large increase in the production is expected.

The exportation of sugar from the various ports of this island during the year 1881 amounted very nearly to 90,000 hogsheads, which calculated at 1,400 pounds net each are the equivalent of 56,000 english tons. This result is about equal to the production in the year 1877 and shows an increase of 1,200 hogsheads or 7500 tons on the total exported in 1880 which was the poorest for the last 25 years.

The total yield of the present crop it is expected will exceed that of last year about 40,000 hogsheads. Such increase in the production of the canes will serve to improve, to a certain extent the present position of these sugar planters, as it will somewhat compensate for the low prices ruling now for said [produce]. It can not, however, be said that this [remarkable] difference in favor of the production this year is caused by any material improvement in the cultivation or augmentation of the plantation or even on account of a better system for the elaboration of sugar, as nothing whatever has been done to better the normal condition of the country in the agricultural line, such a large difference is simply owing to the good conditions of the soil favored by fair weather during the last twelve months. It is true that under the calamitous circumstances during the last ten years, the agricultural interest in this island has suffered considerably, many sugar estates were abandoned and the crop formerly of more than 100,000 tons is now reduced to only 50,000 tons, but it seems likely that this island with its natural resources, the fertility of its soil and a good management, if planters are induced by better prices to give

¹¹ Despacho No. 344

¹² Anejo 1, Despacho No. 344.

more attention to the planting and cultivation of canes, may yet be yearly augmenting its production of sugar of which produce a considerable part is shipped to the United States.

The exportation of sugar from this port during this month (March) has been as follows:

To	the United States	584	hogsheads and	2,352	bags
“	England	328	“		
“	the British channel f. o	230	“		
“	British North America provinces	254	“		
“	Spain	1,375	bags		
“	the island of Cuba	462	“		
“	Saint Thomas	38	“ and	208	“
	Total exported	1,434	hogsheads and	4,397	bags

Of above exportations, those for the United States have been all by English vessels. Those for England and British Channel f.o.

“ by Spanish steamers	228	hogsheads
“ by Danish sailing vessels	320	“

for British North America provinces by English sailing vessels — Those for Spain, Cuba and Saint Thomas by Spanish vessels—

I have been unable to get in time the note of exports from the other ports of the island, but I beg to say that sugar making is rapidly progressing in all districts and pretty considerable shipments of produce are being made. The weather is fine all over the island.

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[10] Report for the month of July 1884. Commercial Report to the Honorable Secretary of State from the United States Consul at St. John's, Porto Rico for the fiscal year ending 30th June 1884.¹³

Herewith I have the honor to submit my commercial report for the district of this consulate containing an exhibit relating to the information required by paragraph number 555 (Consular Regulations). As far as it has been practicable to obtain said statistics and information, they can be relied on. Still I regret I am not able to transmit a more general account of the Navigation and commerce but in spite of any exertions, I have found it impossible caused by the reluctance of the Custom House authorities to communicate any intelligence on these subjects.

¹³ Adjunto del Despacho No. 418, Record 23, August 30, 1884.

Exports

Sugar-9,163,803 kilos value \$595,647.19; molasses value \$34,672.15; hides, coffee, rum and tobacco are mostly exported to Europe.

Imports

Flour 2,336,053 kilos valued at \$298,080.36¢; lard 336,583 kilos value \$74,048.70¢; pork and bacon value \$72,470.14. These are the staple imports. The whole amount of imports is shown by form number 130 amount to \$578,250.41 all products of the United States.

Duties

The Treasury returns of the amount of duties paid into the Custom House at this capital during the fiscal year show that on importation there have been received \$831.679 and on export \$49,455.88 and that the entire amount of duties received at the ports of the island has been for importations (total) \$2,252,081 and for exportations (total) \$289,779.67.

Money Matters

Mexican dollars, half dollars and quarters are the only coin in circulation excepting as is computed some thirty five thousand dollars in United States silver coin consisting of half dollars, quarters, ten cents and five cents pieces. The native shopkeepers have by disfiguring and punching holes in said coins caused it to become provincial. It is very convenient in the way of change as it passes for its face value and cannot be exported without loss. There is no gold coin in circulation. Mexican dollars are by Royal Decree current in the way of trade for twenty "reals vellons," but are at from 15 to 17 per cent discount when tendered for Bills of Exchange on the United States.

Exchange

The Banking Bill business is almost exclusively done with London and Paris. Bills of Exchange have been for the last four months very high and continue to be so. Bills are generally drawn 90 days sight and are now only obtainable at from \$565 to 570 [?] £ sterling, on the United States, 30 and 60 days sight bills command 15 to 17½ per cent premium. The exchange on Europe has been held as high. It has been found to the interest of those that have to make remittances to ship Mexican dollars, so within the last two months over \$500,000 have been exported from this capital alone, should this state of financial affairs continue, it is hard to surmise what coin will be put in circulation for our every day want.

Navigation

I am pleased to report that the commercial agreement for the improvement of the mercantile relations between the United States and the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico that took effect on the 1st March last past, has already caused very great benefit to American tonnage, whereas during the four past months there have arrived direct from ports in the United States (not only at the Capital but at nearly all the other ports in the island), more American vessels with full cargoes, products of the United States than there had arrived during the entire twelve months previous to the said commercial agreement. It is predicted that the Atlas line of Spanish steamers will soon be withdrawn as shippers prefer shipping by American sailing vessels, the duties on their goods being the same as if imported under the Spanish national flag. We have no direct steam communication home ward with the United States, the Atlas line of steamers after making their calls at the different ports in this island return via ports in Jamaica. There are two lines of steamers between Liverpool and this under the Spanish flag, their cargoes consist principally of rice, crockery in crates, machinery, dry goods and beer. It is incredible the quantity of rice that is imported and consumed in the province. The cultivation of said plant has been abandoned in the island on account of the very low price of the imported article. There are also quite a number of Spanish steamers from Barcelona and ports in the Mediterranean, their cargoes consist principally of Spanish low priced red wines, dry goods and shoes of Catalan manufac-

tory, Spanish writing paper, garlic, potatoes and onions. Most of these steamers return to Spain with cargoes of cotton, grain or petroleum via the United States. We are dependent almost entirely on the Spanish Lopez line of maid steamers that call here on the 4th, 14th and 24th of each month for the transmission of our correspondence to the United States via Havana. These are all splendid ships from 4,000 to 5,000 tons, receive a large subsidy from the government at Madrid and also receive from this province and the island of Cuba a monthly subsidy for conveying the mails.

Trade and Industry

Last year's sugar crop was very good and prices throughout the season from October 1882 to August 1883 were so very encouraging, not only the planters improved their engines and machinery and planting more cane, but also encouraged all the small land owners and laborers that could here land near their estates to cultivate cane (to be ground, as customary here, on halves) so the present crop of sweets has been the largest, not only in this district, but throughout the island that has been known for a number of years. I regret to state that notwithstanding the large amount yielded, the unprecedented low price of sugar and molasses has caused great losses and discouraged the planters, that many estates will be abandoned. Sugars, the market price of which was \$4.50 to \$4.75 last crop, have been sold at from \$2.40 to \$2.62½. Molasses will not pay for transportation and is being made into rum. It is feared that there will be very distressing hard times on the entire province, a commercial crisis and panic seems to be hanging over the island. For the two last weeks not a hogshead of sugar has changed hands. Planters are without means to pay laborers, to get in the remainder of this year crop. Money is very scarce and altogether I fear that this beautiful island will even be reduced to great misery and distress.

Population

There has been no official census published since 1879 in the month of June at that date the number of inhabitants in the province reached 738,442. 415,523 whites and 329,919 colored, classified as follows:

White, males	212,545
White, females	202,979
Colored, males	160,963
Colored, females	161,956

Married whites, males 53,311. Whites females 52,256. Total white married 105,567. Colored males 35,977. Colored females 35,607. Foreigners residing in the island are classified as follows:

White males	2,256
White females	1,419
Colored males	2,396
Colored females	2,225

The colored residents are mostly nations of the British West India Islands and Danish possessions, the males find employment on sugar plantations mostly and the females as servants in private families.

Public Instruction

By referring to statements on this subject the number of schools supported by the municipalities of the province are 398 for males and 115 for females for which the yearly expenditure is reported to be \$267,000. There are also 18 schools for males and 21 for females supported by fathers of families, where 1, 227 and females are educated at a cost of about \$71,000.

Central Sugar Factories

There are but two in this district. One of which is provided with the very best of machinery ever turned out of the West Point Foundry, New York. The probability is that they will be followed by others, as the very low prices of "muscovado" sugar has opened the eyes of the planters and in many instances they are persuaded that they will be obliged to introduce improvement or abandon the culture of their cane estates.

Rail Road

The only one in this island run by locomotives is in this district, the property of a private gentleman of this capital and without any government subvention. It begins at this capital and runs to "Río Piedras" a small summer resort, eight miles distant, it is well patronized and is paying so well it is to be extended some twelve miles to the town of Carolina. The owner has had great difficulties put in his way by the government engineers and only by visiting Madrid was he enabled to obtain permission to build two iron bridges and to carry out thus far his railroad undertaking the locomotives are of American manufacture, rails, cars, etcetera, etcetera.

United States Consulate at St. John's, Porto Rico August 4th, 1884

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy

United States Consul

[11] **From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to the Honorably John Davis, Assistant Secretary of State, Washington, D. C., October 7th, 1884**¹⁴

Sir:

I have the honor in conformity with instructions just received from the Department of submitting the following brief remarks in regard to the particular character of my duties as consul at this post and that of the Consular Agencies subordinate to it. I would most respectfully state that this city being the capital of the province of Porto Rico, where not only His Excellency the Governor General has the government palace to reside in but also where all the other government buildings are located, here live all the officials of high grade, naval, military, civil and ecclesiastical ("and their name is legion"). Consequently as one of the traits of the Spanish character there is a great deal of "punctilio" in all that relates to official etiquette. Here the Court reigns and His Excellency the Governor General is looked up to and receives from his subordinates and countrymen, the homage due to a prince. The duties of this Consulate are diverse and very frequently intricate and perplexing, what with national holidays, church "fiestas", to which I, as Dean of the Consular Corps am always invited and expected to attend, official etiquette, etcetera, etcetera. And the "Arancel" or tariff of Custom duties, containing over three hundred clauses which in many instances clash with each other and are construed to suit hungry officials interests (all fines are shared among them), and as in many instances, not only shippers of produce are apt to be careless in making out their manifests, but also captains

¹⁴ Despacho No. 423

of American vessels, either through ignorance or carelessness are continually making mistakes and getting fines imposed on their vessels that the owners and all parties interested expect the consul to have abrogated no matter how culpable they may have been. It is very evident there is [*sic*] at this office other duties beside certifying invoices and the usual routine of consular work. I have the satisfaction of stating that in most instance I have been successful in having fines remitted. My duties in this particularly perplexing part of the service is not confined to this post and the Consular Agencies, dependencies thereof, but also when there is any trouble with the Customs at the United States Commercial Agencies at Mayagüez or Ponce, I am called on to settle same.

Since the "Commercial Agreement" for the improvement of the mercantile relations between the United States and the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico went into effect [tachado] there has more American tonnage arrived not only at this port, direct from the United States with full cargoes of American produce, but also to all the other principal ports in the island, than during the previous eighteen months. The "Atlas" line of steamers, under the Spanish flag, formally left New York every fourteen days with cargoes of American provisions and produce for this island, have been obliged to curtail their voyages to one trip per month, the American sailing vessels have supplanted them.

The total amount of American products and provisions imported into this port in 1883 amounted to \$1,280.00 that of flour and cornmeal alone

Was	\$304,000.00
Pork and lard	\$112,000.00
Cooperage and lumber	\$82,000.00
Petroleum, etcetera, etcetera	\$38,000.00

The amount of exports to the United States from this district consisting of sugar and molasses, was in 1883 \$1,132,918.00.

This island is entirely dependent on the United States for provisions with the exception of rice from India via Liverpool by steamers under the Spanish flag; potatoes and onions from France, Germany and the Canary Islands. There is no other food worth mentioning from any other country imported.

The only manufactories or steam engines in this island are in use for grinding cane on sugar plantations and the only products beside sugar and molasses are coffee and tobacco, mostly exported to Spain.

In this island every thing is expensive, food and clothing very naturally, as we are dependent entirely on importations from foreign countries for what we eat and wear with a high tariff and municipal taxes. At this capital particularly, every thing, including office and house rents are extravagantly high and I could here most respectfully take this opportunity of stating that since the Consular Agencies at Ponce and Mayagüez were taken from the jurisdiction of this Consulate and made Commercial Agencies, my salary of \$2,000 per annum has not been sufficient to enable me to live and support the dignity of office. As representative of the United States I have had to expend my private means so as to be able to live in accord with that of my colleagues and the classes with whom [tachado] I am called on to associate with and over whom [tachado] I am expected to exercise influence. Her British Majesties' Consul at this capital receives a salary of £800 per annum and £200 for miscellaneous expenses, equal to \$5,000. The representative of the French Republic \$4,000 per annum and his Chancellor or clerk \$2,000 per annum. I cannot exact any share of the official fees received at the Consular Agencies, dependencies of this Consulate for the very good reason, most of them barely receive fees suf-

ficient to pay their office rent and for bunting. With regard to said agencies, they are all, with the exception of Fajardo, filled by persons holding their office for the past fifteen years having given satisfaction to the State and Treasury Departments.

I would most respectfully state that \$2,000 per annum, being inadequate for the support of the United States representative at this capital. No person without private means can keep up the proper dignity of the office or even live and conduct his official business in a manner to command respect and influences.

I am in no way extravagant, having lived three score and ten summer being a cripple from wounds received in the Naval service of my country during the little disagreeableness with our southern brothers. Still I have never been able to support myself on my salary and have only in one instance asked for and received leave of absence during the fifteen years that I have been an incumbent in this office, my finances not permitting me to do so without embarrassing myself. I have now been here so many years and having obtained the respect and influence that a representative of his country should enjoy, having been always treated and received with distinguished courtesy and consideration by all the different governors and government officials in this, I must confess I do not aspire to any other office and in good health the climate suits my invalidated state and I have reason to believe my record to be good at the State and Treasury Departments. I am quite contented, but with due respect urge the Departments' influence to have the salary augmented so that the incumbent of the office may be enabled to support himself there on with proper dignity. Begging pardon for these unsolicited remarks.

I am, very respectfully

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[12] **From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to Honorable James D. Porter, Assistant Secretary of State, May 10th, 1886**¹⁵

Sir:

I have respectfully to report that neither in the district of this Consulate or in that of the Consular Agencies, dependencies of same, is there sufficient fruit grown, or exported to become of commercial importance. Coconuts are at times in small quantities shipped in Spanish sailing vessels for the Mediterranean, but more, I am informed, to fill up or as dunnage than the object of profit. The district of Mayagüez, has a large and increasing fruit trade with the United States. There are a number of fast sailing American schooners in the trade — oranges and pineapples are the varieties principally shipped. The pineapples are very large, but more adapted for preserves than for eating in their crude state. The oranges are very large and sweet, are said to keep well on the voyage and are preferred to those received from "Baracoa", Cuba, by fruit dealers. The United States is the only country to which fruit is exported. The extreme low price of sugar the past three years has in many cases ruined the cane planters and I am informed that many cane "estates" in the district of Mayagüez will be dedicated to the production of fruit; oranges and bananas are in season the whole year and pineapples are only very abundant in the month of October, November and December. During those months, there are a number of American Schooners [that] come to the port of Mayagüez from New York and Boston, in ballast (for) to load with fruit, (for) to supply those markets during the Christmas holidays. The great want of good roads in this district and all the Eastern and South-Eastern districts of this island, is the prime cause of so little attention given to the culture of tropical fruits. Rice, sweet potatoes and very many other vegetables that would produce abundantly, if once planted; are neglected. The farmers only cultivate enough for their own consumption, as they in almost

¹⁵ Despacho No. 480

every case will tell when asked, raise more fruit or produce, that it costs them more to transport their products than they realize for them when they get them to a market. Still this capital is abundantly supplied with oranges, bananas and other tropical fruits the entire year round.

I am very respectfully

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[13] **From Edward Conroy, United States Consul to Hon. James D. Porter, Assistant Secretary of State, July 14th, 1886**¹⁶

[13a] **Consular Report for the Island of Porto Rico for the fiscal year ending in June 1886**¹⁷

I have herewith the honor to transmit my annual report regarding Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Navigation for the past fiscal year and accompany the corresponding statistics.

Commerce and Trade

Since my last report I regret to say that the depressed tone then existing has continued in business in general; owing to the poor crops of sugar, the principal and staple product on which the welfare of the Island almost entirely depends; the low and even ruinous prices that have ruled for this article abroad combined with the prostrated state of finances and the continued enormous heavy Government taxations, commerce, and trade have reached a climax, that only by miraculous events it might be able to bring them to their former normal state of healthiness. The crisis that has reigned throughout the world in consequence of the excess of production to that of consumption has had its influence in this Island and business has been reduced to extreme limits in consequence of the above facts, and owing also to the restrictions of credits.

Commerce with the United States has continued to maintain the same feature as in the last year, and has not decreased in comparison with that with Europe. The staple articles which are introduced from the United States are provisions, hardware, and agricultural implements. Sugar has been the reigning production exported to the United States.

Agriculture

In consonance with what I predicted in my last report, the crops in general have not fallen out as what would be desired, especially sugar that has turned out 30% less on an average, throughout the Island, owing to the lack of means and heavy contributions which have obliged many planters to abandon a great part of their lands. The price for sugar has been so low that scarcely those that can still hold out, will be able to continue to cultivate without some reaction taking place. The prospects of this years crops are far from fetching lucrative illusions, and it is only dependant on part of the planters, who still maintain hopes for a ray of remunerative compensations for their labor, that agriculture has not reached a worse state.

Navigation

I am pleased to state that navigation with the United States has continued as when I last reported and as will be seen by the statistical tables, importations from the United States have been chiefly made under the American and Spanish flag, the former enjoying the same privileges regarding import duties as the latter.

¹⁶ Despacho No. 489

¹⁷ Adjunto No. 1, Despacho 489.

Since January 1886 a new line has commenced running a steamer under American flag from New York, that brings out general cargo and returns with produce, and which has greatly influenced the reduction of freights that the former and only line had monopolized.

Exchange and Money Matters

The only current coin that exists in the Island has continued to be the Mexican silver, and since the issue of a Government Decree of 18 November 1885, by which such coins cannot be brought into the island unless they are stamped by the customs, importations of this money have entirely ceased. Bills of exchange have maintained throughout the year a firm and even exaggerative [*sic.*] rate in consequence of the low prices for Mexican silver both in Europe as in the United States that have prevented remittances in spices and 23 to 24% premium for bills in the United States and \$6 for stly [?] have been paid. The commerce in unison with the Government of the island are treating with the Home Government to exchange the existing Mexican Silver for Spanish coin with the idea to better the present critical state of the island, but opinions are greatly divided regarding the turn out and it must therefore be left to the future to be able to give a decisive view on this subject.

General Remarks on the Island

The health of the island has been excellent throughout the year and with exception of slight acclimatization fevers among the troop, that are brought from Spain [no] disease of any malignant character has prevailed. The weather has been very moderate and very favorable for the plantations.

The usual line of coasting steamers continues, and also the two railroads which I spoke of in former reports, it is said that there is in project a railroad circumferate [*sic*] the island, but nothing since is known.

United States Consulate
St. John's, Porto Rico
31th June 1886
Edward Conroy
U. S. Consul

[14] Annual Commercial Report for the fiscal year ending 30th June, 1888¹⁸

No essential change has been experienced in trade during the past year, the imports and exports having been about the same as in the preceding, which the annexed statistics will show.

Navigation has continued to be active with the United States, where the principal markets are for furnishing the Island with provisions and other staple articles, and being also the largest for the consumption of its chief productions, sugar and molasses.

The crop of sugar this year will fall about still more than last, and it is probable that grinding operations throughout the Island will be over in about August/September.

The Government abolished the export duties on sugar, molasses and rum on the 1st August, 1887, which made prices advance in proportion in the Island, although they can be considered about the same as last years', as those of abroad were maintained likely.

As anticipated, this year's yield of coffee was considerable and prices ruled very favorable, from \$16 to \$22 according to class and demand. Next year's crop is expected to be large also, and if prices continue as this year, it will greatly add to the prosperity of the Island.

¹⁸ Adjunto No. 1, Despacho 561.

Financially, the Island continued in the same embarrassed position, as no alteration has taken place in the present money currency, which is the Mexican silver dollar. The proposed project of exchanging it for Spanish colonial coin is still pending.

Exchanges have ruled about the same as last year. Bills on the United States were at 20 to 28% premium and on London, \$5.70 to \$6, according to demand and requirements.

There is to be a Bank established with the privilege to issue paper currency and which has been sanctioned by the Government.

The concession for the laying of a railroad around the Island has been granted to a party in Barcelona (Spain) who, with French capital, has started a company composed of shareholders. They have already sent out several engineers (French) to commence the preliminary works, and it may be expected to be completed within a few years, should no obstructions occur. The establishment of the railroad will no doubt prove of much benefit to the Island, as it will greatly alleviate the traffic of its productions and facilitate travelling, which is mostly done nowadays by land, where the roads are almost over the whole Island in a very bad condition and besides very expensive and burdensome.

The health throughout the year has been good over the whole Island.

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
 Consul
 Capital, St. John's, Porto Rico
 June 30th, 1888.

[15] From Raleigh F. Haydon, Acting Consul at St. John's to William F. Wharton, Assistant Secretary of State, September 9th, 1892¹⁹

Sir:

I have to inform you that on account of the new internal taxes recently imposed by the Spanish Government upon this Province, there exists today throughout the Island, and especially in this city, a state of great excitement.

All of the business houses, stores, restaurants, hotels and shops of every description are closed.

Many appeals have been made to the Government for a repeal of the new law, the people, in a body, declaring that they cannot live under them, but the appeals have been in vain, hence this closing, which is intended to force a reconsideration of the appeals.

Business of every kind is at a complete stand-still, and the working people not only have no work, but there is nowhere for them to purchase food if they had money.

All day today a large mob has been going through the streets yelling and hooting, and they were only seemingly dispersed this afternoon by the police's firing upon them, one man receiving a slight wound.

This is only the beginning, and it is feared that the trouble may result in something serious.

The Governor has threatened martial law if the disturbance is continued, but at this hour (11 P.M.), although the city is more quiet, the trouble, in my opinion (and I am not alone in the opinion), is by no means ended, and I would be surprised at all to see a serious outbreak or later.

This is the first time that Porto Rico has ever rebelled openly against the action of the Home Government, and it is a peculiar fact that this movement is lead entirely by native-born Spaniards who are adherents of the Conservative Party (political), and not by the natives of this Island, the Liberals.

¹⁹ Despacho No. 120

The movement is the more interesting to us (Americans) since the people claim that the augmentation of the taxes was made to endeavor to counteract the effect (the loss of revenue) of the Reciprocity Treaty. On account of this opinion of the people—whether well based or not—American interests *might* suffer in the event of a serious outbreak; and I, therefore, respectfully suggest that an eye be kept to ward this quarter. I shall endeavor to keep you posted; if necessary, by cable.

I write this hurriedly, the mail steamer having arrived ahead of time, and I having hoped to be able to give more definite particulars, since the people seem to expect something more decided from the Governor early tomorrow.

I send by this same mail a file of the impartial paper of the city since Sunday, when the trouble was first inaugurated. If you think it worth the trouble to have them translated, which I have not time to do, they will give you particulars which may be relied upon.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Raleigh F. Haydon
Acting Consul

[16] **From Raleigh F. Haydon, Acting Consul at St. John's to William H. Wharton, Assistant Secretary of State, September 21st, 1892²⁰**

Sir:

Referring to my number 120 of the 9th instant, I have to inform you that the threatened revolution reported therein has been averted by Government's acceding to the demands of the *vox populi* and suspending the new taxes, promising to collect until January 1st next under the old schedule, increased 10%. Everything is now quiet and business, so far as it was affected by this movement, is progressing as usual, but there is reason to believe that on January 1st the new schedule will be enforced, in which case there will be, probably, a repetition of the action of the people in protesting against it.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Raleigh F. Haydon
Acting Consul

[17] **Aug. Ganslandt, Esquire, United States Consular Agent, Aguadilla, Porto Rico, 15th March, 1893²¹**

Dear Sir:

I beg to inform you that:

1. As per notification herewith I have been some time ago required by the Mayor of this town to quarter a number of the Gendarmerie Corps (Guardia Civil) of this Island.
2. And that recently I have been notified by the same Mayor to appear as a voter in the act of the Spanish residents electing the Compromisarios who are to vote the Senators' for the Spanish Cortes.

Being an American citizen, as you are aware from the entry made by yourself in the Register Book of American Citizens kept at the office under your charge, I have refused to comply with the latter imposition and denied to sign the notification served upon me, as I will have nothing to do with Spanish politics.

²⁰ Despacho No. 121

²¹ Adjunto No. 2, Despacho No. 150.

With regard to the former pretension of the Mayor, I have however, silently complied with same, ignoring whether I would be right in declining the order to give quarter to the said Trooper.

For future emergencies I would politely request you to lay this matter before the United States Consul General at St. John's, Porto Rico, and to solicit his opinion whether the Mayor of this town can oblige me to quarter the Gendarmes he may see fit to allow to me, there abounding Spanish citizens in this place who may quarter same.

I remain very truly yours,
(Signed) José B. López

[17a] **Aguadilla, Porto Rico, March 1st, 1893**²²

Mr. Bernardo López:

You will please give lodging or furnish a dressed cot to the Civil Guard Cándido Navas, the bearer of this.

The Mayor,
Wanusco [*sic.*] Acosta

[17b] **United States Consular Agency, Aguadilla, Porto Rico, to L. R. Stewart, Esquire, United States Consul, St. John's Porto Rico, March 28, 1893**²³

Sir:

I am in receipt of your dispatch dated March 21st, number 18, and in reply beg to state that I have transmitted to Mr. López the several questions you ask with regard to him. He has answered same in the enclosure, and I beg of you to interest yourself in the matter, as Mr. López is a person worthy of protection and a quiet man who does not meddle in politics of the Country at all and wishing to be left alone.

Mr. López, whenever he has had an opportunity to serve American citizens or sick seamen has done so with abnegation and incurring in personal inconveniences placing his home at their disposal in cases of need.

Mr. López is in possession of a passport dated [in] Washington, September 25, 1874.

The late Mr. Conroy furnished him on arrival with a passport the same year, which is deposited in the Mayor's office of this town.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Aug. Ganslandt
United States Consular Agent

[17c] **From José B. López, to Aug. Ganslandt, Esquire, United States Consular Agent, Aguadilla, Porto Rico, March 27th, 1893**²⁴

Dear Sir:

Complying with the contents of your esteemed communication dated 24th instant, I have the honor to furnish herewith a reply to the said 10 questions:

1st I am a native of this Island, born in this town.

²² Adjunto No. 3, Despacho No. 150.

²³ Adjunto No. 4, Despacho No. 150.

²⁴ Adjunto No. 5, Despacho No. 150.

2nd My naturalization certificate is dated New York (September), 3rd, 1874.
 3rd About a month after, I left New York for this Island.
 4th Ever since, I have resided here on account of my health and family affairs referring to an inheritance.
 5th In the same locality (residing).
 6th I am a Mechanical Engineer.
 7th In which profession I have been engaged since.
 8th Registered (in Consular Agency) May 30th, 1883.
 9th and 10th I have always had the intention to return temporarily to the United States to see and to stay with my family, consisting of my wife and three children all married and citizens of the United States. My occupation, however, does not allow me to absent myself.
 In addition to the above I beg to say that I have lived in the United States from August, 1851, to the end of the year 1856, and that I returned in 1864 and remained in New York till 1874, when in account of family matters and of the state of my health, I had to return to this place.
 I remain, Sir,

Yours respectfully,
 [rúbrica] José B. López

[18] From Raleigh F. Haydon, Vice and Deputy Consul at St. John's, to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, February 10th, 1894²⁵

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith translations of a communication of complaint and enclosures from Mr. Wenceslao Borda, an American citizen residing and doing business in this Island.

Copies of all of these papers were submitted to the Governor General here by me with an official letter requesting that His Excellency would see that Mr. Borda should be reimbursed of his loses in the matter.

I enclose also a translation of His Excellency's reply, which, while admitting that Mr. Borda has been abused, no remedy.

The points which I made to His Excellency were: (1) that Mr. Borda was forced to pay the money by two armed officers of His Excellency's Government rather than by the usurping Commissioner, and (2) that Mr. Borda was criminally held for insulting an officer of His Excellency's Government when it was admitted that the complainant was not such officer.

I submit the case to you begging that you will give me your opinion of my action in the case and also instructions as to what further action, if any, I should take therein.

I have the honor to remain, Sir,
 Your most obedient, humble servant,
 [rúbrica] Raleigh F. Haydon
 Vice and Deputy Consul

Enclosures: (1) Translation Hacienda "Esperanza", Manatí, [Porto Rico]
 (2) Translation Central Administration of Contributions and Rents, Porto Rico
 (3) Receipt
 (4) Translation Central Administration of Contributions and Rents, Porto Rico
 (5) Translation Government General of Island of Porto Rico

²⁵ Despacho No. 178

[18a] **Translation Hacienda “Esperanza”, Manatí, [Porto Rico], October 28th, 1893²⁶**

Sir:

I beg to place before you the following facts, which may appear incredible in Porto Rico, but they will be easily proven, and I beg to request your earliest attention to the matter as I am suffering immense damages to my property and molestations to my person.

Taking the question from the beginning, last year the Municipality of Manatí taxed this Hacienda unjustly. I claimed against such taxation, my complaint was impugned, and then, I addressed myself to the Intendente Luna, who decided that I was right and that his resolution should be communicated to the Municipality of Manatí. So it was done by the said honorable gentleman and the Municipality did not enforce the collection; but the State has its own collector, who receives 5% of the contributions, and this man, attending more to his own interest than to the superior and just decision of the Intendente and acting on his own account, instituted judicial proceedings of collection against me. I immediately went, personally, to see the present Intendente with a written complaint, and this gentleman resolved that I did not owe any contribution whatever and that such proceedings should be stopped. In spite of this, the proceedings were renewed and I had to telegraph to the Intendente, who again prohibited the proceedings through a communication number 3427, which I enclose to you for examination.

Thus, I thought everything finished, when, a few days ago, I received a summons from the Court of Justice of Manatí in which it appeared that I was sued by some Ramón Gómez Monzo for the fees of collection of the said taxes. Soon the verdict was given by the Judge against the Collector who made the claim, declaring him liable to pay the costs of the suit, etc.

I retired, and some days had elapsed in tranquility, which I had not enjoyed for nearly eight months, having employed the greatest patience and some money, which I had given to the said Collector, which I was unable to recover, although I relied in the promise they made not to trouble me anymore.

I was mistaken. I thought that the vexations and outrages had ceased, Mr. Consul, but those that I have received since, and still I am receiving, are infinitely more unjust and consequently of a worse character, for they do not only attack my property, but also my person; and for both, as an American citizen, I ask your protection, as well as for my wife, also an American, and for my American children residing in New York, and whose interests are here in danger, as you will see.

On the 25th day of September at 12 o'clock two people made their appearance here at my house: one of them was the collector Gómez Monzo, the same as sued me for his fees, and was decided against by the Judge of Manatí, and the other was a perverse fellow whom I had previously dismissed from my house. These two men came accompanied by two Civil Guards on horseback. I asked what they wanted and Gómez answered that they had come to collect \$140. I put the question to the two Civil Guards and one of them replied to me that they had not to give me an account of the orders they had from their superiors. I asked Gómez again on whose authority he had come and he answered that he had not to tell me. I refused positively to pay any money. Then they took ten handsome cows, which being of a very fine beef are very valuable, and were taking them away with them. I seeing sure by the loss of those animals, equals of which could not be found in Porto Rico, decided to give the money that I was asked for. I offered them a money order payable in Manatí and they told me that the payment had to be made in money. Consequently I had to pay in cash, the receipt of which signed by Ramón Gómez Monzo and the two Civil Guards, I enclose to you.

Immediately I went personally to the first Chief of the Civil Guard, señor Oliveros, and to the Commander Bueno, which officers investigated the affair and gave complete satisfaction,

²⁶ Adjunto 1, Despacho No. 178.

offering that they would have the functionary who had sent the pair of Guards to enter my house by force, and to exact the money asked for by such a one, punished for it. With this promise I retired home to wait until the Intendencia (that had also begun proceedings on my complaint) would return me my money and punish the liable ones, when I received an order from the Court of Justice stating that I was to be judged as a criminal for insults to Gómez on the day that he came to exact the money in my own house, by force, with the pair of Civil Guards. At the same time I was given notice by Mr. Ciria, of the Intendencia, of the sentence given against the same man, fining him \$100 and discharging him forever from his official charge of the State and, besides, deciding that my money unjustly taken, as you have seen, should be returned to me.

That is to say that, on the one hand, he is punished for one fault and, on the other, he is defended as a respectable agent of the Authority and it is admitted as a truth that I, who for fear of an injury on seeing these armed men in my house gave up \$140 that he asked, would at the same time have insulted him, so to lose what I had bought by the humiliation of my dignity and with money! I am accused of calling him a rascal and a thief!

I am therefore, Mr. Consul, processed and under the obligation of presenting myself every fifteen days at the Court of Manatí and of giving a bond of 2,000 pesetas or else they will embargo my property to cover that amount. Every moment I expect to be called to Arecibo, Manatí or Mayagüez, consequently not being able to attend to my own business; besides, I desire to leave shortly for New York, where I have a business on which the future of my family depends, as I shall prove to you at our next meetings, from which I am prevented by the arrest to which I am submitted.

Be it enough for me today to lay this complaint before you, offering to make you acquainted with the reasons that have moved the first official Authority of this town to impulse Gómez on this way of iniquity, thus compromising our property and perchance our lives, notwithstanding my having presented myself to the Governor General several days ago, to whom I gave an account of what I have just stated to you.

Señor Olózaga, Chief of the Central Administration, told me some days ago that the criminal proceedings instituted against me for insults and threatenings to an official would fall by its own weight, as it now results that Gómez Monzo had been out of office for more than one month before coming to despoil my house with the Civil Guards. Nevertheless, with all this clear, I have been notified that today, Saturday, to present myself tomorrow, Sunday, in Manatí to be examined by two Physicians. I do not know with what object. And so they will continue vexing me without my knowing the object of it until you deem it convenient to interfere.

Like an honest citizen, I have directed myself in complaint to the superior Authority and, as I have not been attended up to now, I call on you for the first time after many years of lending great benefits to the agriculture and industries of this Country, compromising in it the capital of my family and that of my friends in Europe and the United States; I direct myself to you, Consul of my country, in order that you may defend me against the injustices and insults used with me in behalf of imaginary offenses and without foundation, to a Spanish subject who is despised here by his own countrymen and who has been discharged of his office.

Only the imperious necessity that I have of protecting my threatened interests compels me to the painful point of applying to your moral Authority in defense of aggressions prepared by the first Authority of this locality, where I live with my family and where I have large property; and I call it painful because I believe it is our duty to save as far as possible the prestige of the Government of the country where we are working.

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Wenceslao Borda

[19] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, March 8th, 1894**²⁷

Sir:

I have to report that I left my home in Newviele, Connecticut, on January 30th, 1894, and arrived in St. John's, Porto Rico, February 22 following, having been delayed in New York by the postponement of sailing of the steamers of the "New York and Porto Rico Steam Ship Company", Miller, Bull and Company, Agents, 76 Beard Street.

The day following my arrival I asked for an audience with the Captain General of the Province, which was granted the day the 24th.

I was received by the Segundo Cabo, the Lieutenant Governor, and found that the Captain General was away making his annual tour of Inspection of the Province. A request was made for permission to act pending the arrival of the Exequatur and Commission. This the Segundo Cabo was unwilling to grant in the absence of his superior, whom he said would return on [*sic.*] a few days.

On March the 7th, the Captain General arrived at the Capital, immediately an interview was asked for, and granted on the 8th. At this interview, the same request to act pending arrival of Exequatur was made and granted by His Excellency. The formal permission in writing is now on file at this office.

I would call attention to the fact that the inventory of the office furniture and fixtures herewith, differs materially from the last one on file at this office.

I took official charge and possession of the Consulate and office on the Eighth day of March, 1894.

Enclosure

[19a] **Inventory of the office of the United States Consulate at St. John's Porto Rico, on March 8th, 1894**²⁸

FURNITURE

1 large desk, in good condition (from Vice Consul Crosas)
 1 book case, " (")
 1 iron safe, "
 1 lounge or cane-settee, "
 1 small cabinet desk "
 2 desk chairs, "
 6 office " "
 8 spittoons, porcelain, condition fair.
 2 lamps, "
 2 pitchers glass and porcelain.
 32 glasses, for drinking.
 2 buckets, poor condition.
 1 wash-stand.
 1 small flat top desk, fair condition.
 1 steamer chair "
 3 cane rockers "
 2 round top tables, old.
 1 rattan paper stand, "

²⁷ Despacho No. 2.

²⁸ Adjunto 1, Despacho No. 2.

- 1 bowl, and etc., porcelain, fair.
- 1 refrigerator, good condition.
- 1 letter scale, “
- 1 copying press,“

BOOKS

- 1 Arrivals and Departures of American vessels.
- 1 American Seamen relieved.
- 1 Passport book.
- 1 Seaman's Register.
- 1 United States Treasury Fees.
- 1 Ships Daily Journal.
- 1 Marine-note of Protest
- 1 Marine-extended Protest
- 1 Register of Landing Certificates
- 1 Miscellaneous Record Book
- 2 Dispatch Books.
- 1 Invoice “
- 1 Account Current
- 1 Register of American Citizens
- 1 Register of Letters Received
- 1 “ “ Sent
- 1 Account Book with Agents
- 1 Copying Book
- A large set of books formerly in use with files, and etc.

MISCELLANEOUS

- 2 waste baskets.
- 1 large flag and 3 small ones.
- 2 coat of arms, 6 rubber stamps, 1 seal, 1 inkstand, 1 ruler, 1 paper-weight, 1 armrest, 1 paper-knife, tape, cord, seals, wax, and etc.

Also blank forms, paper, and envelopes.

- 1 flag staff
- 1 sign of the consulate
- 1 frame with glass of Declaration of Independence.
- 15 volumes United States Statutes at Large number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17.
- 2 volumes, Revised Statutes, 1873 to 75, and 1878.
- 3 “ , Wharton's Digest, 1, 2, 3.
- 1 “ , Appendix to ditto.
- 1 synoptical index to laws of United States
- 1 Wheaton's element of International Law.
- 1 Heyls United States Import Duties, 1891. And other old volumes, including Agricultural reports, messages, reports, and etc.
- 1 volume United States Statutes of 1881 and 2.
- 1 volume Consular Regulations 1888.

John D. Hall,
United States Consul.
Raleigh F. Haydon,
Acting Consul.

[20] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's, to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, April 11th, 1894**²⁹

Sir:

Replying to the Departments' Instruction number 91 of March 6th, 1894, I have the honor to inform you that Mr. Wenceslao Borda has given me the following statement as to his citizenship:

He is a native of the United States of Colombia.

He was naturalized by the Court of Common Pleas of the City and County of New York [in] September 15th, 1881.

He first went to New York in 1861 and resided there continuously for several years following, and from then until now he has spent more than half of the time there.

He married an American citizen in New York in 1866, from which marriage he has now three children living.

He became interested in Porto Rico six years before he was naturalized by entering the American commercial house of Latimer and Company, of this City, in connection with which he shortly afterward acquired real property in the Island.

He has voted in two presidential elections in the United States, one of which votes was cast for our present worthy Chief.

He has never resided here continuously, but for several years past has owned an estate in the Island devoted to the raising of sugar and cattle, and still owns it.

His family has always resided in New York.

He has often openly expressed his intention of returning to the United States to reside.

He has owned stock in the New York elevated railroad.

He has three sons now living in New York - one a member of the New York bar; another engaged in mercantile business, and the other at school.

He is about concluding negotiations for the sale of this estate to Messrs. Sobrinos de Ezquiaga, of this City, for \$150,000 gold, with the intention of returning to the United States to reside permanently.

I have the honor to remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] John D. Hall

United States

[21] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, June 27th, 1894**³⁰

Sir:

I have the honor to report that, under the Reciprocal Treaty now in force between the United States, Spain and the West India Dependencies, I believe in many instances American goods and products entering Porto Rico have been unjustly treated and have not received the full benefit which ought to accrue to them under this treaty.

The merchants here have been invited, even entreated to make protests, but for covert reasons have refused to do so to any extent.

A recent incident can be cited, which can be taken as an example of all such cases. Some three weeks ago, Vicente and Company, Spanish merchants here, imported some *maizena* from the United States and duties were levied upon it in the Custom House according to schedule C

²⁹ Despacho No. 7.

³⁰ Despacho No. 18.

58; the importer claimed, and I believe rightly, that it should be entered free under schedule A 34. The merchant stated the facts at this Consulate and was urged and invited to make a protest, but has not done so. In fact, I did not think he would at the time.

The reason of this unwillingness to protest can be attributed, in my opinion, if I am allowed to express it, to causes both political and commercial. Commercial, for the reason that the provoked hostility of the Spanish Authorities involves annoyances, embarrassment and perhaps ruin to the business of the merchant. Political, because nearly all the large business houses are conducted by home Spaniards, and they are consequently allied to the Government at Madrid in whatever pertains to the administration of this Island-right or wrong — and, theretofore, will endure many restrictions, before their pride or political ambitions will allow them to admit openly, before the native population, that anything is wrong in the conduct or direction of the affairs of the Province.

As a result, the benefits under this treaty are, to a great extent, one sided. True flour is imported to the total exclusion of that of Spain, nearly all coming from two or three American firms. Preserved fruits and a few small articles have also been benefited, but coal and lumber came in largely without the treaty.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

[22] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, July 5th, 1894**³¹

Sir:

I have the honor to say that, before receiving circulars of date [*sic*] June 1st and 15th, 1894, I had written for my own amusement the following article in reference to the currency condition of Porto Rico, and now deem it best to submit it to the Department in connection with Dispatch number 10. It is as follows:

While it might be an interesting subject to relate the monetary history of Porto Rico for the last twenty-five years and the causes which have led up to and established the present circulating medium, it would hardly be profitable for the present article and would take much time and space. It is enough to know that we find a debased currency of other nations than Spain in circulation, while the neighboring Island of the same nationality possesses a currency based at least in its values and denominations upon that of the Mother Country.

The circulating medium of Porto Rico is Mexican silver dollars of the mintage of 1885 and prior thereto, together with a subsidiary coin of Mexican halves and quarters, along with some American, and with minor denominations of five and ten cent pieces of almost all nationalities under the sun. A handful of this latter so called money presents a curious spectacle. I have often held it in my hand and wondered whether I had something of any value or whether someone had palmed off scraps of tin of the tags from some favorite brand of chewing tobacco of American manufacture. A careful examination, if perchance the battered face of the coin will allow it, shows that the majority of the five and ten pieces are from the United States. All of this coin, especially that of the United States, has been mutilated by punching holes in the coin and so worn as to hardly show to what nationality to accredit it. It is a curious lot to look at, and one apt to cause a smile. The currency of Porto Rico, therefore, is an anomaly and hardly to be

³¹ Despacho No. 20.

dignified with the name of currency; it is a mixture in which the coin of Mexico is the predominating and ruling feature.

This money is recognized by Spain and by law is accepted by the Spanish Government in payment of all Government dues, and has been for years at a nominal discount of 5,263 - 100%, which is far less than the commercial rate of exchange with Spain.

Various expedients have been resorted to in a vain attempt to keep up the dollar value of the Mexican coin. For a time it was successful and today there is a token value in the Mexican coin, that coin perhaps enjoys nowhere else in the world. This was accomplished in the first place by a decree that no Mexican coin bearing a date later than the year 1885 was good except for its bullion value, and second, by ostensibly confiscating all Mexican money of whatever date, that was brought to the Island as contraband. If this latter regulation has been strictly adhered to, it would have undoubtedly had the effect to maintain a higher token value than this coin now has. The temptation to smuggle became so great as the value of silver bullion fell, that more and more Mexican found its way into the Island through various channels, — also the good condition and brightness of many of the silver dollars would seem to indicate a coinage later than 1885—, until the token value in the Mexican began to shrink as it became more and more plentiful, while corresponding on New York rose steadily until it has reached its present high rate of 50 to 55%. While the Mexican dollar in New York has a value of 50 or 51 cents gold, here it has a value of about 66 and 2/3 cents based upon the rate of 50% exchange, in the Island itself for commercial purposes the value is undoubtedly greater but difficult to fix; in other words, one gold dollar at the above prices will purchase in New York two Mexicans, in Porto Rico, one and one-half Mexicans. It is only a question of time when the entire token value in a Mexican in Porto Rico will be entirely wiped out, and exchange on New York will then rule on the bullion value of the Mexican silver dollar, which at the present prices, fluctuating between 50 and 56 cents for a Mexican dollar, the exchange here would be respectively 100% and 78 4/7%.

The rate of exchange with Spain is 23% or \$1.23 Mexican will buy one dollar of Spanish silver or paper which is depreciated, but if it were possible to buy exchange on Spain to be paid in Spanish gold, I am told by bankers here the rate would be from 48 to 49%, with which the difference of per cent between American and Spanish gold, gives almost exactly the same value to the Mexican dollar in Spain as in the markets of New York and London.

As a consequence, business is hampered and prices of living are continually rising. The laborer and the poor as everywhere under like conditions, fare the worst, they are ground between the upper and nether millstone and the value of their hire is shorn at both ends.

The Government at Madrid finds itself with a problem on its hands of no mean proportions and difficult of solution, except in a right way, and have not as yet found any satisfactory solution or remedy to apply to the distressed monetary condition of Porto Rico. The most feasible and, at the same time, the most costly is to retire the whole body of Mexican money with gold, this will never be done as it would entail too great an expense either on Spain or Porto Rico.

It may be well to add that the time was when the money value of the present currency of Porto Rico was on a par with the rest of the world. The adoption of Mexican money as the currency here is no new thing. It came in some 15 or 20 years ago through causes that are foreign to this article. Today, however Porto Rico is virtually a free silver country, with the mints of Mexico prepared to supply all demands, and presents an object lesson in epitome of the evils of free silver.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] John D. Hall, United States Consul

[23] From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, October 29th, 1894³²

Sir:

Since writing dispatch of date October 22nd, último, there has appeared in a local newspaper on October 25th the enclosed clipping, a translation of which is annexed and explains itself.

If the Spanish Cortes concurs with the recommendation of the Committee, which is probable, the restrictions upon importation of Mexican silver will be virtually abrogated. Exchange will rise to nearly 100%, and holders of Mexican dollars suffer great loss.

I understand the largest holders of these dollars are the Banco Español, having upwards of \$1,000,000, and the local Treasury of the Spanish Government, about half as much.

The attempt will be undoubtedly made by all holders of these dollars to get them out of their hands, before the crash comes, but the main obstacle will be in finding a way to do it.

Yesterday there was a general refusal to take mutilated fractional silver of 5 and 10 cents pieces. Ninety per cent of these denomination are in this condition, and a great part of it is of United States coinage. Large quantities of this small stuff have been introduced, it is said, by the hogshead full, at Ponce, a city on the South side of the Island.

When the refusal of the store-keepers to take this coin became generally known rioting occurred in the streets. Last night the mob attacked the coffee houses, broke nearly all the street lamps and made a demonstration before the residence of the Governor General, and were only dispersed by calling out the tropes in the garrison.

Today the Governor General issued a decree accepting this fractional coin in payment for small transactions, but no one is obliged to accept it in payment of debts to a greater amount than two per cent, and the trouble for the present is over.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Cónsul

Enclosure: Appendix

[23a] **Appendix**³³

Apropos of the retirement of General Dabán, it may be of interest to the Department to know to what extent speculation and corruption permeates Spanish official life. What is said of General Dabán can be said equally as well of others from the highest to the lowest, with now and then a notable exception, and it is also well to note with what little moment such shortcomings are considered by the Spanish Government.

It is reported, and is of such common knowledge that it leaves no room to doubt, in fact, it has been openly commented upon by the opposition papers of Spain, that General Dabán, with the aid of a large banking house here, smuggled into this Island last year large amounts of Mexican money and landed it at this port as munitions of war. All Mexican money of whatever date and stamp has been declared contraband and subject to confiscation when found entering Porto Rico. Mexican dollars, at the time, were worth about 52 cents in New York and much more in Porto Rico. The Governor's share of the spoils in this transaction is said to have been \$50,000.00. This, however, did not affect his tenure of office and standing in Madrid, and he

³² Despacho No. __. El original no indica el número del despacho.

³³ Despacho No. 45.

remained six months as Governor after the expiration of his term of office, then resigned on account of ill health.

I am well aware that this [is] a delicate subject and I have, therefore, said nothing of this enclosure in the body of the accompanying report, or left any copy of it at this Consulate. In fact, I have hesitated to send it to the Department, not knowing in what spirit it will be received.

Very respectfully,

[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

[24] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, June 24th, 1895**³⁴

Sir:

I have the honor to report that General Antonio Dabán, Governor General and Captain General of this Province for the past two and a half years, terminated his office by resignation, and the same was sanctioned by Royal Decree of the 21st of June last, and returned to Spain on the 14th of the same month, leaving the Government of the Island in the hands of the Segundo Cabo, General Andrés G. Muñoz.

On the 20th of June, General José Gamir Maladén arrived as Governor General of the Island, having been named as such by Royal Decree of the 21st of May last.

On Saturday last I personally paid my respects to the new Governor.

It may be well to also say that the present Segundo Cabo, or Lieutenant Governor, will proceed to Cuba, as General of Artillery, as son as his sucesor, who has been named, arrives in the Island.

I am Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] John D. Hall,
United State Cónsul

[25] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, January 7th, 1894 [sic.]**³⁵

Sir:

I enclose herewith copies of a letter from the Appraiser at Philadelphia, and my reply thereto, also a copy of the mercantile circular sent to him.

If I am correct in my calculations, based upon the volume of sugar declared for export in the last fiscal year to the United States, the revenues of the Treasury upon sugars coming from the Island will be affected from \$140 to \$200,000.00, if the value of the Mexican dollar in New York is taken as a standard of value.

All of the sugar is entered at the ports of Boston, New York, Philadelphia and sometimes Baltimore.

I have endeavored in previous Despatches to inform the Department of this token value existing here in the Mexican dollar and the reasons therefore. Whether the Appraisers at the different ports are sufficiently well aware of it, I am unable to say.

It appears to me that is the duty of the Treasury Department to say what value shall attach to a Mexican dollar in Porto Rico.

³⁴ Adjunto 1, Despacho No. 45.

³⁵ Despacho No. __. El original no indica el número del despacho.

I have given all the information in my power upon the subject, and will let the responsibility of fixing the value of this dollar rest elsewhere.

I am Sir,
Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

Enclosures: (1) Copy of letter of United States Appr in Philadelphia
(2) “ “ “ to “ “ “ “
(3) “ “ trade circular sent to Appraiser

[25a] **From C. E. Ingersoll, Appraiser of Merchandise, Philadelphia to Consulate of the United States, St. John's Porto Rico, December 7th, 1894**³⁶

Dear Sir:

We are in receipt at this port of cargoes of sugar from San Juan, and would respectfully request you to forward from time to time to this office for its information, any trade circular or public newspapers that are readily obtainable by you, showing the local value of sugar at your port. These would be of great assistance to us in determining the value of sugar in your market, which, as you know, is the value upon which we assess duty when it arrives here. Any other information as to the special circumstances in connection with the purchase and sale of anyone [*sic.*] shipment of sugar, or any peculiar custom of trade as to commission, weighing charges, export or internal taxes or Counties, etc. which affect the market value of sugar at your port, will be received with much appreciation, and will be of great assistance to the Appraising officers at this port in determining the proper dutiable value of sugar from St. John's.

Very respectfully yours,
[rúbrica] C. E. Ingersoll,
Appraiser

[25b] **From Consulate of the United States, St. John's Porto Rico to United States Appraiser Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 7th, 1895**³⁷

Dear Sir:

I beg to say, in reply to your letter of the 7th of December último, that there is a trade circular issued here twice a month, a copy of which is enclosed herewith, it is in Spanish, if you desire it, I will send it to you with pleasure. The business community here is so small that quotations do not always convey a reliable market value.

In answer to your questions, I would say that the method of buying sugar here in this City from the producer, outside of private sales, is for a few buyers to meet in the office of a merchant once or twice a week, make their bids in writing, from samples present; the owner of the sugar, usually the planter, opens the bids and allots the sugar to the highest market or refuses to sell. The merchant is usually given an open letter of credit from his correspondent in the United States to buy sugars, and is advised by them from time to time, by cable, of the markets. An upset price is given the merchant here, free on board; out of this price the buyer pays all charges and tries to save his commission.

The only government dues levied upon sugar after leaving the hands of the planter, is a loading tax of 50 cents per 1,000 kilograms paid to the Customs Authorities, together with 5¼%

³⁶ Adjunto 1, Despacho No. __.

³⁷ Adjunto 2, Despacho No. __.

premium upon the amount so paid, for on this basis, the Spanish Government receives Mexican money in payment of all dues, etc.

If the merchant, after buying, is obliged to store the sugar; he pays storage generally of 15 cents per hogshead for every fifteen days, or fraction thereof, and the cost of the labor of weighing, receiving and delivering. As you know, all "muscovado" sugar in store loses in weight by draining. Consequently; when shipped, there is the labor of refilling to the original weight, cooperage at about 10 cents a hogshead, hoops, rails, etc., and cost of drayage, which is about 10 cents per hogshead here; then comes insurance, postage, invoice and the merchants commission of 2½%. All of these charges are considered, whether he possesses his own warehouses, help, etc., or hires from another, and should be stated in an itemized account upon the invoice. I should add that all sugar is purchased in Spanish pounds, which are about 2% more than the English pounds.

But this is not all or the most important thing to consider in sugars coming from Porto Rico. Mexican silver is the currency in use all over the Island and it has a token value here greater than the New York market price of the Mexican dollar. When raw sugars were free, this did not make so much difference, except statistically, but with a duty upon them, there is great danger of undervaluation if the New York price of the Mexican dollar is taken as the standard of value.

Nearly all the sugar made on the Island is muscovado and it goes to the United States. In the last fiscal year the total declared exports to the United States were \$3,290,363.62. Of this amount \$2,002,987.88 was sugar; \$888,140.27, molasses; \$72,662.52 molasses sugar; and the remainder \$326,572.95, all other exports. So that an undervaluation of 10 to 15 cents upon the dollar would involve considerable loss in revenue to the Treasury or the United States.

It is a difficult matter to fix the purchasing value of a Mexican dollar in Porto Rico, in its relation to a United States gold standard. The token value in a Mexican dollar here is all the time being steadily eliminated. If you take the rate of exchange current here on New York as a basis to fix the value it will, in my opinion be too low. Then again in remote parts of the Island, where the people are more ignorant and not brought much in contact with the outside world, the purchasing power of a Mexican dollar is much higher than it is here.

An instance will illustrate the matter and, perhaps, make it clearer. A planter offered for sale, a few days ago, some sugar. The highest offer he could get was \$2.50 for a Spanish hundred pounds, about 102 English pounds. At this price, based on the value of a Mexican dollar at New York prices, say 50 cents, of course, freight, etc., left out of consideration, this sugar, if he had sold it, would represent a United States gold equivalent of \$1.25, on a basis at which a draft can be purchased for here at present, say 60%, which gives to the Mexican dollar a United States currency value of 62½ cents, this sugar would have a United States gold value of \$1.56¼, a difference of 31¼ cents. If 40% ad valorem duty be taken of this difference, it gives a loss of 12½ cents, besides the 2 pounds over, on each 100 pounds bought here for entry into the United States. But, as I have said, upon this exchange basis I believe the purchasing power in this place now, anywhere from 15 to 25 cents more than the market price in New York, depending, of course, with whom you are dealing and what you are purchasing. Values based upon Mexican dollars here are elusive, to say the least.

To sum up the whole matter it is this. What I have said of San Juan holds good of the whole Island, and ports where there are Consular Agents. As much more sugar will leave this Island for the United States this year than last, and it will begin to move in volume about the middle of January. The prices from present indications will be low \$2.50 Mexican for 100 Spanish pounds or less. The value of a Mexican dollar here, the way exchange now stands, is from 12 to 15 cents more than in New York. What its value is here for commercial purposes I am unable to state with accuracy.

Very respectfully,

[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

[26] From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, December 10th, 1895³⁸

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith an "extraordinary" copy of the "Official Gazette of Porto Rico, together with a translation of the same, in reference to the long mooted exchange of the Mexican silver money, now current in this Island, for a new money. The details of the plan of exchange have been kept secret, up to the time of this publication on the 8th of December.

The new money is provincial in its character, but it is in all other respects, the same as the coin now circulating in Spain, except that it is coined for Porto Rico and will not be taken in circulation, at least for the present, in Spain or her Dominions.

It is only contemplated by this Decree at present, to refund the whole dollar -Mexican- and not the fractional Mexican money. This later money together with whatever foreign fractional money there is in circulation, will probably be supplanted as soon as enough Mexican dollars are withdrawn from circulation to furnish material for the coinage of the new fractional pieces; these pieces to be of the same fineness and denomination as those now circulating in Spain, only as above excepted.

The bulk of the five and ten cent pieces in circulation are United States coin of these denominations, badly mutilated; therefore it may be interesting to learn what has become of a certain amount-an amount not easily estimated of bad United States coin.

There is a considerable seignorage resulting from the re-coinage of the Mexican money into the new coin, and it is provided, after paying all the expenses attendant upon the exchange, that the residue of this seignorage shall be converted into gold coin, and placed in circulation at the stated premium of twenty per centum. That it will remain in circulation is hardly to be considered. In fact the whole reference to gold in the articles of the Decree is rather spectacular, unless a covert meaning is attached, which has been rumored, viz: that a certain proportion of all dues, customs and otherwise, to the Government, will have to be paid in gold and taken by the Government at this nominal rate of twenty per centum premium.

It is rather early as yet, to predict what effect this new money will have upon the country. Intrinsically it is not worth as much as the Mexican money, and it is absolutely unsupported. That in the course of time, it must find its level, goes without saying. At present the new money is received with favor by the people, and exchange is weak. The ruling rate on New York is now in the neighborhood of 58%.

The money comes to the Island at a favorable time. The coffee crop is large, of good quality and finds a ready market in Europe at good prices, consequently the supply of bills drawn against this crop upon Europe are quite plentiful in the Island. When this resource is exhausted, as it soon will be, the new money will not meet with so much favor, and exchange is likely to advance.

[27] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State January 8th, 1898³⁹

Sir:

Due to the growing importance of this Consulate, I have the honor to make an earnest request that the Department make recommendation to Congress for an appropriation of Twelve Hundred (\$1,200) for clerk hire for this office for the next fiscal year. There is already a large amount of work for this office to perform, with a very large correspondence with the agents

³⁸ NE. Esta carta aparece sin número. Los dos adjuntos mencionados no aparecen en la micropelícula.

³⁹ Despacho No. 16

and in having general supervision of this large Consular District, beside the large number of Americans in Porto Rico who are constantly demanding the Consul's attention. In addition, there is necessarily a large correspondence with the Porto Rican Government and with local officials. Nearly every day I am asked to go in person to the Governor General in the interest of some American citizen or merchant in the United States doing business here, and after autonomy or Home Rule (which has been provided for by the Spanish Government for this Island) goes into effect, the Consul's correspondence with the Porto Rican Government and the personal appeals which he will be called upon to make with the representation of the new form of government here, will be greater than at some of our legations in South America. Autonomy will, I believe, increase American trade with the Island, and I am sure it will more than double the work of this office. The trade of Porto Rico is of more value to the United States than is the trade of many of the South and Central American Republics, and I am convinced that it is to the interest of our government and our people that this office should lack nothing in equipment. The clerk hire fund for this office should be large enough to enable us to employ a first class person with ability to properly fill this important position, one who could at the same time fill the office of Deputy Consul.

Since this is already one of the most important consulates to us in the West Indies or the western continent, and since its importance will soon be greatly increased by the "Home Rule" and the work of the Consulate more than doubled, I therefore earnestly ask that the Department obtain for the next year twelve hundred (\$1,200) dollars for clerk hire for this Consulate. Then in view of the increased importance of this Consulate and in order that the Consul may have prestige in dealing with the Porto Rican Government, I am convinced that this office should be made a Consulate General. It would lend the consular offices here great help and greatly increases the influence of the office at this capital. It would raise the dignity and grade of the office, and I know that grade and rank go a long way in dealing with this government. Some of the governments who have much less interests here than we, have the grade of Consul General; I am convinced that making a Consulate General of this Consulate will be a great help to the consul and will prove of great value to our government and people. I earnestly ask that this consulate be made a Consulate General.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna

United States Consul

[28] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, January 18, 1898**⁴⁰

Sir:

I wish to call your attention to complaints being made to me by Americans living and doing business in Porto Rico, that they are unjustly and unequally taxed, as they claim, on account of their being American citizens. A Mr. Borda, an American citizen living near the city and the owner of a large estate says that when he purchased the plantation of an English company, said English company never paid over six hundred (\$600) dollars tax per annum, but that the government here has increased his tax each year until he now pays about five thousand (\$5,000) dollars, and he claims that this tax is very unequal to the taxes of the natives and that his large tax is on his American citizenship instead of on the value of his plantation. I have [illegible] to the Governor General about the case and the Governor General has promised to look into the matter and see that it is rectified.

⁴⁰ Despacho No. 20

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant
 [rúbrica]Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[29] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, January 19, 1898⁴¹

Sir:

Concerning the unjust taxation of property here belonging to Americans which I spoke of in my dispatch No. 20, I wish to say that considerable misunderstanding and ill-feeling has sprung up between over taxed Americans and some of the Porto Rican officials. And they have caused the arrest of one of our leading Americans, who is a member of the New York bar. It seemed evident that it was their intention to humiliate him and his friends by putting him in prison. Being convinced that this American was in the right and was only standing up for his rights, I interested myself in his behalf and took the matter before the Governor General who treated us with much politeness and assured us that the American gentleman should not be unjustly imprisoned. The American has been given his liberty. In spite of the ill feeling on the part of some of the subordinate officials toward some of our people, the Governor General and the leading officials seem very friendly toward us and appear to be interested in granting to Americans the rights which belong to them.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant
 [rúbrica]Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[30] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, now at Saint Thomas, West Indies, to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, May 27, 1898⁴²

Sir:

I have the honor to request that you will please call the attention of the Honorable Secretary of War to the desire of Mr. Wenceslao Borda Klugkist, who is a loyal citizen of the United States, a graduate of Columbia College, a member of the New York Bar, but who has been living many years at Manatí, Porto Rico and represents large interests there.

Mr. Wenceslao Borda Klugkist is now at New York City, having been compelled to leave Porto Rico soon after my leaving the Island. He writes me that, in case the United States send troops to that Island, he wished to serve the Government in any capacity, and would return with the troops and serve the Secretary of War in any capacity.

He knows the whole Island very well, he speaks Spanish perfectly and is a strong, healthy young man and a red hot American. I think his services would be useful to the Government at such time as the troops shall be landed in Porto Rico.

His address is: Mr. Wenceslao Borda Klugkist
 c/o Sra. C. Darrin
 132 Nassua Street
 New York City, New York

⁴¹ Despacho No. 21

⁴² Despacho No. 65

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[31] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, October 19, 1898**⁴³

Sir:

I am convinced that young men seeking work or positions of any kind should not come to Porto Rico. There are many stranded Americans of this class here already and I have my hands full trying to provide work enough for them to keep them from starving. Such persons as clerks, carpenters, mechanics and laborers of all grades should stay away from Porto Rico.

Porto Rican laborers will work for less wages than an American can possibly live on, for they are contented to live on very cheap food and wear poor clothing and dwell in very poor houses. Americans cannot stand and will not be satisfied with such fare and can do better in the States. No American should come to Porto Rico expecting to strike it rich and no person should come here without plenty of money to pay board bills and have enough to take them back to their homes in the United States. This is a small Island -has a population of about a million people- [and] is the most densely populated country in the world. There are several hundred thousand working Porto Ricans ready to fill the vacant jobs and at a low price.

There may come a time, after the laws of the United States are applied by Congress to this Island, that this will be a good place for American capital and for Americans to do business, but even then a man should have plenty of money to expect to make a business success in Porto Rico. I deem it important that the Department cause this suggestion to be made public through the newspapers of the Country.

I have the honor, Sir, to be,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica]Philip C. Hanna,
 Consul

[32] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of America, October 24, 1898**⁴⁴

Sir:

I wish to call your attention to many complaints coming from the people of this Island concerning the rates of postage between points in Porto Rico and between here and the United States. Under the former regulation of postal affairs, Porto Rico had a very low rate of postage throughout the Island. Especially was this true of the parcel postage, which was very much lower than in the United States. The postal service heretofore was their Island express company for small packages, but the rate they used to have was lower than our Government could continue, I think, without a special act of Congress on that point. The people feel, however, that they should be allowed to send letters to the States at the same rate that persons in one State send letters or mail to another part of the United States, viz two cents per ounce on first-class matter.

⁴³ Despacho No. 110

⁴⁴ Despacho No. 112

I think if the rate to the United States from Porto Rico was made the same as it is in the United States, the people would take notice of such reduction made in their favor and would be satisfied even though the local rate in the island is somewhat greater than heretofore. They say that we allow our Army, Navy and Government people to send letters to the States at two cents per ordinary letter and charge Porto Ricans five cents and also increase the rate throughout the Island, but I am sure if our Postal Department should reduce the rate to two cents per ordinary letter from Porto Rico to all parts of the United States, they would be greatly pleased over such reduction and cease to complain of the increase of the rate in the Island. I am of the opinion that such reduction in favor of this people would have a very wholesome effect and I recommend that it be made.

It is my conviction that we should begin to impress Porto Ricans that they are Americans and that we intend from the very start to treat them in every way as we treat the balance of Americans and that we intend that they shall share in the benefits of American Government and become partakers with us of the blessings of our great Republic. They need some practical demonstration of the fact that it is a great blessing to be permitted to be an American. Any reduction of a common expense like the one above referred to would be a kindergarten object lesson to Porto Ricans and would be appreciated by them.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica]Philip C. Hanna

[33] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, October 26th, 1898**⁴⁵

Sir:

I am informed that in the year 1895, up to which time Porto Rico had for its monetary unit the Mexican silver dollar, Spain called in the Mexican silver dollars from Porto Rico and issued for the Island a special coin for the exclusive use of Porto Rico, known as the Porto Rican peso. Bankers and merchants here inform me that the said issue of silver amounted to between seven and eight million pesos and it is their belief that about six million silver pesos are in circulation here at this time. A part of the said issue having been carried away and quite an amount having been lost and destroyed, I am of the opinion that six million is about the correct estimate of the amount of the silver pesos still in circulation in Porto Rico and this group of Islands. This coin, which is about the size of an American silver dollar, is of light weight and is estimated to contain about thirty-eight to forty American cents worth of silver. The peso is the monetary unit—the basis of trade in this group of Islands.

The Spanish bank of Porto Rico, which has its headquarters at St. John's issues paper[s] which are "promises to pay" so many pesos. There is also a bank of issue at Ponce which issues the same kind of paper. The silver and the paper money have always circulated at the same rate, excepting one time during the late war [when] the people of Ponce became skeptical concerning the soundness of the Bank of Spain at St. John's and they refused for a time the paper of its issue. However, I think the solvency of the Bank of Spain of Porto Rico, at St. John's is now a generally accepted fact and their paper circulates throughout the Island as usual.

The peso of this Island has always fluctuated like wheat on the Chicago Board of Trade. Since I have been in this Island, I have seen the peso nearly at par with American money and within ten days an American dollar was worth one dollar and eighty cents of the peso. I sold gold here during the war as high as two dollars and forty-five cents and I am told it sold in some parts of the Island as high as two dollars and seventy cents. When the United States Army

⁴⁵ Despacho No. 114

landed at Ponce, the rate of exchange at Ponce was two dollars and twenty-five cents and in other parts of the Island it was higher; but our people began to need change and the bankers took advantage of the situation in which the American Army and Navy were placed and they began to make them pay changing their gold and American paper into silver change. Within two weeks, American money dropped from two dollars and twenty-five cents to one dollar and forty cents, and the Spanish bankers of this Island have been reaping a harvest at the expense of the American soldier ever since. I will furnish further information on this subject.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna

Consul

[34] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, October 28, 1898**⁴⁶

Sir:

In relation to the money question of Porto Rico, I have the honor to further state that, since the peso has for many years been the basis of trade and because all loans and mortgages have been made on said basis, I am firm in the conviction that the peso at its former average value should be continued as a debt-paying medium. It should be a great injustice to the borrower who obtained money by security on his sugar estate or plantation and received such loans from the banks in pesos when pesos were worth forty cents, American gold, to be compelled to pay off said loans in a more valuable money.

There is a very strong desire on the part of a few bankers and money brokers here to have the United States Government call in the peso and they hope the United States will be generous enough to re-mint the peso and call it a dollar or that they will get at least ninety to ninety-five cents, American money, for each peso taken up. Then they want the peso abolished and all debts payable in American dollars.

If our Government should be so liberal as to pay a price therefor[e] far above what it has circulated for in the land for which it was made. If our Government should, in an attempt to show liberality toward this Island (which surely needs to be helped) pay more for this money than the poor man has had to sell it back to the banker, no one would receive any benefit but the banker and broker who have hoarded it away in their vaults. If those heavily in debt who borrowed pesos when they represented forty cents each should be compelled to pay these debts in dollars that cost one hundred cents, the bankers would grow fat and the people of the Island who are in debt would be ruined. The people of this Island who understand the subject in the least hope that debts in cheap pesos can be paid in pesos of like value. And I hope that whatever change is made in the monetary system of this group of Islands, the rights of the poor and those struggling under heavy debts will be protected.

I have in mind a Porto Rican gentleman who last summer was compelled to borrow ten thousand pesos. As security, he gave a first mortgage on his estate. He was compelled to pay twelve per cent [of] interest for such loan and at the time the peso had a value - as compared with gold- of about forty cents, so that he only received in value about four thousand dollars. Should the desire of the banker be granted and the peso made worth ninety-five cents, he will have to pay, when his loan is due, ninety-five hundred dollars for the four thousand dollars of value received. The banker, beside gaining the high rate of interest, would gain forty-five hundred dollars, at a like loss to the plantation owner.

I believe that our Government will protect the people here in their rights and see that so long as peso debts exists the peso shall have power to cancel such debts. I hope the time will

⁴⁶ Despacho No. 115

come when the United States dollar will be the trade basis of this Island and I should be glad to see some policy adopted which would put an end to the fluctuation of money, but I do not deem it to the interest of the people that any policy be adopted that would lower the purchasing value of an American dollar, and I do not believe it a wise policy to adopt methods which bring wealth and prosperity only to the banker and the rich.

It appears to me that the United States could in justice to all parties, rich and poor, call in the silver peso and it might be recoined especially for the use of this Island for a period in which old debts could be wiped out. On one side of this special coin the declaration could appear: "This is a Puerto Rican peso". That side would read that it would pay debts to the amount of a peso. On the other side, it could read: "United States of America: Forty cents", or fifty cents or whatever our Government saw proper to pay for it. This would determine the relation of United States and Porto Rican money to each other and to my mind would stop the fluctuation of money and put an end to gambling therein.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
Consul

[35] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, October 31, 1898**⁴⁷

Sir:

Concerning the money question here, I have the honor to say that the situation is every day becoming more serious. The bankers have cornered the money market and the soldiers and citizens are at their mercy. Good American money that used to be worth two dollars and twenty-five (\$2.25) to two dollars and seventy (\$2.70) cents in Porto Rican money is now only worth one dollar and forty (\$1.40) cents to one dollars and sixty (\$1.60) cents and is rapidly declining in purchasing value. The people are bitterly complaining and they feel that the United States should immediately adopt some wise policy to bring relief.

Since the policy went into effect of collecting only Porto Rican pesos for custom dues, the bankers, realizing that the peso was the only money that would pay duties, have tied up the peso, advanced the price of it and, if this policy is continued very long, they hope to get an American dollar for every peso they have in their vaults.

One banker informed me very happily yesterday that this present policy of the Government in the Island just suited him. He said: "If we can only have this order continue for sixty days longer, I will be selling pesos at a premium. American gold won't be in it, for you see, the merchants must now pay duties in pesos and they only hold a small amount in pesos, as they have been selling goods to soldiers and Americans for American money. Now, they have to get pesos somewhere to pay duties, and if I am not mistaken, they'll have to pay us a good big price before this thing is over with."

In my opinion, after a careful study of the question, an order of the Government requiring all duties to be paid in American money would bring immediate relief to the present serious state of affairs. The policy [of] requiring duties paid in pesos makes Porto Rican money rank first, makes it an actual necessity, as American money is not taken at the Custom House. There is a plenty of American money in the Island to transact business with and to pay all duties, and, if an order were given to all custom collectors to accept only American money for duties, American money would at once take its proper rank, return to its correct value, would be once more in demand (which it is not now) and Porto Rican money would at once begin to circulate at a

⁴⁷ Despacho No. 116

reasonable and proper rate. The supply of pesos being limited makes the market an easy corner, but if American money should be required henceforth for payment of all duties, since the supply is unlimited, the market could not be cornered. If the Government required all duties paid in United States money, then bankers would cease *to tie* up even the Porto Rican money and it would circulate at its proper rate as heretofore.

I am convinced that the plan of collecting a part of Porto Rican and a part of United States money would not greatly help the situation. This has been tried at Ponce. I am convinced that the collection of all custom dues in United States money would immediately solve the case and bring contentment to the people. I recommend that all custom dues and money due the United States in this Island be collected in American money; and that the peso be left to pay debts made in pesos and for local use. Then, I believe, the few bankers of this Island will cease to hold the people at their mercy.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 Consul

[36] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, November 17, 1898**⁴⁸

Sir:

I have the honor to state that it is my opinion that the most important question which relates to this Island today is that of the tariff on goods imported and exported. Porto Rican merchants are daily complaining that in many respects the tariff in effect now is even heavier than any placed upon them when Spain was in power, that many of the goods most used in this Island have today a higher import duty than when the Spaniards were in possession.

Of one thing I am fully convinced: Porto Rico will never become a prosperous island until there is a radical change of the tariff, and we can never hope to make Americans out of Porto Ricans until we begin to prove to them that it is for their practical benefit to be Americans. We must begin by treating them as we do the balance of the American family, and let them trade free with all parts of the United States.

This country needs cheap bread, but it cannot be had as long as a high duty exists on American flour. These people need many things which the farmers and factories of the United States have an abundance of to sell, but these poor people cannot afford to buy so long as the tariff exists. This country needs factories in which to employ thousands of laboring people, but no American will build such a factory here so long as he has to pay a high rate of duty on the material he ships in from the States. Several parties from the States have been here to erect large resort hotels, but they all say they cannot afford to build while the duty on American material exists. Hundreds of Americans representing millions of capital are waiting for the duty to be taken off American products; then they will build mills, factories, foundries, shops, refineries, railroads, streetcar lines and give employment to tens of thousands of the working class in Porto Rico.

If we want these people at home, and in order to do this we must invite capital to invest in this Island. We will then see factories erected that will employ thousands of these cheap laborers. Our people will pay them better wages they have had before and they will become happy, contented citizens. Bread will be cheaper and work more plentiful. Their children will be clothed and educated, and the giving to this Island [of] free trade with the United States becomes a moral question.

⁴⁸ Despacho No. 125

I hope to see this Island made American in every sense of the word and I hope our people will cease charging Porto Ricans for landing American shores. Porto Ricans should also be allowed to sell their products in the United States free of duties. Porto Ricans should be treated the same as our people are in any territory belonging to the United States. Then will this Island become prosperous.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 Consul

[37] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, December 22, 1898⁴⁹

Sir:

I have the honor to call your attention to the fact that very many complaints are being made by merchants and others concerning the present system of collection of duties at this and other Porto Rican ports. I am informed that an order exists prohibiting the paying of customs duty in United States money; that the gold or silver coin or paper of the United States is absolutely refused at the Custom House for more than one half of each merchant duties.

I think there is no other place on earth where the gold of the United States has ever been refused in full payment for all kinds of dues, excepting in Porto Rico, now under American rule. There never was a time under Spanish rule when the American gold dollar was refused at Spanish Custom Houses and I am sorry to say that an order exists today that discriminates against the American dollar.

The head of an importing house came to me today with the following statement:

"Some days ago, an American gentleman came to us to act as his agent in receiving a certain shipment of goods which he has ordered sent here from the United States. He was going away and he requested us to receive the goods as his agent and to pay the duty. He calculated that the duty would be about \$500.00 American gold and he deposited with us that amount to meet said duties on the arrival of the goods.

"After his departure the goods came and I went to the Customs House and presented United States gold for all the duty, that being the kind of money the gentleman had left with us. I was then notified by the collector of customs that he was ordered to receive only one half the amount of the duty on goods in American money and the other half in Porto Rican money at the rate of fifty (50) American cents for each peso and the American half of the money at the rate of two pesos for one American dollar. He would not receive more than one half of the amount of the duty in American money. I was compelled to go to the bank and buy Porto Rican pesos with my client's American gold, receiving then \$1.65 of Porto Rican money for each American dollar. When I brought said Porto Rican money to the Custom House I found it required 200 cents of the Porto Rican money which I had purchased with my client's gold to pay one American dollar's worth of duty, thereby causing my client to lose 35 cents of a peso on each American dollar's worth of pesos that I was compelled to buy, and thereby causing to some unknown person a profit of 35 cents of a peso on each dollar's worth of pesos purchased on said transaction. I only hope the unknown person accounts for such profit to the Government and that the Government gets the 35 cents profit.

But what is stranger, with all the tens of thousands of pesos which are collected at the rate of 50 American cents each, no merchant, private citizen, private soldier nor officer of the Government that I know of, is able to get back any of these pesos, excepting at the rate of 1.60 to 1.65

⁴⁹ Despacho No. 137

cents of a peso for each American dollar. What becomes of the other 35 or 40 cents is a mystery and such a mystery as if left to reveal by some of the American yellow journals which are opposed to the administration. I fear they will bring discredit and injury to the present honest and good American administration.

I wish to earnestly call your attention to the above and to add that such statements as this are being made every day by the more honorable and thoughtful class of citizens who jealously guard the good reputation of the Government. It appears plain to me that if the Government would at once cable instructions for all duties to be paid in American money, such instruction would prove a complete remedy and there would be no longer any such "myste-ries" as above referred to, which now appears too deep for common people like merchants or consuls to solve.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
United States Consul

CARTAS CONSULARES FRANCESAS

[38] **Partida de los Diputados de Puerto Rico. Inspección del Capitán Gen. Bancos, Telégrafos etc., Puerto Rico, 2 de julio de 1869**⁵⁰

Señor Ministro,

En el momento en que los diputados nombrados por la isla de Puerto Rico se embarcaban para ir a ocupar su asiento en las Cortes Constituyentes de la metrópoli, el Capitán General partía, también, para realizar su visita de inspección.

Cabe señalar algunas circunstancias que precedieron la partida de los diputados. Aunque éstos representan partidos diferentes, como he tenido oportunidad de indicar a Vuestra Excelencia, sin embargo, han hecho llegar a las poblaciones una manifestación colectiva en la que reconocen toda la importancia del mandato que se les ha confiado y prometen cumplirlo escrupulosamente. Recomiendan, sobre todo, esperar con calma los resultados de su misión, que no puede dejar de ser para la colonia sino una fuente de bienestar y de prosperidad. Hubo comisiones de personas notables que los acompañaron hasta el vapor. Sería deseable que el gobierno no se volviera a burlar de la espera de los habitantes. Se han hecho muchas promesas y, no hay por qué disimular que la tranquilidad del país, es más, la permanencia del dominio español, depende de lo que se conceda.

Hace cuatro días que el Capitán General regresó. Comenzando por las villas donde la lucha electoral había sido muy viva, el General Sanz quiso averiguar por sí mismo y con exactitud, el verdadero valor de esta escisión que aquí se califica como *peninsulares* e *insulares*; es decir, europeos e hijos del país. Según sus observaciones, no sería tan peligrosa como se dice. Empero, creo que amerita tomarse en consideración. De igual forma, deseaba conocer el verdadero espíritu que animaba a los batallones de voluntarios. Como están compuestos exclusivamente por gente de orden con "reformas progresivas y sabias", cree poder contar con ellos, de ser necesario, aunque está claro con qué condiciones. El General inspeccionó igualmente las diferentes administraciones de las villas por donde pasó; la verificación de los registros de la aduana de Aguadilla constató irregularidades tales que ordenó el arresto inmediato de todos los empleados.

Este acto enérgico ha causado en Puerto Rico una sensación un tanto más febril toda vez que el administrador es yerno del diputado Fernández, el propietario más rico de la colonia.

El regreso de S. E. a la capital se distinguió por una recepción entusiasta por parte del municipio y del comercio. Por primera vez, una parte del batallón de voluntarios tomó las armas.

El mes de junio suele ser una época de fiestas y de regocijo para Puerto Rico. Desde tiempos inmemorables se festeja solemnemente el día de San Juan Bautista, patrón de la villa. No ha sucedido así en 1869; la crisis por la que atraviesa la Isla y, sobre todo, la incertidumbre que presenta el porvenir no han permitido darle el brillo de años anteriores.

De nuevo se ha puesto sobre el tapete un proyecto ya viejo, esta vez con ciertas oportunidades de éxito. Me refiero al establecimiento de un banco de emisión y descuento. Desde hace algunos años se había concedido el permiso, se habían redactado los estatutos, el

⁵⁰ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 14.

capital casi estaba suscrito, pero surgieron dificultades; dificultades suscitadas por los poderosos negociantes del país, que son ahora los dueños del mercado, y a quienes esta institución, bien establecida y bien reglamentada, no puede más que contrariar. Ya no se hablaba de ello, y no se habría hablado más probablemente, si no fuera porque un capitalista español solicitó al gobierno de Madrid el privilegio de establecer un banco en Puerto Rico. Como ya existía una concesión anterior, la administración no quiso tomar una decisión antes de saber si aquellos a los que había otorgado la concesión anteriormente, habían renunciado a ello. Por eso se hizo un llamado, por medio del diario oficial, a todos los suscriptores originales, para fijar un plazo de veinte días para desistir o desembolsar los fondos.

Hay otro proyecto, muy viejo también, que se acaba de volver a considerar y ya se han dado órdenes de ponerlo en efecto. Se trata del establecimiento de una línea telegráfica eléctrica de la Capital a Arecibo. Para ello también se había adoptado la vía de suscripción. Los suscriptores están sujetos al pago de cuotas. Según las informaciones que nos da el diario oficial, los fondos ingresan en caja. Arecibo es un puerto de la costa norte, poco frecuentado, y donde los vapores de la isla de Cuba no hacen escala. Comenzará a ser verdaderamente útil cuando comunique a Aguadilla, Mayagüez y Ponce con la Capital. Los vapores que hacen escala en Mayagüez, las noticias importantes y los precios de los mercados de Cuba podrán conocerse un día antes. En todo caso, es una mejora que representa un paso hacia el progreso que tanto necesita la colonia, desprovista aún, no solamente de ferrocarriles, sino de rutas. En efecto, apenas si podemos contar en toda la Isla una centena de kilómetros de caminos realmente transitables.

En mi despacho del pasado 7 de junio, señalé a Vuestra Excelencia una tentativa de levantamiento del batallón de Infantería de Valladolid. No se conocen muchos detalles. En las circunstancias actuales, hemos creído nuestro deber echar tierra a dicho asunto. Sin embargo, trece acusados comparecieron ante un consejo de guerra. Cuatro fueron condenados a pasar por las armas (creemos en la conmutación de la pena), tres a las galeras y los otros puestos en libertad.

No terminaré este despacho, Señor Ministro, sin mencionar la recepción cordial que me hiciera el Capitán General Sanz el día en que regresó a la capital. Quiso informarme bien de sus proyectos de mejora y me dijo al despedirse: "Mi viaje ha tenido éxito, ya verá que dará frutos". Me anunció también su próxima salida hacia la otra parte de la Isla.

No dejaré, Señor Ministro, de tener a Vuestra Excelencia al corriente de los sucesos que me parezcan de naturaleza interesante.

No pierdo de vista, Señor Ministro, la petición que el Sr. Esmein ha enviado al Capitán General a fin de obtener la renovación de un privilegio para el establecimiento de fábricas centrales de azúcares. La administración de finanzas la examina desde hace algún tiempo, y el General Sanz me ha prometido que, una vez el informe llegue a sus manos, se apresurará a darme a conocer la decisión. Me encargaré, Señor Ministro, de darla a conocer a Vuestra Excelencia tan pronto me sea informada.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
 Señor Ministro,
 de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
 y muy obediente servidor
 [rúbrica] Emile Coste

[39] Asunto del Sr. Esmein: solicitud de una renovación de privilegio, Puerto Rico, 16 de agosto de 1869⁵¹

Señor Ministro,

Aunque ya ha pasado bastante tiempo y a pesar de sus reiteradas promesas, el Sr. Capitán General aún no me ha dado a conocer la solución que desea dar a la solicitud que le ha enviado el Sr. Esmein, al efecto de obtener la renovación de un privilegio, ya antes concedido a otro francés, para establecer fábricas centrales de azúcares. Todo el deseo que yo pueda tener por obtenerla se desvanece frente a los mecanismos complicados de la administración.

Para que Vuestra Excelencia pueda darse cuenta con exactitud de la dificultad y de la lentitud que enfrenta uno aquí, en cada paso, en el manejo de los asuntos, me bastará darle a conocer a Vuestra Excelencia lo que ha sucedido con la solicitud del Sr. Esmein. Transmitida por mí, el pasado 22 de mayo, al Capitán General, permaneció cerca de un mes en las oficinas para traducirse. Una vez cumplida dicha formalidad, la misma se envió a la administración de finanzas y, por esta última, al Consejo de administración. La opinión del Consejo se inclinaba a rechazar la petición, basándose en el artículo 23 del real decreto del 30 de julio de 1833 sobre las patentes, que declara prescrita por ley y, sin que se pueda prorrogar, toda patente que no se haya utilizado en el año y un día a partir de su expedición. Los documentos se enviaron de inmediato al departamento de finanzas, donde se encuentran aún en este momento. La última transmisión que falta por hacer ahora es el envío de todos los documentos del departamento de finanzas al gobierno, para que pueda responder oficialmente a mi comunicación. Mas parece que la copia del privilegio adjuntada a la petición se ha extraviado en las oficinas y se hacen necesarias nuevas dilaciones para que el departamento de finanzas pueda solicitar a los archivos del gobierno una segunda copia en reemplazo de la que se extravió. Entonces, sólo el Capitán General me podrá dar a conocer su decisión.

Estos informes que he obtenido, Señor Ministro, sólo por vía indirecta, aunque segura, me permiten juzgar, desde ahora, el resultado de este asunto. Tal como lo presentó el Sr. Esmein, no puede tener una solución favorable, ya que se apoya en un precedente que no tiene ningún valor en virtud del real decreto antes citado.

Creo, pues, que sería útil —sin que ello, no obstante, me garantice el éxito— que el Sr. Esmein haga una nueva solicitud de privilegio, sin mencionar para nada y por nada la que se concedió anteriormente. De esta forma, la administración realizará un nuevo estudio, desde un punto de vista totalmente diferente y, quizás entonces se pueda obtener la concesión que solicita el Sr. Esmein.

Sin embargo, no hay por qué disimular que todo esto será prolongado y difícil.

Recomendaré, pues, al Sr. Esmein, Señor Ministro, que en caso de que envíe una nueva solicitud a este gobierno colonial, la haga en los términos más breves y precisos posibles y, sobre todo, desde un punto de vista puramente práctico. Ese es el precio que se debe pagar por una probabilidad de éxito.

En las diferentes cartas que me ha enviado el Sr. Esmein, me ha dicho que puede obtener de uno de los amigos íntimos del Capitán General una recomendación para él. Creo mi deber exhortarlo a que aproveche la oportunidad, ya que sin duda le será de gran utilidad.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,

Señor Ministro,

de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
y muy obediente servidor

[rúbrica] Emile Coste

⁵¹ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 18.

[40] **Puerto Rico, 12 de mayo de 1869**⁵²

Señor Ministro,

Tengo el honor de transmitir adjunto a Vuestra Excelencia la tabla comparativa de las cosechas de la isla de Puerto Rico, durante el período de 1863-1868.

Dicho estado señala que en el año 1868 se obtuvieron buenos resultados.

Algunos artículos: azúcares, melazas, algodones, cueros arrojan cifras mejores que las de 1867.

El café se mantiene estacionario, por así decirlo, y más bien tiende a disminuir. Para 1868 la cifra es, en efecto, menor que para 1867.

Es menester señalar una prueba realizada con los algodones en 1868, cuando por primera vez se hizo una exportación de algodón en rama por cuenta del estado. Sin embargo, este cultivo muestra poco futuro, las cifras son bajas y en algunos puntos de la Isla ha sido abandonado completamente.

Dos producciones importantes de la Isla llaman la atención por lo bajo de sus cifras, más aún cuando, cada año, la diferencia, en disminución, se vuelve más marcada: primero el tabaco, que presenta una diferencia de 39,908 quintales sobre la cosecha de 1863. De 1867 a 1868, la diferencia es sólo de 846 quintales. No es menos cierto que, al parecer, se está abandonando progresivamente el cultivo de esta solanácea que no puede competir con producciones similares, muy superiores en calidad, de las Islas de Cuba y Santo Domingo. Luego viene el ron. La diferencia de 1863 a 1868 es de 85,781 galones; la de 1867 a 1868, de 11,020 galones. La falta de destilerías bien organizadas, y la preferencia que ha tenido la materia prima, en estos últimos años, en el mercado americano explican estas diferencias.

Los países que compran los productos de Puerto Rico son:

Melazas -	Estados Unidos y las provincias de Nueva Inglaterra
Azúcares -	Estados Unidos, las provincias de Nueva Inglaterra, Alemania, Inglaterra, España y Francia
Café -	La Isla de Cuba, Inglaterra, España, Francia e Italia
Tabaco y Algodón -	Casi en su totalidad en Alemania
Cueros -	Casi exclusivamente en España

Los precios de estos productos han sido:

Azúcares:	4\$ ¼ a 5\$ 5/8 (24 f. 25 ct. = 28 f.) el quintal (el quintal equivale a 100 Libras)
Melazas:	0.\$ 25 ct. (1f.25) el Galón
Café:	12.\$ ¾ (60f.75) el quintal
Ron:	10.\$ (50.f) los 110 Galones, el tonel adicional.
Cueros suaves:	12\$ ½ (62.f) el quintal
“ salados:	9 a 9\$ ½ (45f a 47f) el quintal

⁵² Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 5.

Las zonas de producción se subdividen de la manera siguiente:

El azúcar se cultiva en toda la Isla, sin embargo los terrenos más apropiados son los de la parte sur sureste y oeste: Ponce, en primera fila, al sur; Mayagüez al oeste; Arroyo-Guayama al sureste.

El café en la parte norte = Aguadilla; oeste = Mayagüez; y un poco al suroeste = Guayanilla y Guánica.

El tabaco casi exclusivamente en el norte = San Juan, Arecibo y Manatí; algunas plantaciones en el sur = Ponce y Jobos. Naguabo es el puerto de la Isla que mantiene relaciones continuas con las posesiones francesas Guadalupe y Martinica. Un decreto muy reciente del General Gobernador de la Isla, con fecha del 7 de marzo de 1869, ha paralizado las exportaciones, confiamos en que momentáneamente.

A todos los productos del país se les grava un impuesto a la salida:

Azúcares por bocoy	- 6 escudos	(15.f 75 ct)
Melazas idem	- 1 id. 30 []	(3.41)
Café por quintal	- 2 “	(2.62)
Tabaco idem	- 400. []	(1.05)

Los propietarios han visto con malos ojos esta medida que no había existido antes en la Isla. Las casas que compran para la exportación han suspendido sus compras. Los propietarios, forzados a vender para hacer frente a sus compromisos, se ven obligados a sufragar, por encima del precio del mercado, el descuento de los impuestos pagaderos al momento de la exportación. La situación actual de la isla de Cuba permite que este nuevo impuesto aún sea soportable, ya que los precios son buenos en el mercado de Puerto Rico y las exportaciones de la isla de Cuba son muy inferiores a las de los años anteriores.

Según parece, por las cifras de la tabla comparativa de los resultados de la isla de Puerto Rico, esta colonia debe hallarse en un estado, si no floreciente, al menos exento de una crisis seria. No obstante, ello no es así. Mas no es necesario buscar la causa de la estrechez por la que atraviesa la Isla, en el rendimiento superior o inferior de la cosecha anual. Si bien es cierto que ésta puede atenuar, no es tan importante como para hacer desaparecer un mal que tiene raíces demasiado profundas. Lo que le falta a Puerto Rico son capitales, instituciones de crédito para desarrollar sus fuerzas productivas y ayudar al comercio en sus transacciones. Se trata al fin y al cabo, y sobre todo, de la penuria total en la que se encuentra el Tesoro. Es necesario remontarse a hace algunos años atrás, para poder explicar esta situación. En Puerto Rico existía una moneda colonial, conocida en el país con el nombre genérico de “moneda macuquina”, la cual tenía circulación, única y exclusivamente, en la colonia. Las transacciones se llevaban a cabo ampliamente y con creces; la moneda no escaseaba nunca, al no ser susceptible a la exportación. El gobierno ordenó, por decreto, la desmonetización y la reemplazó por la moneda que tiene circulación legal en España. La ley elevada de esta última produjo un comercio de exportación con los Estados Unidos, que el gobierno no detuvo; comercio que ha dado los resultados que vemos hoy. Es decir, que en un país español, todas las transacciones se hacen mediante una moneda americana de una ley muy débil y desprovista de un control serio, puesto que proviene de una fabricación particular. Hay un hecho que debo señalar para explicar la desaparición del oro español de la isla de Puerto Rico: Desde hace muchos años, la moneda conocida con el nombre de “Onza de oro” se pagaba y aceptaba en el comercio de La Habana, a razón de 17 piastras fuertes, y en Puerto Rico, por el contrario, sólo se recibía por su valor real (16 piastras). Algunas veces, ésta resultaba ventajosa, ya que podía variar, según las circunstancias, de un 4 a un 4½ y hasta un 5 por ciento; pero, a pesar de esto, los negociantes tenían total interés en hacer las remesas en oro a la isla de Cuba, porque se beneficiaban de una piastra por onza. Hoy día se ha tomado una medida similar en Puerto Rico, aunque demasiado tarde. A todos estos hechos viene a sumarse, en 1863, la guerra de

Santo Domingo. Mientras duró, el Tesoro de la isla de Puerto Rico, incluso los fondos municipales, se agotaron completamente. Esta reserva, producto de tiempos mejores, servía para equilibrar el presupuesto en espera del ingreso de las contribuciones. Empero, al no existir más la reserva, al aumentar los gastos cada año mientras, por el contrario, los ingresos tienden a disminuir, se ha producido un déficit que se ha ido agudizando sucesivamente y que nunca se ha podido subsanar. Por eso ahora vemos a los empleados sin trabajo, incluso a los oficiales del ejército, con un retraso de cuatro meses, y todos los compromisos del Tesoro atrasados, lo que ocasiona una estrechez tanto más general, toda vez que alcanza las bolsas pequeñas.

El municipio se encuentra en la misma situación, pues su reserva fue absorbida de la misma manera. Por esto, todos los días nuevos impuestos aumentan las cargas, ya muy fuertes, de los contribuyentes. Una de las causas que han agravado aún más los apuros financieros de la administración es la diferencia notable en el rendimiento de las aduanas durante el año 1868, ocasionado por una medida que todavía no se ha anulado (buena, en el fondo, pero que sólo ha servido para disminuir los ingresos del Tesoro sin ninguna ganancia para las poblaciones). En 1867, a causa de las calamidades que se abalanzaron sobre la colonia: huracanes, temblores de tierra, el gobierno de la metrópoli creyó sabio decretar la importación libre de todos los artículos, que se dice son de primera necesidad y cuyo detalle venía anexado al Decreto. El precio de los artículos no bajó, por ello, al consumo. Como el comercio de la Isla estaba en manos de algunos negociantes, los cuales mandan como dueños y señores en el mercado, siendo los únicos detentores de los productos, eran ellos quienes fijaban los precios; de manera que el decreto del gobierno no lucraba más que a estos últimos. Estos hechos presentan hoy un carácter un tanto más serio, toda vez que las poblaciones necesitarán un mayor bienestar para mantenerse sordas a las insinuaciones malintencionadas que los enemigos de la metrópoli no dejan de repetir. Es necesario, sin embargo, admitir en principio que el mal existe, mal que prácticamente no tiene remedio, porque para hacerlo desaparecer sería necesario que el déficit se subsanara y que se creara una reserva que permitiese a la administración esperar la entrada de los impuestos, como otras veces. Sería necesario, sobre todo, la nivelación del presupuesto de la Isla, incluso su revisión, para llevarlo a lo que era antes; es decir, a un presupuesto de provincia. Todas estas consideraciones muestran el estado actual del comercio de la isla de Puerto Rico, el cual se puede resumir en varias palabras: paralización general con tendencia a agravarse; ninguna empresa nueva o esfuerzo importante, sino por el contrario, para poder liquidar, los capitales se retiran completamente de circulación y de todos los asuntos comerciales por temor a complicaciones políticas.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro,
de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[41] Solicitud de privilegio para establecer fábricas centrales de azúcar, Puerto Rico, 23 de mayo de 1869⁵³

Señor Ministro,

He recibido el despacho que Vuestra Excelencia ha tenido el honor de escribirme el pasado 5 de abril, y mediante el cual tiene a bien transmitirme una petición que el Sr. Esmein, negociante de París, envía al Capitán General de Puerto Rico, a fin de obtener la renovación de un privilegio, anteriormente concedido a otro negociante francés, para establecer fábricas centrales de azúcares.

⁵³ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 7.

Me apresuré a hacer llegar dicha solicitud a su destino, luego de haber tenido conocimiento de la misma.

El proyecto del Sr. Esmein me parece una empresa grande y loable, desde el punto de vista teórico, pero considerándolo únicamente en el terreno práctico, como se deben estudiar, además, todas las cuestiones comerciales, me parece que presenta dificultades serias que quizás podrían presentar un escollo para la buena voluntad, el espíritu de empresa y los capitales de los asociados.

Un punto esencial es que la Compañía no puede ni debe contar, de ninguna manera, con los capitales nativos, porque los que podrían suscribir seriamente, son precisamente los interesados en que la situación actual continúe de forma indefinida.

Tampoco hay por qué disimular que los primeros pasos de la Compañía serán costosos y penosos, desavenencias en la compra de terrenos para la instalación de las fábricas, dificultades para obtener los materiales de construcción, más obstáculos aún para los medios de transporte, mano de obra cara, escasa y poco inteligente.

Además, se debe tener en cuenta que estamos en 1869 y que, desde 1854, aunque no se hayan hecho grandes progresos, las haciendas importantes han sufrido cambios en sus instalaciones y su maquinaria. Salvo por raras excepciones, poseen máquinas buenas y excelentes, muchas de las cuales incluso han alcanzado el último grado de perfeccionamiento.

A mi entender, la compañía no debería contar, pues, desde su instalación con las cosechas de los grandes propietarios, las cuales podrían ofrecer una compensación seria en consideración del capital comprometido. Poco a poco reconocerán la prueba del hecho consumado y emprenderán, quizás, el nuevo camino que se les deparará una vez establecidas, ya que el material actual se encuentra en mal estado y se verán obligados a encargarse de su reparación.

Por otro lado, no hay mucho que decir acerca del acicate civilizador del interés personal por los jíbaros (campesinos), porque son indolentes por naturaleza y sus necesidades son limitadas. Es cierto que se interesan por las cosas, pero sin ninguna instrucción, y carecen por completo de todo espíritu de iniciativa.

También existe, y no de manera insignificante en Puerto Rico, un celo por parte de la administración hacia todas las empresas extranjeras, que en vez de favorecer su desarrollo mediante estímulos y franquicias, se las arregla para levantar obstáculos en el camino que hay que recorrer. En fin, que se tienen que vencer la vieja rutina y los intereses creados.

Todas estas consideraciones me llevan a pensar que el éxito de esta empresa exige condiciones completamente especiales. Primero un capital disponible y suficiente para poder instalar todo y, de ser necesario, para hacer los anticipos de fondos necesarios a los propietarios de plantaciones endeudados, librarlos de quienes dependen hoy día e interesarlos, por ese medio, en el éxito del nuevo orden y, lo que es más importante, de una administración prudente e ilustrada, que conozca a fondo el país, que haga las cosas sin imponerse, que siga su programa, pero poco a poco, teniendo mucho cuidado de adaptarlo a los usos y costumbres de la colonia; porque para que cualquier reforma tenga oportunidades de éxito, es necesario que el país en el que se va a aplicar esté lo suficientemente preparado para recibirla y que comprenda bien todas sus ventajas.

Sólo me falta apreciar las ventajas que el comercio francés podría obtener del establecimiento de las fábricas centrales de azúcares.

Es indiscutible que mientras más se desarrolla el comercio de exportación y de importación en un país, más importante se vuelve necesariamente el movimiento marítimo, sobre todo cuando se trata de una isla. No obstante, opino que las ventajas que obtendrá la marina francesa del establecimiento de estas fábricas no podrían tener, de ningún modo, una importancia muy grande, porque siempre existirán los derechos diferenciales de pabellón. En lo que respecta a las importaciones, aunque la Compañía haga traer todo de Francia, tendrá mucho cuidado de fletar, para su transporte, de preferencia naves españolas, para poder disfrutar en la entrada de un derecho diferencial de aduana que varía de un 6 a un 8%.

Así pues, sólo como último recurso y cuando no encuentre naves españolas, recurrirá al pabellón francés.

En cuanto a las exportaciones, basta con echar un vistazo a las estadísticas comerciales de la Isla, para ver que la marina francesa no ganará mucho, a pesar de todo el desarrollo que se pueda dar a las fuerzas productivas del país, ya que los principales mercados que compran los productos de Puerto Rico son los Estados Unidos, Inglaterra, España y las Ciudades Hanseáticas, y nuestro pabellón siempre tendrá que luchar contra las preferencias concedidas al pabellón nacional en cada uno de los países que acabo de señalar. Francia compra poco a Puerto Rico; tiene sus colonias y sobre todo una industria similar de azúcares de remolacha que compite con las azúcares de caña. Las ventajas se verán restringidas, pues, y tendrán tan poca importancia que no creo que se deba considerarla seriamente.

Es deseable, sin embargo, que la Compañía obtenga su privilegio. Sería bueno que Puerto Rico les debiera a la iniciativa y a los capitales franceses, una empresa destinada a cambiar de arriba abajo el sistema de explotación y de cultivo que se sigue hasta el día de hoy. Por lo demás, Señor Ministro, no dejaré de tener a Vuestra Excelencia al corriente del seguimiento que se dará a la solicitud del Sr. Esmein y, de realizarse dicha empresa, Vuestra Excelencia puede estar seguro de que haré cualquier cosa por instruir a la Compañía y por defender, si viene al caso, los derechos que se le podrían conceder.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro,
de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[42] **Arancel de Aduanas vigente en la isla de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 21 de octubre de 1869**⁵⁴

Señor Ministro,

Tengo el honor de enviar con faja, a Vuestra Excelencia, los aranceles generales de aduanas, vigentes en este momento en la isla de Puerto Rico, los cuales ha tenido a bien requerirme en su despacho del pasado 9 de septiembre.

Estos aranceles, llenos de graves lagunas, ya no guardan relación con las necesidades generales del comercio, en atención a los progresos logrados desde que se confeccionaron, y creo útil, Señor Ministro, someter a la bondadosa atención de Vuestra Excelencia las observaciones que me ha sugerido el estudio serio y profundo de estos documentos.

La isla de Puerto Rico, por su posición geográfica, por la naturaleza de su suelo, por el gran desarrollo que ha tenido su población en pocos años, ya que contamos con no menos de 931 habitantes por legua cuadrada, estaba llamada a convertirse en el centro del comercio de las Antillas y en el punto donde vendrían a converger todas las líneas de comunicación entre el Atlántico y el Pacífico.

El ejemplo de la isleta vecina de San Thomas sirve para comprobar, de manera irrefutable, que si el gobierno español lo hubiera querido, Puerto Rico se hallaría hoy en un envidiable estado de prosperidad.

Sin embargo, ha sucedido todo lo contrario. Apenas posee los medios de comunicación interiores más indispensables; cualquier empresa se desvanece ante las innumerables dificultades que encuentran, a cada paso, sus iniciadores. La producción podría ser muy superior a la actual, si una organización inteligente hubiese contribuido seriamente al desarrollo de sus fuerzas productivas.

⁵⁴ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 29.

Tributarios de San Thomas durante mucho tiempo, apenas en una época relativamente reciente es que algunos negociantes han tomado el camino de Europa y han comenzado a abastecerse directamente.

De la extensión que adquirió poco a poco el comercio de importación, nació naturalmente la necesidad de reformar la reglamentación de las aduanas de la Isla.

Mientras se ocupaba de una cuestión tan importante, la administración no habría debido perder de vista que la colonia es un país esencialmente agrícola, que no había aquí ningún interés creado que salvaguardar, ninguna protección que otorgar, que no fuera en lo que pudiera activar y favorecer el desarrollo de la agricultura; que los mercados extranjeros forzosamente estaban llamados a proveer a la Isla todo lo que necesitaba. Así pues, era esencial, incluso necesario, que los aranceles se redactaran desde un punto de vista puramente fiscal, de la manera más simple posible y en condiciones bastante ventajosas, para que el consumo se volviera considerable. Por consiguiente, su rendimiento habría adquirido cada día mayores proporciones y habría traído fondos cada vez más considerables a las arcas del Tesoro, los cuales le hubieran permitido hacer frente, y mucho más, a sus necesidades inmediatas.

Sería difícil seguir paso a paso, Señor Ministro, los cambios hechos, en diversas épocas, en los aranceles generales de las aduanas de Puerto Rico. Se puede decir, sin embargo, que los primeros aranceles especiales que vinieron a reglamentar el comercio de importación y de exportación de la colonia datan de 1836. Los que rigen actualmente, desde el 1^o de enero de 1858, siguen siendo los mismos en el fondo, pero reestructurados en algunas partes por los decretos del 2 de agosto de 1849 y el 8 de agosto de 1851, provistos de un nuevo reglamento por el decreto del 5 de octubre de 1857 y de un suplemento por decreto del Intendente General de la Isla, con fecha del 5 de noviembre de 1864, y puesto en vigor a partir del 1^o de enero de 1865. Dicho suplemento contiene, entre otras cosas, diferentes modificaciones hechas en diversas épocas al reglamento general del 5 de octubre de 1857.

Hay un punto importante que debo señalar:

Por los decretos del 5 de marzo y 13 de junio de 1856, y con el propósito de desarrollar más el comercio directo de la isla de Puerto Rico con los puertos de los países productores extranjeros, se concedió una bonificación de un 6% sobre el total de derechos de importación que se deben pagar según el arancel, para toda importación venida directamente a los puertos de la Isla.

Algunas partes del reglamento del 5 de octubre de 1857 merecen una mención particular.

El comercio de cabotaje entre los diferentes puertos de la colonia, sólo puede llevarse a cabo en naves españolas. Sin embargo, el artículo 197 permite que todas las naves, sin importar su pabellón, transporten melazas entre los diversos puntos de la Isla.

El capítulo 14 entero trata sobre la organización del depósito mercantil. Éste no existía en Puerto Rico antes de 1857. Es lamentable, sin embargo, que la capital sea la única que aproveche esta excelente medida que procura tantas facilidades al comercio, al permitirle reexportar sus mercancías sin pagar derechos de aduana.

Lo que caracteriza particularmente a los aranceles generales de importación y exportación de las aduanas de Puerto Rico, es que el tanto por ciento de los derechos que se deben pagar se calcula, no sobre el valor real del objeto, sino más bien sobre el que le señala la parte del arancel. Es un error muy grave que a menudo ocasiona muchas dificultades. Por otro lado, el artículo 44 del reglamento de 1857, obliga al negociante a hacer uso, en sus declaraciones, de las mismas expresiones y los mismo números que el arancel da a las mercancías. El resultado es que, puesto que éstas últimas han cambiado mucho y los aranceles han permanecido estacionarios, la mayoría de las veces se le hace imposible al comercio evitar la multa que inflige, incluso en caso de un error involuntario, el artículo 287 del mismo reglamento. Esta disposición se ha convertido en una verdadera carga para los negociantes desde que, por decreto del Intendente general de la Isla, con fecha del 28 de septiembre de 1867, la tasa de la multa aumentó, del 2% que fijaba el artículo 287 del reglamento, a un 16%.

Cuando examinamos atentamente y en detalle las diferentes partes que componen estos aranceles, nos llaman la atención las anomalías que contienen y nos sorprendemos de que la administración, que tiene gran interés en que los enunciados sean claros y precisos para poder impedir el fraude, no haya tomado la iniciativa de una reforma radical y completa en todos los aspectos. Lo que descubrimos a primera vista es, sobre todo, que aunque se haya adoptado el sistema decimal de pesas y medidas y se haya hecho obligatorio oficialmente, todavía está en práctica el viejo sistema para todas las operaciones de aduana.

Asimismo, la piastra (5 Frs.) ha permanecido en los aranceles como unidad monetaria por el valor que se le da a los productos sujetos a derechos de importación, mientras que la unidad monetaria oficial es el Escudo (2 Frs. 50).

Por otra parte, es evidente que si se hiciera un análisis serio de la relación entre el valor que asignan los aranceles a las mercancías presentadas para la importación y su precio real en la actualidad, concluiríamos fácilmente que, tal y como están, ya no tienen razón de ser y lo único que pueden ocasionar es perjuicio a todos: al Tesoro, por hacer posible y lucrativo el contrabando; al comercio, por apresurar su desarrollo; y al consumidor, por hacerle pagar más por lo que compra.

Traeré a la atención de Vuestra Excelencia la nota de artículos admitidos para la importación, libres de todo derecho, que termina el primer arancel. Se compone, casi en su totalidad, de todo lo que puede favorecer el desarrollo de la agricultura.

Cuando en 1864 se publicó el suplemento a los aranceles de las aduanas, se quiso remediar en lo posible las dificultades que se renovaban a diario.

El propósito sólo se logró en parte, puesto que la base siguió siendo la misma: el patrón fijo del valor.

Esta medida inmutable no puede existir donde sólo hay relaciones móviles y proporciones cambiantes.

En 1864, luego de que la administración decretara obligatorio el uso del sistema decimal de pesos y medidas, para favorecer su extensión y adopción rápidas, publicó las disposiciones que contiene la nota 8, insertadas en ese mismo suplemento, y declaró libres de todo derecho para su importación y durante cuatro años, a partir del 15 de octubre de 1864, todos los artículos cuya nomenclatura acompaña la nota 8.

Estas disposiciones se encuentran abrogadas desde el 15 de octubre de 1868.

Ese es, Señor Ministro, el conjunto de aranceles generales de las aduanas que rige actualmente el comercio de importación y de exportación de la isla de Puerto Rico.

Para completar este trabajo, intentaré analizar rápidamente, y sin embargo, con suficiente entendimiento, las diferentes reformas que trae consigo el orden actual.

La verdadera noción de la riqueza debe recaer sobre todas las cosas útiles o agradables, que poseen un valor intercambiable. Así pues, conviene investigar primero los medios de desarrollar, lo más posible, las fuerzas productivas de la colonia. Para lograrlo, sería útil que se realizara un estudio inteligente de todos los artículos que pueden favorecer ese desarrollo, directa o indirectamente, y permitir que se introduzcan sin ninguna traba; además de conceder una libertad completa a la exportación de los productos y facilitar su salida simplificando las formalidades con las que hay que cumplir para embarcarlos.

Convendría, también, que el proyecto de declarar "puerto franco" toda la parte extra muros de la Capital, discutido por tanto tiempo y nunca resuelto, se tomara en seria consideración. La Isla no podría sino beneficiarse al convertirse en un puerto de depósito general de mercancías y llegaría así a contrabalancear la importancia de San Thomas. Como podría abastecerse de los cargamentos de vuelta, no pasaría mucho tiempo sin que se volviera el punto de encuentro del comercio de las Antillas.

Los aranceles de importación exigen una reforma general y completa. Nada de lo que existe puede continuar. Mientras más simples sean, menos fraude habrá. Las comisiones permanentes de aranceles también han discutido diversos proyectos; el que ha reunido la mayoría de adherentes es la clasificación de las mercancías por grupos y la recaudación de los derechos a peso y *ad valorem*, según su naturaleza.

El reglamento de 1857 exige igualmente que se simplifique en muchas partes. Es esencial no perder de vista que la celeridad y la facilidad en la expedición en aduana son condiciones muy importantes, y que mientras menos se obstaculiza el comercio, más se desarrolla.

Habiéndose dejado a un lado la supersticiosa idolatría por la manera de obrar actual, que siempre se ha opuesto al progreso más legítimo, es completamente lógico esperar, Señor Ministro, que las comisiones que el gobierno de la metrópoli acaba de nombrar, para estudiar y proponer reformas para introducir en el sistema político, administrativo y económico de la colonia, decididamente marchen por buen camino, y que la solución que darán a las diversas cuestiones que se les han presentado, será conforme a las aspiraciones justas y legítimas de los habitantes de Puerto Rico.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro,
de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[43] Viaje del Capitán General. Decreto de amnistía para los condenados y reos por delitos políticos, Puerto Rico, 16 de diciembre de 1869⁵⁵

Señor Ministro,

Un decreto del Capitán General Gobernador de la Isla, con fecha del 7 del corriente, en Mayagüez, y que hoy publica la Gaceta oficial, concede la amnistía plena y entera a todos los condenados o reos por delitos políticos.

[Las razones que han llevado a esa medida] son diversas; es bueno [considerarlas en] su verdadera perspectiva.

Desde hace mucho tiempo, las finanzas de la colonia se encuentran en total confusión. Se han hecho intentos de todas clases por llegar a salvar el déficit, pero todas las maniobras, ya sean las intentadas en La Habana o las que se elaboraron en Madrid, no han dado más que pobres resultados.

El año pasado se intentó cambiar el sistema de contribuciones, siempre con el mismo propósito. Una vez puesto en vigor, generó reclamaciones de todas partes, y la administración, vencida ante las pruebas, se vio forzada a reconocer cuán justas eran las mismas. Las reentradas que se prometían no pudieron efectuarse, pues. El equilibrio tan deseado y buscado no pudo restablecerse tampoco esta vez.

Reducida a sus propias fuerzas, la administración no logró su objetivo y sus dificultades se fueron agravando.

Empero, antes de abandonar del todo el terreno y reconocer su impotencia, se llevó a cabo un último intento.

Esta vez se acometió la exportación. Los productos de la colonia fueron gravados con un derecho de salida. Este nuevo impuesto debía terminar con la crisis, o al menos hacerla más soportable, según dicen, pero es menester creer que los resultados no respondieron a lo previsto, porque la situación crítica del Tesoro no ha cambiado.

No le quedaba, pues, ningún otro recurso a la administración, la cual ya había intentado todo lo que estaba a su alcance, que hacer un llamado al crédito público. El empréstito se hacía necesario; pero el empréstito bajo buenas condiciones.

Si esta cuestión del empréstito hubiera sido abordada con honestidad, si en vez de detenerse a mitad de camino, se hubiese levantado de una buena vez el velo sombrío que

⁵⁵ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 43.

cubre el asunto de las finanzas de la colonia, muy seguramente se habría podido llegar a una solución; porque es esencial destacar que el Tesoro es el único que afronta dificultades.

Sólo habría hecho falta que se hubiera solicitado una suma bastante fuerte para nivelarlo todo: que se emitieran las obligaciones que proporcionan interés, se reglamentara su amortización y se estipulara la garantía.

Mas no se llega tan lejos. Basta con abordar lo más apremiante: se solicitan 500,000 piastras (2,500,000 F) sin interés, se entregan bonos a los suscriptores, los cuales serán admitidos en las cajas públicas en pago de toda contribución o de derechos de aduana, a partir del 1^{ro} de enero de 1870.

Esto no es suficiente; en pocos meses habrá que recomenzar.

El empréstito se decretó, pero con la intención de hacer ingresar fondos de los que se tenía urgencia, y no se podía esperar que los suscriptores viniesen voluntariamente a aportar su dinero.

El Capitán General convocó al comercio, una comisión se reunió en la Capital, donde domina el elemento español, y acto seguido se suscribió una suma bastante fuerte. Se enviaron diputaciones del interior, pero algunas no pudieron o no quisieron comprometerse de forma definitiva.

No obstante, era necesario alcanzar la meta; debía cubrirse la suscripción. Entonces, el Capitán General se decidió a emprender un viaje por las principales villas con la esperanza de allanar con su presencia muchas de las dificultades.

El principio de su viaje tuvo éxito. La villa de Aguadilla dobló la suma que había prometido la diputación que había enviado a la Capital. Mas en Mayagüez, las cosas no mostraron un aspecto tan favorable. El Capitán General había entrado en uno de los departamentos de la Isla donde domina el espíritu independiente y liberal, con fama de ser el centro del partido separatista. Este departamento era, pues, uno de los que tenía el mayor número de condenados o de prisioneros por delitos políticos.

Resultaba bastante difícil abordar la cuestión del dinero en semejantes condiciones, sin lanzar un golpe maestro, sin contentar la opinión pública.

Ese es, Señor Ministro, el verdadero motivo de la publicación del decreto de amnistía, fechado precisamente en Mayagüez. A pesar de ello, la recepción hecha al Capitán General fue fría; la suscripción no le agradó, y para obtener lo suscrito, se vio casi forzado a emplear medios, si no violentos, al menos de los que, en ciertos casos, no toleran objeciones.

Las otras villas de la Isla: Ponce, Guayama, Humacao, no ofrecieron resistencia. El empréstito, o mejor dicho, este adelanto de las contribuciones o los derechos que se deben pagar, se efectuará; pero no es necesario, sobre todo en las circunstancias actuales, que la administración permanezca en este estado de penuria; podrían suscitarse serias complicaciones y debe evitarlas a toda costa.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
 Señor Ministro,
 de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
 y muy obediente servidor
 [rúbrica] Emile Coste

[44] **Puerto Rico, 1^{ro} de junio de 1870**⁵⁶

Señor Ministro,

La petición que el Sr. Esmein, del comercio de París, envió al Capitán General, el pasado 2 de octubre, al efecto de obtener un privilegio de diez años para la instalación de fábricas centrales de azúcares en esta colonia, luego de ocho meses de espera finalmente acaba de

⁵⁶ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 70.

llegar a una solución, la cual, por desgracia, no es la que hubiera deseado. Creo no poder darla a conocer mejor a Vuestra Excelencia sino brindándole la traducción de la carta que tengo el honor de transmitirle adjunto, dirigida al Sr. Esmein de parte del Sr. Intendente de finanzas.

Traducción* : “El Gobernador Superior Civil de esta isla, luego de haber escuchado la opinión del municipio de la Capital y la del Consejo de administración sobre la consulta que se les había solicitado en lo que respecta a la concesión del privilegio exclusivo de diez años que usted solicita para establecer fábricas centrales para la fabricación de azúcares en la Isla, y conforme a lo que esta Intendencia había propuesto, ha rechazado su instancia, fechada en París el 2 de octubre de 1869, la cual le fue presentada por el Sr. Cónsul de Francia en la Capital, tanto por los perjuicios que causaría su instalación en la provincia a las haciendas azucareras del interior, por causa de los grandes capitales que requiere ese tipo de fabricación, como porque está prescrito formalmente que todos los objetos de privilegio exclusivo deben ser máquinas, aparatos, instrumentos, procedimientos y operaciones mecánicas o químicas, y no empresas ni operaciones generales.

Este último caso abarca el privilegio que usted solicita, ya que es evidente que lo que reclama es un privilegio exclusivo que no es ni de invención ni de introducción. Ya los propietarios azucareros de esta provincia, deseosos de que el país disfrute de todos los progresos posibles, van a establecer esas mismas fábricas centrales que usted solicita y con muchas más ventajas para los propietarios de caña de azúcar a pequeña escala, porque estas fábricas se instalarán sin privilegios ni obstáculos de ninguna índole.

Por consiguiente, si conviene a sus intereses, usted puede establecer sus fábricas centrales para la fabricación de azúcares en esta provincia, pero queda claro que de ninguna manera podrán disfrutar de mayor privilegio que el que disfruten las que se van a establecer.

Lo que manifiesto para su conocimiento, etc.

27 de mayo - firmado

Belmonte.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,

Señor Ministro,

de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde

y muy obediente servidor

[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[45] **Puerto Rico, 24 de marzo de 1874**⁵⁷

Señor Ministro,

Desde la carta que tuve el honor de remitir a Vuestra Excelencia el 11 de febrero pasado para ponerle en conocimiento de la política inaugurada aquí por el nuevo Gobernador de Puerto Rico, la situación del país no ha cambiado.

El Señor General Sanz sigue afirmando sus principios conservadores y eliminando del país a todo elemento peligroso. Mientras los radicales dominaban en España, todos los gobernadores que se sucedieron en la Isla, excepto el General Gómez Pulido, representaban en diferente grado esos mismos principios y habían alejado de la armada de Puerto Rico a los dirigentes conocidos por su afiliación al partido Español y Conservador para remplazarlos por oficiales adeptos a las ideas radicales. El General Sanz hace la misma operación, pero en sentido contrario: envía a La Habana — desde donde el General Jovellar los envía a España — a todos los oficiales cuya inclinación conservadora no está bien confirmada, y manda llamar

* N. del T. — Esta es una retraducción, ya que el original en español no se encontró.

⁵⁷ Dirección de Consulados y Asuntos Comerciales, No. 82.

de la metrópoli a los dirigentes en quienes cree poder confiar. Ya ha partido de aquí más de una veintena de oficiales de todos los grados.

El país está tranquilo, pero no recobra la prosperidad tan rápido como se quisiera. Aunque la cosecha de café ha sido abundante y ha obtenido precios bien remuneradores, el azúcar, que constituye la riqueza principal de la Isla, va en descenso y su producción será muy reducida. El desarrollo de la caña se detuvo debido a una sequía que duró más de un año. Estas desafortunadas circunstancias no son propicias para que aumente el crédito público ni para que circule el dinero en el país. El numerario escasea y se paga a precios desconocidos en Europa: 12, 18 y 24 por ciento al año.

El General Sanz, a la vez que modifica sustancialmente el estado político de esta isla, se ocupa también con energía de desarrollar sus intereses materiales. En este respecto hay mucho que hacer en Puerto Rico pero la principal necesidad son las carreteras; la transportación de los productos a los mercados en muchos lugares tiene un precio excesivo. El Gobernador ha decidido construir una vía principal que atraviese la Isla yendo de Ponce a la Capital. Ya ha puesto manos a la obra; todos los prisioneros, cuyo trabajo hasta ahora sólo había generado un tráfico vergonzoso que enriquecía a los comandantes y empleados de la prisión, se han puesto a trabajar en la vía pública. Bajo la administración del General Primo de Rivera, se había decidido abrir una nueva puerta en las fortificaciones que rodean la villa para facilitar la transportación de la mercancía, pero este proyecto había quedado sin ejecutarse. El General Sanz hizo comenzar los trabajos desde su llegada, y ya se puede salir de la villa por esta vía.

Por su parte, los municipios que creó el Capitán General han gestionado alivios para los contribuyentes. Las economías obtenidas en los diversos presupuestos de la colonia durante un trimestre ascienden hoy a la suma de 108,370 piastras, es decir, 541,850 francos (cifra oficial), y prometen continuar. Había pues razón para decir, como ya lo había escrito a Vuestra Excelencia, que los consejos municipales populares habían recargado al país con un aumento en impuestos de más de dos millones de francos anuales. Para estudiar mejor las necesidades de las localidades, el General Sanz inició un recorrido hace ocho días. Visitará la costa este, el sur y el oeste de la Isla hasta Ponce, desde donde piensa regresar a San Juan.

Me resta, señor Ministro, poner a Vuestra Excelencia en conocimiento de un hecho lamentable que ocurrió en la isla de Vieques al comienzo de este mes y al que el Cónsul de Inglaterra ha dado mucha importancia.

Cuando el General Sanz llegó a la Isla, se hizo correr el rumor de que venía para restablecer la esclavitud. Enterado de esta calumnia, el Gobernador se apresuró a desmentirla y ordenó que su proclama recibiera la mayor publicidad. Se leyó en Vieques a diferentes grupos de negros pertenecientes a las plantaciones, pero en la propiedad de un danés de San Thomas, el señor Yardemull, los negros rehusaron reunirse para escuchar la lectura. Se buscó a dos guardias civiles y de su intervención resultó un conflicto en el cual los negros usaron piedras y los guardias sus revólveres. Fueron heridos tres negros y uno de ellos ha muerto de su herida; otros negros fueron arrestados y conducidos a prisión. Ahora, sucede que esta gente es oriunda de las colonias inglesas. Enterado de los hechos, el señor Cooper se quejó al General Sanz, el cual le respondió que el asunto sería remitido a los tribunales, que sería examinado con imparcialidad y que se haría justicia a quien correspondiera. No obstante, de parte y parte hubo una correspondencia bastante intensa: el Cónsul de Inglaterra solicitó un buque de guerra a su nación y se trasladó a él para emprender una investigación. Por su parte, el tribunal español emitía informes.

Estas circunstancias dieron pie a que el General Sanz se quejara al Gabinete de Madrid sobre la actitud que había asumido aquí el Cónsul de Inglaterra, y a que el señor Cooper, por su parte, remitiera a su gobierno quejas contra el Capitán General de Puerto Rico.

No conozco muy bien las circunstancias que precedieron al arresto de los trabajadores ingleses de Vieques, de modo que no puedo decir si a la Guardia Civil le faltó prudencia en esta ocasión o si se vio obligada, como ha declarado, a usar sus armas para defenderse y

hacer valer la ley, pero es probable que los tribunales esclarecerán los hechos. En cuanto al General Sanz, me parece que cumplió con su deber al remitir el caso a la justicia y someterlo a un tribunal civil para dar más garantías a los extranjeros, aunque el caso pertenezca a la jurisdicción militar.

En el momento oportuno, haré conocer a Vuestra Excelencia el veredicto que sobre este asunto dicte el Tribunal de Humacao.

Reciba el respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro,
de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
y muy obediente servidor.
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[46] Contrato de la Sociedad Unión General. 30 mil bonos del Tesoro de Puerto Rico, equivalentes a un valor de 3 millones de piastras para la indemnización a propietarios de esclavos, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 10 de julio de 1879.*

Señor Ministro,

Creo mi deber traer al conocimiento de Vuestra Excelencia un hecho que acaba de ocurrir en esta colonia. Es muy importante y toca demasiado de cerca a los intereses franceses como para no merecer la atención del gobierno.

Se trata de que una de nuestras grandes instituciones financieras, la Sociedad "Unión General" de París, ha adquirido treinta mil bonos (de los 70,000 que emitió el Tesoro de Puerto Rico para cubrir la indemnización que debe pagarse a los propietarios de esclavos) a razón de cien piastras por bono o título.

La adquisición se realizó al precio de 55 piastras corrientes por cien piastras españolas. La diferencia del cambio entre estas dos monedas es de 5.26% a favor de la Unión General.

Estos títulos habían quedado sin curso desde la emisión y no tenían utilidad en manos de los propietarios, pues pasados ya cinco años había un retraso de dos en el pago de los intereses y de los títulos repartidos.

Habiendo consentido la Unión General en pagar aquí mismo y en efectivo, el Arno, vapor anexo al Royal Mail, entregó el 5 de este mes en Ponce, donde se concentraron los 30 mil bonos, una suma efectiva de un millón y medio de piastras en dinero mexicano adquirido en el mercado de Londres.

La llegada de una suma tan considerable en las circunstancias críticas que atraviesa esta Colonia, y de las cuales le hablaré a Vuestra Excelencia, es de por sí un suceso muy afortunado que no deja de aligerar notablemente el peso de la crisis que aqueja al país.

La gestión de la Unión General bien podría reducirse simplemente a una operación financiera más o menos ventajosa que sólo podrá valorarse con exactitud cuando expire el largo término de su liquidación total, o bien podría tener un desarrollo mutuamente ventajoso para la empresa y para este país, procurándole a éste recursos que no tiene y que le hacen gran falta para cambiar su maquinaria industrial.

El cultivo de la caña y la fabricación de azúcar pueden ser, por sí solos, la base de la riqueza en los lugares cuyas condiciones naturales favorecen a la caña de azúcar. Esto es, si al mismo tiempo el producto se elabora mediante los procesos más avanzados, porque, por más favorables que le sean el suelo y el clima, sólo resistirá la competencia de productos similares provenientes de otros países en tanto en cuanto no se quede rezagado en la aplicación de los procedimientos.

* NE: Carta aparece sin número.

Puerto Rico ofrece condiciones privilegiadas para el cultivo de la caña de azúcar. Este precioso vegetal alcanza en esta isla su desarrollo completo; se estima que un pedazo de terreno rinde aquí 50% más de lo que rendiría en las colonias francesas e inglesas de las Antillas Menores. En cuanto a las Antillas Mayores: Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Santo Domingo y Cuba, puede decirse que gozan de condiciones más o menos iguales.

Antes de que se introdujeran las fábricas y los aparatos al vacío, estas colonias se encontraban en condiciones idénticas, y como la industria de la remolacha todavía no tenía el auge que tiene en nuestros días, el cultivo de la caña rendía en Puerto Rico grandes beneficios; los precios eran altos, la demanda activa y los hacendados no tenían motivo alguno para abandonar la vieja rutina. Sin embargo, los azúcares de fábrica, incluida la de remolacha, se han impuesto en el mercado y aprovisionan las refinerías; el precio de costo del producto ha bajado debido a las economías que siempre traen consigo las empresas a gran escala y la aplicación de procesos avanzados; la Isla ha permanecido ajena al progreso y todavía realiza su producción bajo condiciones anticuadas e imperfectas, a lo que se añaden circunstancias accidentales como lluvia abundante y prolongada, sequías, etc. Todo esto ha provocado una situación tan difícil que tiene alarmados hasta a los más indiferentes, y aquellos que por estar en el seno de la prosperidad no se conmovían ante ningún progreso obtenido en el extranjero reconocen que la fuente de su riqueza, la producción azucarera, se precipita hacia la ruina si ellos no se acogen sin demora al progreso, en una palabra, si el antiguo sistema no se reemplaza a la mayor brevedad por fábricas. Sólo la transformación puede impedir que desaparezcan todas las haciendas.

Se estiman en alrededor de cincuenta las haciendas que se han tenido que abandonar en los últimos cuatro o cinco años. Otras muchas luchan penosamente contra la muerte, y si las cosas continúan así por un poco más de tiempo Puerto Rico estará muy pronto en el nivel de Jamaica, cuya producción ha bajado de 150 mil bocoyes a 25,000. Pero aquí no se podrá aducir la misma razón, pues luego de la emancipación los negros no han abandonado el cultivo de la caña y no se observa que ésta les inspire la repugnancia marcada que les inspira a los negros de Jamaica. La razón principal de esta decadencia es, todos lo reconocen, la falta de una fábrica central. No podemos poner en duda la preponderancia de este motivo. La instalación de una fábrica a la cual se pueda confiar la cosecha trae unas ventajas para la agricultura que son de todos reconocidas, en nuestros días la industria individual no puede sobrevivir a la competencia de las industrias de grandes capitales. He aquí un hecho concluyente:

Seis o siete haciendas de Trinidad han terminado su zafra con pérdidas que varían de £500 a £1,500, mientras que una hacienda que lleva su caña a la fábrica ha ganado 12 mil piastras netas.

Constatada esta situación, uno se pregunta por qué razón este país ha mantenido hasta el momento los procesos antiguos de fabricación, por qué no ha buscado el progreso al igual que otros lugares menos favorecidos y menos importantes, como nuestras Antillas francesas, y si será fácil obrar la transformación que todos reclaman hoy con urgencia.

Diversas causas explican por qué la fabricación de azúcar no ha progresado en Puerto Rico durante los pasados 15 ó 20 años.

En última instancia, la bondad del suelo y el trabajo esclavo han impedido que se haga factible aquí la transformación implantada en los países vecinos. Aunque parecía no dársele importancia, de ninguna manera se ignoraba lo que acontecía en otros lugares, pero para encaminarse en esa dirección se necesitaban muchas cosas de las cuales la Isla carecía y aún carece.

Para estas empresas, que exigen un desembolso de fondos considerable, han faltado fuerzas y voluntad, sin contar el desánimo y la aversión provocados por el fracaso de todos los intentos de crear empresas mediante la asociación de capitales, tales como: ferrocarriles, irrigaciones, bancos y empresas marítimas.

Hay que decir también —y no es ésta una causa menor de la aludida inacción— que el gobierno no sólo no ha ofrecido ningún tipo de incentivo para el progreso en esta isla, sino que en todo momento se ha mostrado hostil.

Ya que los repetidos y concluyentes experimentos no permiten dudar más de las excelentes ventajas que ofrece la instalación de fábricas centrales en la Isla, es de suponer que con la participación de una institución financiera poderosa como lo es la Unión General, que acaba de adquirir del Tesoro Colonial un crédito de tres millones de piastras, el capital que necesita el país le llegará del extranjero.

Al establecimiento de las fábricas seguirían otras creaciones importantes derivadas naturalmente de la primera, tales como: institución de crédito inmobiliario, avances en la agricultura (abandonada hoy a su propia suerte) creación de carreteras y vías férreas.

Es de suponer que la Unión General estudiará sin falta una cuestión tan interesante, y si decide patrocinar las fábricas centrales puede contar con el seguro apoyo y la benevolencia del país.

Sería difícil por el momento prejuzgar el resultado de la presencia en esta isla de dicha sociedad parisina y sus relaciones con el Tesoro. No podemos ocultar que esta institución deberá tener mucha paciencia para conformarse con el retraso en el pago de los cupones y títulos que se han distribuido. Si este atraso (que ya lleva dos años de cinco) no aumenta, ello será un gran logro para el banco y para el país. Y decimos para el país, porque mientras más favorecida se vea la Unión, mayor y más eficaz será su ayuda.

Un hecho muy singular es la polémica violenta que esta negociación ha suscitado en la prensa de Puerto Rico. Por un lado, está el periódico oficial, abiertamente contrario a las ideas y los intereses franceses, que en todo momento ha combatido el progreso y ha recurrido a toda clase de sofismas para apoyar su tesis: que nos oprimirá el extranjero, que la administración correrá la suerte de [ilegible], que desaparecerá el numerario al cabo de varios meses y, como último resultado de la operación, que disminuirá el capital de la Isla por el total de la diferencia entre el precio de compra y el valor nominal si la Unión pagó 55% por un valor sin circulación y por el cual los especuladores del país no han ofrecido nunca más de 25%.

Del otro lado está toda la prensa de la Isla, que proclama sus simpatías por el capital extranjero, tanto más útil cuando el país carece de numerario. Esta prensa valora los beneficios que tendrá la aportación de una suma tan considerable y expresa la esperanza de que, una vez el comprador se aclimate al país, se irá involucrando más y participará en las diferentes empresas útiles y lucrativas que se le ofrezcan.

En cuanto a la administración, no es de asombrarse que debido a su atraso haya sido hostil a la operación, como lo demostró sobre todo en sus esfuerzos por pagar los títulos y cupones durante los dos últimos meses antes de que la operación de la Unión General se concretara y también al aumentar la suma total inscrita en el presupuesto anual para este propósito, lo que aún deja un atraso de dos años como ya se ha señalado. Es bueno decir que este celo se enfrió súbitamente cuando la operación se convirtió en realidad.

Me ha parecido conveniente, Señor Ministro, traer al conocimiento de Vuestra Excelencia una operación francesa tan importante como la que acaba de realizarse y que constituye una de nuestras principales instituciones financieras en acreedor del Tesoro de esta isla por una suma de tres millones de piastras fuertes.

Como es natural, se espera que esta operación fomentará las relaciones comerciales entre Puerto Rico y Francia.

Resta desear a esta gran empresa el mejor de los éxitos por el bien de esta colonia española y de nuestra nación.

Reciba el respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,

Señor Ministro,

de Vuestra excelencia el muy humilde

y muy obediente servidor

El Canciller [rúbrica] Lessoa

[47] Situación de la isla de Puerto Rico en los aspectos comercial, industrial y económico, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 15 de junio de 1880⁵⁸

Señor Ministro,

La isla de Puerto Rico, una de las Antillas Mayores y la cuarta en extensión, sigue a Cuba en importancia y población. Su territorio ofrece, por la abundancia de aguas y la extensión de las planicies, todas las condiciones deseables para la producción agrícola, sobre todo para el cultivo de la caña de azúcar. Esta planta crece aquí de forma admirable y su cultivo ha sido, y seguramente continuará siendo, la base de la producción de este país, a pesar de la importancia que ha adquirido el café, cuya exportación alcanzó el año pasado 325 mil quintales, y a pesar también de que el tabaco amerita consideración, aunque está muy por debajo de los otros dos. Tampoco debemos olvidar el ganado como un producto importante de exportación; nuestras colonias de Martinica y Guadalupe, la isla de Cuba, las Antillas inglesas y San Thomas vienen a abastecerse aquí de ganado para el trabajo y para la carnicería. Del comercio de la Isla con el exterior, este producto constituye una porción que en 1878 ascendió a casi 12,000 cabezas de ganado estimadas en cerca de 50 piastras (250 francos) cada una.

La melaza, el ron y el cuero son los otros productos principales que esta parte de las Antillas ofrece para exportación.

A pesar de su numerosa población (738,400 habitantes), sus productos de valor y sus excelentes condiciones de clima, fertilidad y topografía, si dijéramos que en Puerto Rico todavía está casi todo por hacer no estaríamos muy lejos de la verdad. La isla no sólo carece de la maquinaria y los perfeccionamientos que durante estos últimos quince o veinte años han revolucionado la gran industria azucarera, sino que todavía carece de los medios más elementales de comunicación, tales como carreteras y puentes, de modo que la transportación es lenta, onerosa y a menudo muy difícil, sobre todo en la temporada de lluvia. En esa época las comunicaciones con el interior se interrumpen a intervalos, pues las crecidas de los ríos a veces detienen a los correos y los viajeros. Aunque durante los últimos años, y más específicamente bajo la administración del actual Capitán General, se ha dado cierto impulso a las obras de mejoramiento de las carreteras, debemos reconocer, sin embargo, que falta todavía mucho por hacer. Es así que en tiempo de lluvia casi toda la región de las montañas, tan propicia para el cultivo de café, frutas y diversos cereales, se torna casi inaccesible aun para los caballos de paso más seguro. Como consecuencia, por ejemplo, los costos de transportar el café desde ciertos centros de producción hasta el litoral son el doble y a veces hasta el triple de lo que se paga por el flete de esta mercancía desde el puerto de embarque hasta Europa.

La transportación y los viajes se realizan, pues, generalmente por mar, en barcos de vapor de líneas europeas, americanas e internacionales que hacen escala en diversos puntos de la Isla. También se utiliza un vapor de cabotaje, propiedad de una sociedad anónima que se creó para administrarlo y que constituye la primera, y puede decirse que la única, creación de capital asociado en Puerto Rico.

El "Crédito Mercantil", banco de descuento y depósito, es la segunda empresa que se ha formado por asociación, pero se trata de una sociedad especial y más bien forzada, compuesta de los portadores de los títulos emitidos por el Tesoro para indemnizar a los propietarios de los esclavos. La sociedad se creó para la época en que estos valores se vendían a un vil precio, estaban estancados y no circulaban, circunstancias sin las cuales este banco no habría nacido. Su capital nominal de tres millones de piastras (15 millones de francos) se completará a medida que se reciban los intereses y se amorticen los títulos, es probable que en un período de 16 a 20 años. Aparte de los servicios que el banco brinda a los que lo utilizan para

⁵⁸ Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales, Subdirección del Sur, No. 30.

transacciones de su incumbencia, es de dudar que esta empresa sea ventajosa para el capital en un país donde los intereses alcanzan la tasa de 15 a 20 por ciento y donde hubiera convenido a los portadores de los títulos negociarlos al mejor precio posible.

Otras tres empresas completan la nomenclatura de las que ofrece la Isla. Son éstas:

La fábrica azucarera de Loíza, que está situada en la costa norte, cerca del mar, a 31 kilómetros de la Capital, y que pertenece a una empresa de Nueva York. Todas las máquinas provienen de los talleres de West Point. Esta fábrica podrá producir cerca de cuatro mil toneladas de azúcar, pero apenas comienza y todavía no funciona bien. Antes de algunos años las plantaciones no podrán rendir el volumen que la fábrica requiere.

La fábrica de Vega Baja, a casi 38 kilómetros de San Juan, fue construida por la Casa Cail y Cía. de París. Este magnífico establecimiento, propiedad del señor Leonardo Igaravides, se encuentra en este momento endeudado y sumido en una quiebra cuyo resultado no puede preverse. La fábrica llegó a producir hasta cuatro mil bocoyes de azúcar. Libre de deudas y bien administrada, podría constituir una empresa excelente.

Por último, el tranvía de vapor que debe conectar la Capital con el pueblo de Río Piedras, a 12 kilómetros de distancia. Esta empresa es en esencia personal y se debe a la iniciativa de un rico capitalista de esta región, el señor Pablo Ubarri, quien se ha encargado solo de cubrir todos los gastos de la construcción. Este tranvía ya funciona a lo largo de 6 kilómetros, y debe completarse muy pronto. Los carriles y el material móvil vienen de los Estados Unidos. Se estima que los gastos de construcción, materiales, etc. podrán ascender a cerca de dos millones de francos.

Estas cinco empresas, la primera por acciones, la segunda por asociación de acreedores del Tesoro Público, y las últimas tres privadas pero lo bastante notables como para figurar en la misma línea que las otras, son las únicas obras de cierta importancia con que cuenta esta provincia.

En 1878, el Señor Ministro de Ultramar en Madrid solicitó a la Dirección de Obras Públicas de Puerto Rico que redactara un informe con el fin de demostrar si, con los elementos disponibles, sería posible establecer en la Isla un ferrocarril de circunvalación, o bien si sería preferible reparar o terminar la carretera del litoral que ya se había trazado. Esta información puso de relieve de la forma más evidente, según parece, las grandes ventajas que tendría para Puerto Rico la creación de un ferrocarril que, partiendo de la Capital, atravesara todas las cabezas de Departamento y regresara a su punto de partida, así como también sus posibilidades de ejecución desde el punto de vista económico. Por desgracia, pasó con este proyecto lo mismo que con tantos otros, no se le ha dado curso hasta el día de hoy.

A juzgar por lo anterior, no puede sorprendernos constatar que esta isla se encuentre en un estado de relativo atraso, que todo esté por hacer, que no haya capitales, que el comercio esté estancado, que el interés del dinero sea alto y haya alcanzado, sobre todo en los últimos años, una tasa agobiante para todos los que tienen necesidad de recurrir al crédito. Dado que el espíritu de asociación no se ha podido articular en el país y que la industria no ha penetrado todavía de lleno, son muy serios los obstáculos para el desarrollo de sus recursos.

Las causas de semejante situación son muchas y complejas, vienen de hace mucho tiempo y sería superfluo investigarlas con minuciosidad, así que me limitaré a enumerar las principales, que son:

El sistema colonial, que como tantos otros errores no debería ser más que un recuerdo del pasado, pues implica el más total olvido de los principios económicos propicios al desarrollo de la riqueza pública.

La administración civil y política, a la que se debe imputar que el país se encuentre todavía privado de buenas carreteras y puentes y que las dificultades de transportación hayan detenido por doquier el desarrollo del comercio y la industria.

La administración de la justicia, cuyos procesos lentos y costosos provocan en muchos casos, demasiados por cierto, la ruina de los litigantes y la destrucción o desaparición de la propiedad rural que está en litigio o embargada.

El fracaso de diversos intentos de asociación abortados al momento de concretarse o que ni siquiera pudieron ponerse en marcha debido a las trabas y dificultades que encuentran todas las empresas ante la administración y a las onerosas imposiciones que pesan sobre ellas desde que se establecen.

La desconfianza que resulta de los motivos que acabo de enumerar y que desde hace algún tiempo paralizan el comercio de la Isla, disuadiendo a los capitales extranjeros de venir a invertir aquí.

La falta de medidas económicas capaces de contrarrestar los efectos de la abolición de la esclavitud de 1873 y, por tanto, las dificultades que atraviesan los grandes propietarios, es decir, los dueños de plantaciones o agricultores de la caña de azúcar. Faltándoles las refacciones para pagar la mano de obra libre, los años malos que antes podían soportar mal que bien han sido mortales, y una tras otra muchas plantaciones han desaparecido.

Por último, el progreso industrial, la fábrica central que cambia las condiciones de la producción y mejora los productos, y a la que Puerto Rico permanecía ajeno, evidentemente es una de las causas más poderosas de la actual decadencia del cultivo de la caña en esta isla donde, no obstante, la fertilidad del suelo es notable, ya que la cuerda de tierra (3,930 metros 40 cm cuadrados) produce aquí un promedio de treinta toneladas de caña, mientras que en las islas francesas se ven obligados a abonar el suelo a razón de 15 a 20 piastras (75 a 100 francos) por cuerda, y en la isla inglesa de Trinidad a razón de 10 a 12 piastras (50 a 60 francos). Puede decirse que en Puerto Rico el abono casi no se conoce o al menos se usa muy rara vez. Aquí se supone que la tierra rinde 20 por ciento más que en las Antillas Menores, con un ahorro de 15 a 20 piastras (75 a 100 francos) en abono por cuerda.

El mal debido a la falta de fábricas comenzó a manifestarse en Puerto Rico sobre todo desde hace 6 ó 7 años. De 200 haciendas azucareras que había en la Isla antes de esa época, en la actualidad la cantidad se ha reducido en casi un tercio. Casi todas las que existían todavía hace pocos años en los distritos de Bayamón, Toa Baja y Vega Baja han desaparecido. A poca distancia de la capital (20 kilómetros más o menos) se encuentra el inmenso y fértil llano de "La Carolina". Todavía se elevan en ese punto las chimeneas de numerosas haciendas donde antaño reinaba la vida, el movimiento. Ahora están abandonadas, excepto tres o cuatro. Sin embargo, ninguna localidad está mejor dispuesta para la explotación azucarera: "La Carolina" está unida al puerto de la Capital mediante un canal que constituye la vía de transporte más económica. Es pues muy probable que, a menos que se establezcan fábricas, no veremos resurgir el cultivo de la caña en ninguna de las propiedades o localidades que se han visto obligadas a abandonarlo. Ahora reemplaza este cultivo el pastoreo y la cría de ganado, industria fácil que no exige casi mano de obra y requiere poco capital pero que es infinitamente inferior a la caña como productora de riqueza.

Además de la fuerza mecánica de su maquinaria, la fábrica añadiría a la agricultura una gran cantidad de brazos que actualmente se emplean en la cosecha, porque una empresa de esta naturaleza realiza las mismas tareas de transportación y producción con mucha menos mano de obra. Liberado de las tareas de fabricación, el agricultor tendría mucho más tiempo que dedicar a sus campos y el doble de recursos a su disposición, dado que no tuviera un gran capital invertido en ganado, carretas, edificaciones y máquinas. También se deben considerar las grandes ventajas que ofrecen los ferrocarriles portátiles para recoger las cañas en los campos. Si los bueyes y las carretas no tienen que entrar en el terreno cultivado, no pisotean, dañan ni destruyen los tocones, sobre todo cuando la tierra está saturada por la lluvia. El agricultor queda relevado de transportar la caña al molino en largos trayectos y por caminos detestables que la menor lluvia torna intransitables, ya que la transportación toca a la fábrica, que la realiza mediante ferrocarriles. Así no hay peligro de que la cosecha o parte de ella se quede sin recoger. También ocurre a veces que las epidemias diezman cruelmente el ganado. Además del valor perdido en animales, las plagas afectan el trabajo, encarecen y detienen el acarreo y retrasan el progreso de la cosecha y la entrega de la mercancía.

Podemos preguntarnos si entre las diversas empresas que se ofrecen en un país donde todo está por hacer no habrá algunas que prometan una inversión más segura y lucrativa que la de las fábricas y que, por tanto, deban preferirse a éstas. Explotación agrícola y minera, ferrocarriles, canales, acueductos, avenamiento, irrigación tan necesaria en llanuras preciosas como las de Guayama, Arroyo y Guánica, he aquí, ciertamente, empresas de actualidad que merecen atención. Pero al parecer la fábrica sigue siendo por mucho la más fecunda para el país y el capital, la preferida en todos los aspectos y la que genera la producción más cuantiosa de Puerto Rico.

Además, aquí todo el mundo está preocupado, y con razón, con este asunto de las fábricas centrales, asunto de importancia vital para esta parte de las Antillas. Los periódicos multiplican sus reclamos y destacan todas las ventajas de establecer centrales en esta región. El propio gobierno, reconociendo la gravedad de la situación que atraviesa el país en la actualidad, está ocupándose en serio de remediarla y parece muy dispuesto a alentar e incluso facilitar esta transformación que además se impone sin demora so pena de que en ciertos puntos de la Isla se tengan que abandonar la mayoría e incluso todas las plantaciones.

Reciba el respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,

Señor Ministro,

de Vuestra Excelencia el muy humilde

y muy obediente servidor

[rúbrica] Elavenère

[48] Sobre la producción azucarera en Puerto Rico antes y después de la abolición de la esclavitud, Puerto Rico, 5 de diciembre de 1880⁵⁹

Señor Ministro,

En continuación del despacho que envió este Consulado el 15 de junio pasado sobre la "Situación de la isla de Puerto Rico en los aspectos comercial, industrial y económico", conviene conocer la causa del estado de decadencia de esta isla, la cual hace unos siete años era todavía tan próspera y afluente que le hacía honor al nombre Puerto Rico.

Sin repetir lo que se ya ha dicho mil veces sobre su favorable situación geográfica, mientras la Isla fue puerto franco de la Nueva España, es decir, de México, la fuente de su riqueza se encontraba en el comercio más que en la agricultura en general o la caña en particular.

Los sucesos políticos que al comienzo de este siglo separaron a España de sus mejores posesiones transoceánicas atrajeron a esta isla una inmigración extraordinaria. De Haití, Santo Domingo, Venezuela y otras partes de América vinieron a refugiarse aquí todos los que temían a los disturbios de sus países o querían correr la suerte de su madre patria. Así, la población de la isla de Puerto Rico, que a fines del siglo pasado contaba apenas 50,000 habitantes, se vio duplicada en algunos años.

Al separarse México de España, cesó el comercio que Puerto Rico tenía con aquél, y los habitantes de la Isla, más numerosos a causa de la inmigración que acabo de mencionar, se vieron obligados a dedicarse a otras industrias.

La caña de azúcar, que, desde el comienzo del siglo XVI según algunos y del siglo XVII según otros, se había importado a la Isla y cuyo cultivo parecía dar buenos resultados, fue desde entonces objeto de especulación para los habitantes del país, que se dedicaron a cultivarla a gran escala. Se crearon haciendas como por encanto: dondequiera que el terreno se prestaba al cultivo de la caña. Pronto casi toda la superficie de la Isla se encontraba bajo

⁵⁹ Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales, Subdirección del Sur, No. 47.

explotación: surgieron ciudades y la ["Miel de Reseau"], como la llamaba el emperador Teodosio, se convirtió prontamente en la riqueza principal del país.

Se contaban en la Isla hasta la abolición de la esclavitud 505 haciendas azucareras más o menos importantes que, a pesar de poseer maquinaria imperfecta para fabricar azúcar, rendían cada año, bueno o malo, más de 100 mil toneladas de este preciado producto.

La brusca abolición de la esclavitud, que llegó el 22 de marzo de 1873, hacia el final de la cosecha o una vez terminada ésta, provocó disturbios en el cultivo de la caña y la producción azucarera, al punto de que varios hacendados se vieron en la necesidad de abandonar la explotación; otros ya no pudieron desarrollar normalmente este cultivo.

En efecto, los esclavos de las haciendas estaban considerados una propiedad inherente a la tierra; su alimento y vestido no costaban a los propietarios más que 50 ó 60 céntimos diarios por persona, y todavía este gasto no los perjudicaba económicamente, pues podían obtener todo a crédito hasta el momento de la cosecha. Además, las diferentes casas comerciales de la Isla siempre tenían a disposición de los hacendados una parte de su capital que, además de reportarles un interés de 12 a 18%, aseguraba a la casa prestadora la oportunidad de comprar el producto de la hacienda con beneficios.

Sin embargo, al proclamarse la abolición de la esclavitud, las haciendas se encontraron sin los brazos necesarios para su producción justo cuando les hacían falta para asegurar la cosecha de la siguiente primavera. Los propietarios que no tenían fondos para recurrir a la mano de obra remunerada no pudieron obtener el crédito del que gozaban antes ya que sus haciendas, privadas de los brazos que las hacían producir, habían sufrido de golpe una gran depreciación.

Cierto es que el gobierno español había concedido a los propietarios de esclavos una indemnización en bonos del Tesoro, pero, debido a sucesos políticos en la Península Ibérica, estos bonos no tenían en ese momento casi ningún valor, y varios de sus poseedores, obligados por la necesidad, se deshicieron de ellos al precio irrisorio de 20 por ciento.

El estado siguiente, que presenta la producción azucarera durante los doce últimos años, bastará para demostrar que la abolición de la esclavitud fue la causa de que se abandonara el cultivo de la caña de azúcar y, por consiguiente, de la decadencia de esta isla.

La producción de azúcar fue, a saber:

En	1869	81,500	toneles
"	1870	100,000	id.
"	1871	103,000	id.
"	1872	89,559	id.
"	1873	101,195	id.
"	1874	80,060	id.
"	1875	83,135	id.
"	1876	68,830	id.
"	1877	62,328	id.
"	1878	82,974	id.
"	1879	68,225	id.
"	1880	50,000	id.

De las cifras anteriores, consignadas en las estadísticas oficiales, se desprende que en menos de diez años la producción azucarera disminuyó en más de 40%. Por lo demás, no podía ser de otro modo si de las 505 haciendas que existían en la Isla antes de la abolición de la esclavitud quedan hoy apenas 300 y mal explotadas si no semiabandonadas.

Esta merma del producto, que se cuenta por millones de piastras, dejó en la miseria a poblados enteros en pocos años. Sus voces de alarma sobre la falta de trabajo causada por el abandono del cultivo de la caña se extendieron con rapidez y en todos los puntos de la Isla se formaron grupos de personas prácticas, pensantes y bien intencionadas que se dieron a la tarea de estudiar el mal que denunciaba el país y de buscar el remedio adecuado para conjurarlo.

A la cabeza de toda esta gente se colocó el Señor General Despujols, Conde de Caspe y Gobernador General de la Isla, quien, con perseverancia digna de todo elogio, investigó por sí mismo y mandó estudiar todo lo concerniente al cultivo de la caña y la fabricación del azúcar. Los periódicos del país se hicieron eco de los esfuerzos del Gobernador General; las administraciones provinciales y municipales y las sociedades agrícolas e industriales se dieron en cuerpo y alma a la tarea de suplir toda la información que la estadística podía ofrecer; se encomendó a escritores de primera la elaboración de proyectos adecuados para conjurar la crisis que amenaza con arruinar a la Isla.

Así, con ánimo que rayaba en entusiasmo, se emprendió el estudio serio de los diferentes sistemas adoptados en los países azucareros donde la abolición de la esclavitud databa ya de varios años, tales como Martinica, Guadalupe, Trinidad, etc.

Quedó evidenciado, como se verá más adelante, que el cultivo de la caña debe separarse de la fabricación del azúcar a semejanza del método establecido en Martinica y Guadalupe y que, por consiguiente, se debe sustituir el antiguo sistema de fabricación con la creación de centrales azucareras.

Una cuerda de tierra (que equivale a 3,930 metros con 40 centímetros cuadrados) dedicada al cultivo de la caña cuesta:

Si para el gran cultivo, un máximo de 70 a 75 piastras* (350 a 375 francos); si para el cultivo llamado de plantilla (siembra de primavera), de 55 a 60 piastras (255 a 300 francos); si para el cultivo llamado de Retoños, 35 piastras (175 francos).

Así, a una hacienda que abarque las tres formas de cultivo arriba mencionadas, la cuerda de caña viene a costarle en promedio sólo alrededor de 56 piastras (280 francos), con la caña puesta en la fábrica.

En cambio, el rendimiento se calcula de la manera siguiente:

En el gran cultivo- 4 bocoyes de azúcar por cuerda; en el cultivo llamado de Retoños, 3 bocoyes; y en el cultivo llamado de plantilla, 2 bocoyes y medio.

Esto equivale a un rendimiento promedio de 3 bocoyes por cuerda que, multiplicados por 14 quintales de 46 kilogramos, dan un total de 42 quintales de azúcar.

Ahora bien, siendo el precio promedio del azúcar 4 piastras por quintal, una cuerda de caña produce la suma de 168 piastras u 840 francos.

Teniendo en cuenta la tasa de interés en este país (que nunca es menos de un 18 a un 20% anual) y las condiciones atmosféricas, que en ciertos años resultan perjudiciales para el cultivo de la caña o para su producto azucarero, sin duda no exageramos al afirmar que el capital invertido en la explotación de la caña en este país rinde un mínimo de 30%, deducidos los gastos de elaboración.

Una hacienda bien organizada (y si en ella se establece el sistema de fábricas centrales que reducirá por mucho la maquinaria que hoy se necesita para los trabajos de explotación, acarreo de la caña a la fábrica, etc.) debe tener $\frac{1}{4}$ del terreno dedicado al gran cultivo, $\frac{1}{4}$ al

* Piastras es equivalente a pesos.

cultivo de retoños, $\frac{1}{4}$ al cultivo de primavera, y $\frac{1}{4}$ al pastoreo para alimentar a los animales de trabajo.

Mediante el sistema de separar el cultivo de la caña y la fabricación del azúcar, sistema que prospera en nuestras Antillas y que sigue dando los mejores resultados, el agricultor estaría todavía más favorecido. Con el mismo gasto por cuerda de caña (56 piastras o 280 francos), obtendría las ventajas siguientes.

Si el fabricante le paga la caña a razón de 5% de su peso en azúcar, y una cuerda rinde en promedio 700 quintales de caña, ello equivale para el agricultor a 35 quintales de azúcar que, multiplicados por 4 piastras, valor promedio del quintal de azúcar, da un total de 140 piastras o 700 francos. Deduciendo de esta cantidad los gastos de explotación, es decir, 56 piastras, el agricultor obtiene por cada cuerda de caña un beneficio neto de 84 piastras ó 420 francos.

¡Por lo tanto, el agricultor obtendrá un beneficio inesperado de más de 100% si se inaugura el sistema de fábricas centrales en este país! Es muy posible a partir de esto afirmar que ninguna industria puede ofrecer al capital un interés tan fenomenal, mientras que la caña de azúcar sí tiene la capacidad de procurarlo. Y todo esto a la vez que el agricultor queda libre de las preocupaciones de la fabricación y se economiza las cuantiosas sumas que se veía obligado a gastar en aparatos y obreros para extraer el azúcar de la caña.

Estos cálculos todavía se quedan cortos si nos referimos a las estadísticas de los resultados que han obtenido las Antillas francesas e inglesas con la introducción del sistema de fábricas centrales y, por consiguiente, de la separación del cultivo y la fabricación.

La ventaja del fabricante, que no es menor que la del agricultor, está en poder extraer a la caña el mayor rendimiento, en el aumento en valor del azúcar producida mediante cristalización al vacío, en la calidad de su producto que no se desperdicia pues ya no se perderá de 8 a 10% en el acarreo como lo pierde el azúcar moscabada que se fabrica con el sistema antiguo, y además le quedan para su beneficio el ron y la melaza.

Una fábrica central de acción triple que pueda producir en espacio de 120 días, época en que la caña alcanza su máxima madurez, de 4 a 6,000 bocoyes de azúcar deberá tener a su disposición unas 1,500 a 2,000 cuerdas de caña. Si cada cuerda produce en promedio 700 quintales, la central tendrá 1,400,000 quintales de caña que moler. Si, como se ha constatado por lo que producen las centrales de Martinica y Guadalupe ya mencionadas, el fabricante sólo extrae de la caña el 8% de azúcar, aunque pueda extraer el 9 e incluso el 10%, de todos modos le quedan 21 quintales de azúcar por cuerda, que multiplicados por 4 piastras, valor del azúcar, dan un total de 84 piastras o 420 francos.

De 2,000 cuerdas, se obtendrá pues la suma de 168,000 piastras u 840,000 francos. Suponiendo que los gastos de fabricación asciendan a una cifra redonda de 100,000 piastras, todavía el fabricante obtendrá un saldo neto de 68,000 piastras o 340,000 francos como remuneración del capital de 200,000 a 250,000 piastras, que es el precio estimado de una fábrica central con sus accesorios capaz de fabricar 6,000 bocoyes de azúcar en espacio de 120 días. A esta ventaja, a la que ningún especulador es indiferente, hay que añadir los beneficios que se obtienen de la destilación de ron, de la melaza, del incremento en valor del azúcar cuando es cristalizada en vez de moscabada como la que se produce con el método antiguo, y, en fin, el hecho de que el azúcar moscabada implica un desperdicio de 8 a 10% el cual se ahorraría con el azúcar hecha en centrífuga, que no sufre ninguna disminución y puede transportarse incluso en sacos.

Todavía existe otra ventaja para el fabricante, la cual se ha probado con el Areómetro de Baumé. Dicha ventaja consiste en la posibilidad de fabricar azúcar durante el período en que la caña está más madura, es decir, cuando la dulzura del jugo tiene más densidad.

He aquí, según el Areómetro de Baumé, una tabla analítica de experimentos químicos relativos a la cantidad de azúcar que se puede obtener de la misma cantidad de jugo según su grado de dulzura:

Densidad de dulzura en grados	Gramos de azúcar por litro de jugo	Cantidad de azúcar en peso
4°	28	0.026
5°	49	0.048
6°	78	0.074
6° ¼	85	0.076
6°½	91	0.086
6° ¾	98	0.092
7°	105	0.099
7° ¼	111	0.112
7° ½	118	0.114
7° ¾	124	0.117
8°	131	0.127
8° ¼	137	0.129
8° ½	144	0.135
8° ¾	152	0.142
9°	159	0.149
9° ¼	165	0.155
9° ½	172	0.161
9° ¾	180	0.167
10°	188	0.174
10° ¼	196	0.180
10° ½	204	0.187
10° ¾	211	0.197
11°	217	0.200
11° ¼	226	0.206
11° ½	230	0.211
11° ¾	237	0.216
12°	244	0.227

En la tabla anterior se observa claramente que el rendimiento de la caña aumenta de forma progresiva a medida que ésta va madurando, pues entre 8° y 12° de densidad en dulzura el producto azucarero casi se duplica.

Estos resultados fabulosos de las fábricas centrales se han constatado también en esta isla, donde se introdujo en 1874 el sistema de acción triple con los aparatos de la Casa Cail y Cía. de París.

En efecto, desde la abolición de la esclavitud, cuando hubo que incorporar mano de obra remunerada para explotar la caña y fabricar azúcar, el agente de la Casa Cail y Cía. en esta isla, el señor Emile Louhet, cuya modestia no es una de sus menores cualidades, fue el primero en fomentar el aprecio y la adopción de los aparatos centrífugos. Así, desde el 1874, la mencionada empresa ha construido en esta isla cuatro fábricas azucareras de acción triple, entre ellas la de San Vicente en Toa Baja, que puede producir hasta 10,000 bocoyes de azúcar. Además hay proyectadas otras dos fábricas. Pero si estos establecimientos existen hoy en Puerto Rico es sin duda gracias a los perseverantes esfuerzos del Señor Louhet. Con la inteligencia y la práctica que le distinguen en esta materia, y con el consentimiento de la empresa que representa, este Agente también elaboró un proyecto para crear 18 fábricas centrales a gran motor y de acción triple, solicitando que las 700,000 piastras presupuestadas anualmente para el pago de la indemnización por los esclavos se destinaran, sin garantía formal, al pago de las mencionadas fábricas. Como no se pudo obtener la garantía solicitada, el proyecto se cayó como tantos otros.

Ahora bien, hace dos años una sociedad norteamericana construyó una central en Loíza, pero como dicha fábrica se estableció sin tener facilidades adyacentes que le abastecieran la caña, no ha podido producir todavía el resultado deseado. Este año, en tanto que una de las empresas comerciales más sólidas de esta ciudad ha comenzado a cultivar caña en los alrededores de la central, es seguro que en la próxima cosecha su producción sobrepasará toda expectativa.

Reconociendo en principio que el bienestar de esta isla depende del cultivo de la caña, hecho que también queda establecido en los documentos oficiales y las estadísticas, y dado que la Isla carece de los recursos pecuniarios que se necesitan para construir las centrales que manda dicho cultivo, el Gobernador General de la Isla, con el fin de inspirar mayor confianza al capital extranjero y si es posible atraerlo al país, solicitó al gobierno español las ventajas siguientes para favorecer a las centrales que se construirían en Puerto Rico:

1. Exención por 5 años de toda contribución industrial y municipal para las centrales que se establecerían en la Isla;

2. Exención de todo derecho de aduana para ladrillos, hierro, madera, en una palabra, para todo lo que se necesite en la construcción de las centrales, sin contar la exención de derechos ya decretada para todas las máquinas y los instrumentos que sirven en la agricultura;

3. Tan pronto se establezca una central, todas las construcciones o propiedades rústicas destinadas al cultivo de la caña que dependan de la fábrica gozarán por cinco años del privilegio de pagar la misma tasa de contribución territorial y municipal que hayan estado pagando durante los últimos cinco años.

4. En el próximo presupuesto insular, una cantidad de 15,000 piastras (75,000 francos), que podrá aumentarse en los años siguientes, se destinará ya sea a una prima de media piastra (2 f. 50 cm) por bocoy de azúcar que se fabrique, o a una garantía de 6 u 8% que la ley presupuestaria aseguraría a los capitales invertidos en la construcción de las centrales.

Aquí se tiene la certeza de que estos privilegios serán otorgados y, cuando llegue la concesión de Madrid, se proponen darles la mayor publicidad posible en los principales centros financieros de Francia, Inglaterra, Alemania y los Estados Unidos.

Como los capitalistas norteamericanos ya comenzaron el experimento creando la central de Loíza, cuyos resultados son contundentes, sería deseable que nuestros capitalistas también se decidieran a tomar en consideración los beneficios reales e indiscutibles que obtendrían de sus capitales si los invirtieran ya sea en el cultivo de la caña o en la fabricación

de azúcar o, mejor todavía, en una combinación de estas dos industrias. Se debería formar una unión de capitalistas que designe a hombres con práctica y experiencia para que estudien sobre el terreno este asunto, que no puede más que interesar a los especuladores de todo el país. Pero no deberían demorar mucho, puesto que es de suponer que los capitalistas norteamericanos o ingleses, convencidos por su reciente experimento de las ventajas que aguardan al capital que se invierta en la industria que nos ocupa, tratarán de adueñarse primero de la situación.

Invertir nuestros capitales en la fabricación de azúcar resultaría para los intereses franceses en una doble ventaja. Los grandes vapores-correo de la Compañía General Trasatlántica, que desde hace algunos meses tocan los puertos más importantes de la Isla, conseguirían siempre un flete de regreso seguro y remunerado.

Conforme a los planos oficiales que el Gobernador General de la Isla ha mandado elaborar, se construirían 46 centrales en los siete departamentos en que se divide administrativamente la isla de Puerto Rico. Dichas centrales se construirían en las localidades siguientes:

1. Departamento de la Capital		
en	Bayamón	Una
"	Carolina	Una
"	Dorado	Una
"	Loíza	Una
"	Vega Baja	Una
2. Departamento de Arecibo		
en	Arecibo	Tres
"	Manatí	Dos
3. Departamento de Aguadilla		
en	Aguadilla	Una
en	Aguada	Una
4. Departamento de Mayagüez		
en	Añasco	Dos
"	Cabo Rojo	Una
"	Hormigueros	Dos
"	Mayagüez	Dos
"	San Germán	Una
5. Departamento de Ponce		
en	Guayanilla	Una
"	Juana Díaz	Una
"	Peñuelas	Una
"	Ponce	Seis
"	Santa Isabel	Una
"	Yauco	Dos
6. Departamento de Guayama		
en	Arroyo	Una
"	Caguas	Una

“	Guayama	Dos
“	Salinas	Una

7. Departamento de Humacao

en	Fajardo	---
“	Humacao	Dos
“	Maunabo	Una
“	Naguabo	Dos
“	Ceiba	Una
“	Yabucoa	Dos

Partiendo de lo anterior, nos permitimos augurar un floreciente porvenir a esta isla, que la naturaleza parece haber favorecido maravillosamente.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
 Señor Ministro,
 de Vuestra Excelencia el muy humilde
 y muy obediente servidor,
 El Administrador del Consulado
 [rúbrica] Argélian de Johannis

[49] **La Justicia en Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 12 de diciembre de 1882**⁶⁰

Señor Ministro,

Tengo el honor de anunciar a Vuestra Excelencia que la estadística judicial del año 1881 acaba de ser presentada al Gobernador General de Puerto Rico por el Presidente de la Audiencia Real de esta isla. Este documento no va precedido de un informe sobre el funcionamiento de la Justicia; es un trabajo más bien administrativo que científico, consistente sólo en una serie de tablas que presentan en cifras los resultados de la administración de la Justicia criminal, civil y comercial durante este último año. Sin embargo, admitiendo que dicha estadística sea exacta y esté completa, podemos observar en ella la evolución de la criminalidad y extraer ciertas enseñanzas.

En 1880 se instruyeron 2,941 causas en los Tribunales de Puerto Rico. En 1881, esta cifra ascendió a 3,240, un aumento de 299 causas, lo que ya nos permite constatar un recrudecimiento de la criminalidad. Por desgracia, la osadía y la perversidad de los atentados cometidos este año contra el orden público, la vida y la propiedad de los habitantes de esta isla prueban que el mal, lejos de disminuir, tiende a agravarse cada día más.

Los crímenes y delitos registrados en estas tablas nos indican el grado de moralidad de este pueblo, y de ello se desprende que el principio de autoridad se respeta cada vez menos (crímenes contra el orden público), que las pasiones están más sobreexcitadas (crímenes contra las personas) y que la depravación de las buenas costumbres es mayor.

La cantidad de heridas de muerte infligidas con la intención de matar ha aumentado considerablemente. Por lo general, los crímenes violentos pueden atribuirse a causas imputables, de cierto modo, a las costumbres extrañas de este país, donde las riñas, las disputas de juego y en las pulperías casi nunca terminan sin efusión de sangre, sin que desde el primer arrebatado de cólera ambas partes recurran al cuchillo nacional. Las causas determinantes, los motivos, que no se reflejan en la estadística porque ésta sólo nos da

⁶⁰ Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales y Consulares, Subdirección de Asuntos Consulares. El original no indica el número del despacho.

números, remiten en su mayoría a la miseria y sobre todo a la ignorancia. En efecto, la cantidad de acusados analfabetos ha aumentado a tal punto que realmente podemos considerar la ignorancia como el verdadero origen de los crímenes cometidos en Puerto Rico. En general los asesinos pertenecen a la raza de color. La raza blanca, la raza española, contribuye en cierta medida a este recrudecimiento de la criminalidad, pero en proporciones menores. A propósito de esto, hay razones para pensar que los mulatos siempre han mostrado instintos más perversos que los negros, cuyo nivel moral es un poco más elevado. También debemos observar que, en las 3,240 causas que se instruyeron en 1881, la mayoría de los culpables eran reincidentes empedernidos e incorregibles, toda vez que los Tribunales de la Isla carecen de recursos para hacerlos entrar en el camino del deber. Ciertamente, los Tribunales no pueden luchar contra la corrupción que reina aquí, dondequiera, lo mismo en las clases altas que bajas, contra la depravación de las costumbres que desde hace algunos años ocurre descaradamente a plena luz del día y hasta en las calles más transitadas; pero se les reprocha que a veces desatiendan los diligenciamientos y que, en algunos casos, no castiguen con suficiente fuerza. Sea como fuere, al ver que sigue en aumento el promedio de acusados reincidentes, uno se pregunta si esa reincidencia general, esa recaída, no se podría combatir con una represión más enérgica y por tanto más eficaz. Desgraciadamente, hay criminales innatos que no se reformarán jamás; pero también, ¡cuántos otros hay capaces de arrepentirse y de regresar al bien! Los Tribunales se contentan con aplicar el Código; el culpable no sólo sufre todo el rigor del castigo que ha merecido, sino que, además, siempre se le inflige a la española, es decir, brutalmente, aunque en algunos casos deberían tenerse ciertas contemplaciones. Para seguir el espíritu de la ley, después de castigarlo habría que reformarlo, más aún cuando el castigo ha sido severo y la sociedad no tiene nada más que exigir. Ahora bien, aquí no se ha hecho ningún esfuerzo en ese sentido. El castigo nunca se atenúa ni se reemplaza por un proceso reformador, y es ahí que reside el daño. No se repara en que algunos de esos desgraciados son, en el fondo, sólo descarriados de un instante; no se comprende que, después de haber sido sometidos durante largos años a un régimen inflexible y a compañía pervertidora, estos hombres reinciden porque todo los conduce a ello absoluta e inevitablemente, porque no se les ha enseñado durante su detención a forjarse de ahí en adelante una vida mejor; de igual modo se olvida que, en realidad, la mayoría del pueblo peca sólo de indolente, perezoso e inconsciente y que la administración, por abandono, tiende mucho más a desarrollar sus malos instintos que a refrenarlos. Este recrudecimiento de crímenes y reincidencias tiene varias causas. En primer lugar, la poca vigilancia de la policía, cuyo servicio es tan defectuoso que la vida de la gente honrada parece estar, en cierto modo, atada al capricho de los agentes encargados de asegurar el orden y la tranquilidad. Luego hay que tener en cuenta la influencia pervertidora que reina aquí dondequiera, como he dicho antes, tanto en las clases altas como bajas: los niños crecen en un ambiente muy malsano; la mayoría de ellos, los de clase baja, son abandonados a su suerte desde temprano, sin apoyo y sin dirección. En un informe anterior le he señalado, Señor Ministro, las condiciones de higiene verdaderamente desastrosas que padece en este momento la población obrera de las villas de Puerto Rico y, en particular, la de San Juan — capital de la Isla —: gente apiñada en viviendas donde falta aire, espacio y luz, donde viven amontonados hombres y mujeres, ancianos y niños, en una promiscuidad degradante. En estos verdaderos tugurios, que apenas miden siete metros cúbicos y donde viven seis u ocho personas, no hay ni lavaderos ni desagües, y de ellos emana siempre un olor nauseabundo: esas viviendas son receptáculo de todas las inmundicias. Aunque en estos cuchitriles no se manifiestan de costumbre epidemias temibles como la viruela o la fiebre amarilla, sin duda el vicio sí se encuentra allí permanentemente. Es evidente que ésta es una causa de degeneración física y moral cuyos efectos se reflejan en el recrudecimiento de la criminalidad que acabamos de constatar: serio problema, problema de higiene y de preservación social, el más importante de todos ya que no sólo toca a la salud pública sino también a la moralización de este pueblo que se ha envilecido en este ambiente, sobre todo en materia de inteligencia y de facultades morales. Este desarrollo de la

degeneración ahora sólo puede detenerse mediante un conjunto de medidas higiénicas, humanitarias y sociales que deberían tomarse sin demora. En primer lugar, las viejas e inútiles murallas que circundan la villa de San Juan, cuya población ha aumentado considerablemente, deberían derribarse para darle el aire y el espacio que le faltan y que desde hace tantos años reclaman sus habitantes. Además, debería encargarse a una comisión velar con diligencia y de común acuerdo con la policía por el saneamiento de todas esas viviendas insalubres donde se corrompen tantas familias y que constituyen, casi todas, verdaderos centros de vicio e infección. Todas las medidas tocantes a la protección de la existencia y la salud no sólo evitarían un mayor envilecimiento de la raza española y puertorriqueña, sino que la colocarían en mejor condición para reformarse (si se puede utilizar esta palabra) intelectual y moralmente.

Ahora bien, ¿está la Justicia en armonía con las necesidades, las costumbres, los habitantes de Puerto Rico? A menudo he observado que la Justicia no es muy conciliadora en este país, donde hay tantas enemistades sordas y tantos odios arraigados. Sin el respeto de los derechos, sin derechos para todos, la administración de la Justicia no puede ser buena. ¿Es que la Justicia asegura aquí a todos los justiciables, sin distinción de partido, las mismas garantías de imparcialidad? Lo creo tanto menos cuanto que el fanatismo político a veces ha cegado a los jueces al punto de hacerles olvidar por completo los principios de justicia de los que nunca deberían apartarse. Estos desvíos son más notables en los Tribunales de 1ra. Instancia, pues la Audiencia Real, compuesta de magistrados más íntegros, se atiene bastante al texto de la ley.

La Justicia está demasiado alejada de los justiciables, no les es lo suficientemente accesible. No es muy rápida; deberían desaparecer algunas disposiciones caducas que la complican demasiado. Es, además, demasiado costosa. A consecuencia de los exagerados costos judiciales, y lo extenso y complicado del procedimiento, los pobres se encuentran en cierto modo inermes cuando, habiendo sido perjudicados, quieren ejercer su derecho.

Por lo demás, no existe asistencia judicial como tal en este país donde el dinero prima sobre todo. En cuanto a los procesos judiciales, los magistrados no se esfuerzan mucho en conciliar, en avenir a las partes, aun cuando se trate de pequeños litigios, de conflictos sin importancia, meros asuntos de justicia de paz. Cuando un hombre de color reclama una suma, por pequeña que sea, rara vez abandona su reclamación. Si no logra resolver amistosamente su discrepancia, tarde o temprano toma el lugar del juez que debió entender en su caso y a cuya ayuda recurrió en vano: entonces vemos que surge de pronto un nuevo crimen, el asesino no escapa a la investigación de la policía, se hace el sumario sin ningún control y, tras interminables aplazamientos y una detención preventiva demasiado larga (seis, ocho, a veces quince meses), el juez emite su sentencia sin informar su Instrucción a la defensa. Si el detenido es remitido al consejo de acusaciones, el fiscal, magistrado que representa al Ministerio público, interviene entonces provisto de tal poder que desde ya se hace patente la inequidad entre la acción pública y la defensa, pues es imposible tomar acción judicial contra el Fiscal, aunque el acusado, desprovisto de recursos, haya sido privado injustamente de la asistencia de un abogado o de un apoderado, como lo establece el Código de Instrucción Criminal en algunos casos. Esto es excelente cuando se ha probado la culpabilidad; pero cuando el acusado es en realidad inocente del hecho de sangre o de cualquier otro crimen, su posición es muy desconcertante. Comparece ante un juez que está protegido de todo castigo. Podrá decir la verdad, toda la verdad; sin embargo, por más elocuente que sea, el juez sólo se convencerá con pruebas y testimonios. Ahora bien, en este país y bajo este cielo abrasador, las pasiones son intensas, inflamables. A raíz de un asesinato, familias enteras se dividen y la hostilidad y el odio en que viven a veces no permite obtener fácilmente testimonios confiables. Además, aquí todo se compra, todo se vende. Los mismos empleados de la administración ponen precio a sus servicios. Si el acusado es pobre, muy rara vez encuentra apoyo energético en su defensor, quien siempre procura los intereses que le traerán mayor remuneración. El acusado se encuentra, por así decirlo, solo, sin fuerza ni protección, en manos

de una Justicia que parece cruel, es decir, que no guarda suficiente relación con las costumbres de este país, pues se da el caso de que ante ella comparecen infelices sin otro medio de defensa que el grito de sus indignadas conciencias. De ahí que en Puerto Rico la vida, el honor y la propiedad tengan muy débil garantía. Hay, pues, toda una serie de reformas urgentes que adoptar si se toma en cuenta la opinión pública y el desarrollo de la criminalidad, cuyo recrudecimiento llama la atención de los moralistas; reformas que por lo demás se imponen desde hace mucho tiempo a la atención de aquellos que tendrían la capacidad de fomentar el progreso, de realizar una obra moralizadora y patriótica; pero, uno tras otro, los gobernadores generales de esta isla no han tenido otro propósito que llegar tranquilamente al término de su mandato, y España sigue confiando esas importantes funciones a generales que carecen de toda capacidad administrativa; por eso, en vez de lograr algún progreso en esta colonia, España más bien la hace retroceder. España debe considerarse muy afortunada de que esta situación, resultado del abandono y el desorden de su administración, aún no haya generado mayor antagonismo entre la raza española y la raza nativa; porque si surgiera un hombre, un hombre capaz de despertar a este pueblo y sacarlo de la cobarde indolencia en que dormita, esta lucha de razas que ni siquiera se prevé hoy sería entonces inevitable, y tanto Cuba, que está esperando el momento favorable, como Puerto Rico, esas dos hermanas de las Antillas españolas, seguirían el ejemplo que desde 1817 les han dado las repúblicas de América central y del sur al proclamar su independencia. Ese día España cosechará, de un golpe, todo lo que ha sembrado en esta tierra amada por el sol.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro,
de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
y muy obediente servidor.
[rúbrica] H. Dubreuill

[50] Envío del formulario referente al comercio de porcelanas y licores en Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 10 de julio de 1883⁶¹

Señor Ministro,

En contestación al Despacho que me ha hecho el honor de escribir para solicitar información respecto al comercio de porcelanas y licores en esta Isla, me apresuro a devolver adjunto a Vuestra Excelencia el formulario que acompañaba el mencionado despacho, con la información que he podido obtener de buenas fuentes sobre el susodicho comercio.

Por otra parte, creo mi deber informar a Vuestra Excelencia que nuestros fabricantes del Departamento de Gironda constantemente solicitan a este Consulado el mismo tipo de información, sobre todo en lo referente al comercio de vinos y licores. Pero por desgracia nunca quieren seguir los consejos que les damos, es decir, que para las colonias españolas fabriquen artículos ordinarios y baratos, dándoles la apariencia de mercancía fina por medio de las marcas y las etiquetas.

Si nuestros fabricantes tuvieran en cuenta lo que acabo de honrarme en exponer a Vuestra Excelencia, podrían obtener muy buenos beneficios en este país, donde los licores de Alemania y los vinos españoles se venden muy bien.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro,
de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
y muy obediente servidor,
El Administrador del Consulado
[rúbrica] Argélian de Johannis

⁶¹ Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales y Consulares, Subdirección de Asuntos Comerciales, 2da. Oficina, No. 17.

[51] **Envío del Boletín de Información Comercial, Puerto Rico, 24 de julio de 1883**⁶²

Señor Ministro,

Conforme a las Circulares del 15 de marzo y 24 de abril pasados, con sello de la Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales y Consulares, tengo el honor de enviar adjunto a Vuestra Excelencia el Boletín de Información Comercial que prescriben las susodichas circulares.

Este Boletín no está completo, pero le ruego, Señor Ministro, que tenga a bien tomar en consideración la multiplicidad de información que aquí se abarca y la dificultad con que se obtiene, sobre todo si se trata de información que, por su naturaleza, toca muy de cerca los secretos del comercio.

Por otra parte, Vuestra Excelencia puede tener la seguridad de que la información contenida en el mencionado Boletín proviene de buena fuente y es lo más exacta posible.

Exportación

La exportación durante el mes de junio se limitó, como siempre, a los principales productos del país, a saber: café, azúcar, melaza, tabaco, cuero, ganado mayor. Es una pena que Francia obtenga de Puerto Rico sólo café, y en pequeñas cantidades. Francia podría exportar azúcar para sus refinerías, como lo hace Inglaterra y comienza a hacerlo España también.

Importación

En la parte del Boletín relativa a la importación, anoté los productos alimenticios que llegan por cargamentos o en grandes cantidades. Casi ninguno de estos comestibles proviene de Francia. América del Norte hace la competencia a España con las harinas, e Inglaterra con el arroz de la India. En cuanto a otros productos como jamón, tocino, mantequilla, garbanzos, judías, conservas, frutos secos, velas, jabón, aceite de oliva, vinos finos, licores diversos, golosinas, etc., todo ese género de mercancía llega en muy pequeñas cantidades, sólo según lo manda el consumo, que es muy limitado. El comercio de estos productos se realiza por correspondencia o por intermedio de viajeros, y Francia suministra la mayor parte. Dicho comercio se podría desarrollar más si nuestros negociantes y fabricantes quisieran adaptarse a las costumbres de este país, que en vez de buena calidad siempre busca lo más barato.

Bacalao

Hay un tipo de comestible que Francia podría tratar de importar a esta isla, donde obtendría beneficios satisfactorios. Se trata del bacalao. Pero habría que empacarlo en cajas o en barriles, es decir, acondicionarlo como el que llega de Halifax, que aquí se consume mucho.

Movimiento de Barcos

En cuanto a la navegación, España sigue ocupando el primer lugar. La marina mercante francesa sólo se ve en este puerto a la llegada bimensual del vapor-correo. Sin embargo, deberíamos imitar a la marina noruega, cuyos veleros llegan a Puerto Rico cargados con carbón de piedra y siempre encuentran fletes de regreso muy remuneradores. La época propicia para encontrar buenos fletes en los puertos de esta isla son los meses de marzo a julio.

Pérdida en el cambio

La admisión de la moneda mexicana en este país ha causado cuantiosas pérdidas en las transacciones comerciales con Europa. De ordinario, la pérdida en el cambio bajaba durante la época de la cosecha de azúcar y café, pero desde hace unos dos años aumenta continuamente.

⁶² Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales y Consulares, Subdirección de Asuntos Comerciales, No. 23.

Como verá Usted, Señor Ministro, en el Boletín, esta pérdida se ha vuelto una carga muy pesada para el comercio.

Comercio de Telas

Antes de tener el honor de hablarle sobre las obras públicas que se han aprobado o están en proyecto, expongo a Vuestra Excelencia el enorme comercio de telas de algodón de todo tipo, cuyo monopolio en esta isla lo ha tenido hasta hoy, casi exclusivamente, Inglaterra. Este comercio alcanza anualmente la cifra de 7 a 8 millones de francos.

Telas Alemanas

Sin embargo, Alemania empieza a hacer la competencia a Inglaterra con sus telas de hilo, que aquí se conocen con el nombre de "Dril", y con telas de lana y algodón que los alemanes pueden enviar por 10% menos, y cuya calidad no tiene nada que envidiar a telas similares de fabricación inglesa. Ahora bien, si los industriales alemanes han encontrado el medio de fabricar a bajo precio, ¿por qué nuestros fabricantes no pueden imitarlos? En vez de limitarse al comercio de artículos de moda y de lujo, deberían adaptarse a las costumbres de los países importadores y fabricar el tipo de producto que se venda fácilmente.

Casas comerciales en esta villa

En este país se pueden obtener grandes beneficios en todo tipo de comercio, sin temor de exponerse a perder las mercancías. Aquí, como en todas partes, existe mal y buen comercio, lo cual nosotros, como Agentes de gobierno designados por Vuestra Excelencia, tenemos el deber de estudiar y conocer. Sólo se trata, pues, de informarse de antemano con qué casas comerciales nuestros negociantes podrían mantener relaciones de negocio en toda confianza.

Me permito, Señor Ministro, indicarle a continuación y por orden de importancia las principales casas comerciales de este lugar, las cuales no vacilaría en recomendar a nuestros negociantes y fabricantes.

Dichos establecimientos son:

Sobrinos de Ezquiaga, Feddersen-Willink, Vijande y Cía., Crosas y Finlay, Hala y Cía., Prats y Cía., Sr. Veve, de Fajardo.

Todas esas casas son conocidas por honorables no sólo aquí sino también en las principales plazas comerciales de Europa y de América, y además son muy solventes.

Obras públicas que se realizarán

En lo que concierne a las obras públicas, hay dos de gran importancia que están aprobadas: la excavación del puerto de esta villa y el ferrocarril que circunvalará la Isla.

Tengo el honor de enviar en este sobre a Vuestra Excelencia el pliego de condiciones para la susodicha excavación y un mapa de la Isla en el que usted verá, Señor Ministro, la ruta que recorrerá el ferrocarril, trazada con tinta azul. Tengo también el honor de adjuntarle, con sus respectivas traducciones, los artículos de ley relativos a los privilegios y subvenciones que otorga el gobierno español para la construcción de las vías del tren.

Para la excavación del puerto se ha fijado en el presupuesto de la Isla, a partir de 1881, una suma anual de 250,000 francos, de manera que la tesorería ya tiene 750,000 francos disponibles para esta obra.

El ferrocarril de circunvalación tendrá 523 kilómetros de largo y puede construirse por secciones. He creído útil indicarle aquí las secciones y la cantidad de habitantes a los que están destinadas a servir en sus respectivos trayectos.

Dichas secciones son:

- 1° Línea de San Juan a Arecibo, de 75 kilómetros, con una población de 106,659 habitantes;
- 2° Línea de Arecibo a Aguadilla, de 55 kilómetros, con 71,993 habitantes;
- 3° Línea de Aguadilla a Mayagüez, de 38 kilómetros, con 52,977 habitantes;
- 4° Línea de Mayagüez a Ponce, de 97 kilómetros, con 101,600 habitantes;

- 5° Línea de Ponce a Guayama, de 63 kilómetros, con 48,005 habitantes;
 6° Línea de Guayama a Humacao, de 55 kilómetros, con 55,822 habitantes;
 7° Línea de Humacao a Fajardo, de 30 kilómetros, con 54,358 habitantes;
 8° Línea de Fajardo a San Juan, de 50 kilómetros, con 61,125 habitantes.

Hay también en proyecto una nueva línea de 60 kilómetros, que irá de San Juan a Naguabo, pasando por Gurabo, Juncos y Las Piedras. Esta línea se ha proyectado en vista de la posible explotación de una mina muy rica de magnetita que se descubrió recientemente en Juncos.

Obras públicas realizadas en la Isla durante los últimos años:

Las obras públicas en esta Isla han tomado un gran auge durante la última década. Si tenemos en cuenta la crisis comercial del país (producto de la súbita abolición de la esclavitud y de la cual ya comienza a recuperarse de forma notable) y los gastos en obras públicas, hay que admitir que quizá ninguna de las Antillas ha progresado tanto como Puerto Rico. Se han tendido once grandes puentes de hierro, de construcción moderna, sobre ríos y torrentes; se han construido ciento cuarenta y ocho kilómetros de vías transitables; veinte kilómetros de ferrocarril están en uso; y ahora se están dando en esta villa los últimos toques a un gran hospital con capacidad de más de 400 camas.

Por lo demás, durante el año fiscal español que terminó el 30 del pasado mes de junio, se gastaron 256,000 piastras (es decir, 1,280,000 francos) en obras públicas de todo tipo. Lamento contradecir a mis predecesores, pues no puedo explicarme en qué información se basaban para escribir sin cesar a Vuestra Excelencia y demás que en Puerto Rico todo estaba por crear.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,

Señor Ministro,
 de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde
 y muy obediente servidor,
 El Administrador del Consulado
 [rúbrica] Argélian de Johannis

[52] Informe sobre la situación de los emigrantes de nacionalidad francesa en Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 24 de diciembre de 1883⁶³

Señor Ministro,

De conformidad con el despacho que Vuestra Excelencia me ha hecho el honor de escribirme el 20 de noviembre pasado, bajo el sello de la Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales y Consulares, a fin de obtener la información más precisa y completa posible sobre la situación de los emigrantes de nacionalidad francesa en esta Isla, así como sobre las ventajas y los inconvenientes que presenta este país para los franceses que vienen a establecerse, me apresuro, Señor Ministro, a decirle, en primer lugar, que la situación de nuestros nacionales en Puerto Rico es de las mejores.

En efecto, las autoridades locales son, en general, siempre benevolentes respecto a los franceses. Por otra parte, esta benevolencia es merecida porque en nuestra colonia, que cuenta más de dos mil individuos, nunca se han observado esos crímenes ni esos delitos que muy a menudo ocupan los tribunales.

⁶³ Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales y Consulares, Subdirección de Asuntos Comerciales, No. 39.

Nuestros nacionales, excepto alguna rara excepción, son todos trabajadores y tranquilos. No se dedican en absoluto a la política, pese a que existen en esta isla dos partidos, uno conservador y otro separatista, nacidos desde la abolición de la esclavitud.

La prueba de la estima en que se tiene a nuestros nacionales es que a algunos se les pide a menudo aceptar funciones de concejal municipal y hasta de alcalde del lugar donde residen. Además, las autoridades de la isla los consideran como los mejores habitantes de Puerto Rico.

Este consulado conoce a penas a la mitad de los franceses que viven en la Isla, porque no todos vienen a presentarse a su llegada. Nuestros agentes consulares tampoco los conocen. No obstante, según los datos reunidos por los diversos alcaldes, se puede afirmar que la cantidad de nacionales nuestros que residen en esta Isla pasa de dos mil.

Lo que sí es cierto es que su fortuna, según las contribuciones que pagan, se calcula en más de cuarenta millones de piastras o doscientos millones de francos.

Los franceses que vienen a vivir a este país no pueden considerarse verdaderos emigrantes, es decir, gente que deja a su país natal para lanzarse a la aventura en tierra extranjera. Muy al contrario, en su mayoría vienen a invitación de parientes o amigos que les han precedido y que se ocupan de ellos tan pronto llegan o los ayudan a establecerse, además de que por lo general mantienen relaciones continuas con su país de origen, enviando a los que allá quedaron parte de los beneficios de su trabajo y de su industria. Por otro lado, muchos viajan ocasionalmente para ver su suelo natal, y tan pronto reúnen algún capital regresan definitivamente a su patria.

Lo cierto es que la colonia francesa de Puerto Rico es una fuente de riqueza para Francia, porque los emigrantes envían hacia allá, o llevan ellos mismos, la mayor parte de su fortuna.

Según su lugar de origen, los franceses de esta Isla pueden dividirse en cuatro grupos, a saber:

Seis décimas de la colonia vienen del Departamento de Córcega;

Dos décimas vienen de los Departamentos del Sur y de los Pirineos;

Una décima parte viene de otras regiones de Francia; y una décima parte se compone de nuestros criollos de Martinica y Guadalupe.

Las ocupaciones principales de nuestros nacionales son:

La agricultura, la industria y en menor grado el comercio.

Los oriundos de Córcega son por lo general propietarios de plantaciones. Muchos de ellos son muy ricos, aunque la fortuna de algunos es fruto de estafas y engaños, cosas bastante comunes en este país y que casi siempre pasan impunes.

Los de los Pirineos y el sur de Francia se dedican con facilidad al comercio, sobre todo a la venta ambulante, que aquí es muy remunerada.

Los oriundos de las otras regiones de Francia y de nuestras Antillas por lo general ejercen trabajos inherentes a la fabricación de azúcar o a la profesión de mecánico.

Las provincias de la Isla que tienen mayor población francesa son Ponce, Mayagüez y Guayama; viven menos franceses en las provincias de Humacao, Arecibo, Aguadilla y San Juan, sede del consulado.

La facilidad que brindan los alcaldes a los franceses para obtener la cédula de vecindad (autorización para permanecer en el país) es lo que impide saber a este Consulado, así como a nuestros agentes consulares, la cantidad de franceses que residen en sus respectivas circunscripciones. Desconocedoras de la Convención Consular existente entre Francia y España, las autoridades locales nunca cumplen con las disposiciones del Artículo 3 de dicha Convención en lo concerniente a los nacionales nuestros que llegan. Es por eso que la autoridad consular no los conoce.

En resumen, la isla de Puerto Rico es, en más de un aspecto, ventajosa para la emigración francesa. Nuestros nacionales encuentran trabajo fácilmente, a menos que sean perezosos o bebedores. Las industrias, excepto la fabricación del azúcar, comienzan a penas a despuntar en este país donde hace pocos años la esclavitud más repugnante era la única base de la

riqueza nativa. Nuestros nacionales, con su inteligencia natural, contribuyen en mucho al desarrollo industrial y agrícola de este país, donde alcanzan posiciones convenientes y muchos amasan grandes fortunas.

Esta es, Señor Ministro, la información que durante cuatro años dedicados al estudio de este país y sus habitantes he logrado reunir, y que le remito en respuesta a su despacho arriba citado.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro,
de Vuestra Excelencia el muy humilde
y muy obediente servidor,
El Administrador del Consulado
[rúbrica]Argélian de Johannis

[53] Señores Vadi, hermanos, en Puerto Rico. Central Coloso: un pedazo de Francia. Petición para concederles una condecoración, Puerto Rico, 30 de julio de 1884⁶⁴

Señor Ministro,

En continuación del despacho que tuve el honor de dirigirle el 26 de mayo pasado, bajo el sello de la Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales y Consulares, Subdirección de Asuntos Consulares, me tomo la libertad de solicitar respetuosa y muy especialmente la reconocida bondad de Vuestra Excelencia en favor de dos de nuestros nacionales, los señores Emile y Louis Vadi, hermanos oriundos de Cervione, cerca de Bastia (Córcega). El segundo es Doctor en Medicina graduado de la facultad de París y agente consular nuestro en Aguadilla.

El señor Emile Vadi, el mayor de los dos hermanos, llegó a esta Isla hace varios años. Con inteligencia singular y diligencia sorprendente, supo hacer fértil un terreno que parecía ingrato. Más tarde su hermano Louis se le unió para ayudarlo y juntos han hecho en ese terreno una fábrica azucarera llamada "Coloso"; está situada en Aguada, cerca de Aguadilla, y es la más perfeccionada de todas las que existen de ese género en la Isla. Esta fábrica tiene una extensión de 3,000 cuerdas de terreno, o sea alrededor de mil hectáreas (la cuerda mide 3,930 metros y 40 centímetros cuadrados). Está dotada de máquinas de acción triple provenientes de los talleres de la Casa Cail y Cía. de París; diez kilómetros de vías Porteur Decauville, con cien vagones y locomotoras, la surcan a lo largo y a lo ancho para facilitar su explotación.

Pero lo extraordinario para este país es que, estando en la fábrica "Coloso", uno cree estar en una hacienda francesa. Allí todo respira el aire de nuestra patria; la caña de azúcar se cultiva a la francesa con todos los progresos de la ciencia agrícola: las construcciones rurales, la fábrica y la casa del dueño son a la francesa, y franceses son los empleados principales. Se diría que los señores Vadi han transportado a Puerto Rico un pedazo de Francia.

El producto de esta fábrica, que ya ha obtenido la medalla de oro en la última feria de Ponce, fue este año 40,000 quintales de 46 kilogramos de azúcar cristalizada. Dicha fábrica posee además una magnífica destilería, establecida según los últimos perfeccionamientos.

La inteligente actividad de estos dos hermanos les ha ganado muy rápido la estima de toda la región, pues, como tuve el honor de escribirlo a Vuestra Excelencia en otra ocasión, los señores Emile y Louis Vadi no sólo honran a la colonia francesa de este lugar sino que también contribuyen con sus méritos y cualidades a fomentar el amor por nuestra patria. Las autoridades locales, sin distinción, les conceden la mayor benevolencia, y en más de una ocasión Su Excelencia el Señor Gobernador General de la Isla me ha expresado su admiración por ellos diciéndome "que esos dos franceses son verdaderos caballeros".

⁶⁴ Dirección de Asuntos Comerciales y Consulares, Subdirección de Asuntos Comerciales, No. 87.

En efecto, ¿cómo podría ser de otra manera si los señores Vadi dan sustento a los varios cientos de peones empleados en “Coloso”? ¿Cómo no iba el señor Doctor Louis Vadi a ganarse el amor de los habitantes de la circunscripción de Aguadilla, si siempre —en especial durante las epidemias de fiebre amarilla y de vómito como la que nos castiga tan cruelmente en este momento— se multiplica para ayudar a la humanidad sufriente llevando el auxilio de la ciencia a los enfermos por doquier, en la ciudad y en el campo, de día y de noche, con el mayor desinterés, sobre todo si se trata de nuestros nacionales? El señor Doctor Vadi ha adquirido ya como médico una reputación bien merecida.

Inteligente y estudioso, pronto se ha distinguido entre sus colegas médicos, quienes saben hacerle justicia. Desde 1878, además, se desempeña como agente consular de Francia en Aguadilla, función que ejerce, y siempre ha ejercido, con dedicación y afán para provecho del servicio y de sus compatriotas.

Agregaría también, Señor Ministro, que el beneficio de la fábrica azucarera “Coloso” es riqueza para Francia, pues llega allí casi íntegro. Todos los años, uno de los dos señores Vadi va a ver a su familia que reside en Cervione y le lleva las ganancias de su industria.

Partiendo de la exposición precedente, me atrevo a rogar a Vuestra Excelencia que acceda a considerar con benevolencia los méritos verdaderos de estos hermanos, los señores Vadi, y vea si, en su gran sabiduría, los juzga dignos de la condecoración del Mérito Agrícola o de cualquier otra recompensa honorífica.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,

Señor Ministro,
de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor,
El Administrador del Consulado
[rúbrica] Argélian de Johannis

CARTAS CONSULARES INGLESAS

[54] Report by Mr. Consul Couper, on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico, & c., for the Year 1869⁶⁵

The very propitious weather, and the absence of any greater political disturbance than the natural sympathy of the islanders for their countrymen in Cuba, have caused a considerable increase in the commerce of Porto Rico, both import and export; the value of the former which consists principally of dry goods from Great Britain, provisions and lumber from Canada and the United States, and wine and oil from Spain, was about 16,000,000 of dollars, or 3,250,000£., and of the latter about 12,000,000 of dollars, or 2,400,000£.; of these amounts, probably not more than 4,000,000£. were imported in British bottoms, although the total value of British imports was at least twice that amount.

The cause of this is the differential duty of 6 per cent imposed upon goods imported in foreign vessels, which is particularly injurious to British shipping; and as the British import trade might, and probably will be, soon augmented to a million pounds sterling per annum, it is important that efforts should be made for its removal. If persuasion failed, the imposition of a similar duty upon Spanish vessels bringing sugar to British ports would soon effect it, for they would no longer seek cargoes in England, with the certainty of been unable to bring a return one, and would have to rot in their ports. The extent to which our shipping suffers, may be imagined by its numbers, 552 having entered all the different ports of Porto Rico and Vieques in 1869, and their imports being thus forcibly confined to provisions, lumber, coals, &c., which either pay no duty or a very trifling one, a large proportion came in ballast, and had to rely on homeward freight alone for their remuneration.

I announced in my last year's Report, that the Government had taken the import duties off provisions, the object was praiseworthy, but proved a disastrous failure; it was intended for the benefit of the poor, who were supposed to have suffered in the hurricanes and earthquakes of 1867; but this was an error of judgement consequent upon the personal government of a military chief fresh from Spain, and ignorant of the fact, that the poorer classes here do not consume imported provisions, but live upon the produce of the soil, such as yams, plantains, rice, &c., and moreover, that the calamities, which this well meant but injudicious measure was intended to alleviate, did not in fact fall injuriously upon the poor, but on the contrary, at once provided them with well paid and unlocked for occupation, not only in the fields, but in the cities in the repairs of houses, &c. Imported provisions, therefore, maintained their former prices throughout the year, to the utter ruin of the already impoverished. Treasury, which depended for its revenue upon the duties of the Customs, to the detriment of the trade with the mother country, whose flour was driven from the market by that of the United States, and to the advantage of no one but the merchants who did not reduce their prices one cent.

As a consequence, indeed an urgent necessity, these duties have been re-imposed from the 1st January 1870, together with heavy municipal taxes upon imports, and an export duty of 2½ dollars the hogshead of sugar, 50 cents the puncheon of molasses, 50 cents the cwt. of coffee and 20 cents the cwt. of tobacco.

The following is a detail of the alterations in the tariff:

⁶⁵ PP 1869-70, 1870 [c. 115] LXIV.233. No incluye tablas descriptivas.

Articles free of import duty from 1st January 1870

Trees, nursery trees, and seeds.

Mineral coal and charcoal.

Asses, mares, horses, mules, as also all kinds of woolly and stock cattle imported to improve the breed.

Guano and all sorts of natural or artificial manure.

Machines and mechanical apparatus of all kinds, imported for agricultural purposes and local use in farms, and for whatever application tending in any way to save hands and labour, and render less costly the working of rustic properties, which are or will in the future be under cultivation.

Machines and mechanical apparatus of all kinds, whose object be the working and improvement of plantations, from the carting of the cane to the mill, and the grinding of the same, to the package of the produce, and its conveyance out of the Estate; also all the auxiliaries of said machines and apparatus if they are not applied to other purposes than those required on the plantation.

Machines and apparatus with especial application to cultivate coffee, cocoa, and cotton plantations.

Machinery for the especial purpose of drilling artesian wells.

Mills to thrash rice and shell corn.

Live fish.

N. B. — Wooden houses and nails for same, white, spruce, and pitch pine lumber, shingles, zinc in plates, and galvanized iron sheets, not been being mentioned in the above-named degree, will pay duties according to their former tariff.

N. B. — By a recent decree of the Municipality of this city, the health visit, charged heretofore to all vessels from abroad, arriving at this port, has been augmented to 6½ dollars Spanish coin, instead of 4½ dollars formerly charged. It is also ordered by same decree, that vessels that come alongside the quay will have to pay 1 dollar for each mast the vessel may have.

By another decree of same authority, local taxes have been imposed on the articles mentioned hereafter, as follows:

	\$	Cts.
Gross playing cards	2	0
Baskets of 12 bottles champagne	1	50
Demijohna, brandy, of 3 gallons	1	0
Barrels of 4 dozen bottles, beer	0	80
Boxes of 15 bottles, gin	0	37.5
Boxes of 12 bottles, gin	0	30
Boxes of 12 bottles, fine liquors, Maraschino and others	0	25
Demijohns, gin, of 3 gallons	0	12.5
Demijohns anised, of 5 gallons from Hamburg	0	10

Boxes of 12 bottles common liquors from Mallorca and Cataluña	0	10
Demijohns, anised and Holanda, of 3 gallons from Spain	0	5
Demijohns brandy (imitation) of 1 gallon	0	3

By these measures it is hoped to place the revenue in healthy state, but as the employees, civil, naval and military have been for months in arrears of pay, public works at a standstill, and the roads and bridges fast becoming impassable, it was necessary to adopt some immediate measure to meet these demands, and the Captain-General with great difficulty, succeeded in obtaining rather less than 400,000 dollars from the merchants, as an advance upon future import duties, for which sum "bonds" of the Treasury are to be issued, and to be received as cash in Custom-house, but it is quite clear that, if the Government could not pay its way, with the whole Customs revenue, it will be unable to do so with a part of it.

The rates of exchange were lower and less variable than in 1868, and ranged from 4 dollars 90 cents to 5 dollars 15 cents the £ sterling, whereas in 1868 they rose to 5 dollars 35 cents and 5 dollars 40 cents. The interest of money is from 1 to 1½ per cent a month; if a bank were established in the island, money would no doubt be cheaper, and great facilities would be afforded to the planters to extend their operations, but the Government will not permit a bank of issue, and one of mere deposit, does not appear to induce any one to embark in it.

Shipping and Navigation

About 1,500 vessels of all nations, including the coasting trade, entered the ports of Porto Rico and Vieques in 1869, of which 552 were British; by far the greater part, probably four-fifths of the British shipping came from the colonies, for the reason above assigned, that the heavy differential duties prevent foreign vessels with valuable cargoes from entering here.

The tonnage dues, however, upon Spanish and foreign vessels were equalized by a Royal Decree in June 1868, but British vessels were not admitted to the privilege until February 1869, owing to the question of how far the reciprocity upon which it was based was affected by the laws of our colonies; it is an important concession, reducing the dues from 4s. to 1s. 6d. the ton.

At the port of St. Juan, the buoys which were inconveniently placed in mid-channel have been removed, and substituted by two red ones at the mouth of the harbour, the fair way being betwixt them.

At the port of Mayagüez, a British vessel has been wrecked upon a rock, said to be hitherto unknown, and not marked in any chart; it is situated betwixt points Jigüero and Algarrobo, three miles due west of Añasco, in the direct course for the harbour of Mayagüez.

Agriculture

The crops consist of sugar, coffee, cotton and tobacco, for consumption and exportation, and rice, fruits, Indian corn, cocoa-nuts, plantains, yams, and vegetables for home consumption. A trade in oranges and cocoa-nuts has until lately sprung up betwixt Mayagüez and the United States, which promises to become important. Cattle are bred in large quantities upon the east side of the island, and are imported from Naguabo to the British and other colonies.

The crop of sugar in 1869 was extremely productive, owing to the fine weather, the more general application of manures, and the improvements which have been used in its manufacture; the large shipments made to the United States proved unfortunate as speculations, and much money was lost.

The crop of coffee fell short of those of 1867 and 1868, but these were very exceptionally good years, and a continuance could not have been expected; the future promises well, persons ignorant of coffee planting and without capital had possessed themselves of some of the estates, and by their reckless proceedings greatly injured them and themselves, but these men may now have been bought out, and it is to be hoped that the crops will improve.

Cotton planting is being abandoned, and will probably soon disappear as one of the productions of the island.

The culture of tobacco is on the contrary increasing, owing to the great demand from Germany.

Population and Industry

The population of Porto Rico is composed of 300,000 whites, 300,000 free coloured people, and about 30,000 slaves; with so large a fund of labour, there has, of course, been no slave trade for many years, nor is there any inclination on the part of the inhabitants to encourage any sort of immigration; labour is plentiful, and of as good a quality as can reasonably be expected in the tropics, at from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. a day, without food. The proportion of free to slave labour is about four to one.

The price of slaves has greatly diminished, owing to the certainty which is felt, that they will be shortly emancipated; indeed, very little business of this description is effected; sales are generally the consequence of pecuniary necessities, and the slave who, a short time ago would fetch 7 or 800 dollars, can now be with difficulty sold for half that sum. As far as this island is concerned, emancipation would effect no perceptible change in its condition, but, unfortunately, it cannot be accomplished without including Cuba, and there a real difficulty lies.

Public Works

Owing to the poverty of the Treasury these are at a standstill; there are no railways, no canals, and the ordinary roads and bridges are falling or fallen to decay; an electric telegraph, a single wire, has been established this year from the capital to Arecibo, touching at Bayamón, Vega Alta, Vega Baja and Manatí; it is to be continued at once to Mayagüez, and subsequently all the island; it is said that the deep sea cable, projected by an English company, is to touch at Ponce, an inconvenient point, as it is on the south side, with the Sierra intervening betwixt it and the capital; no arrangements appear to have been made with the Government to secure the inviolability of the telegrams.

General Remarks

It may not be uninteresting to give a short account of the different British interests which exist in the island.

1. The general commerce of Great Britain with this island is worth at least a million of money.

2. 552 British ships are engaged in the trade, of 11,040 tons, and with 5,000 seamen.

3. The British Post Office established here, transmitted in 1869, hence to different parts 57,233 letters, and 329 packages of newspapers, postage value of which, was 3,712£. 14s. 9d., and the postage value of letters received (all of which were prepaid) was probably 2,000£., or a total annual revenue to Her Majesty's Post Office of 5,712£. 14s. 9d. 890£. 6s. 8d. of British postage stamps were sold here during the same period.

4. The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company also derives a handsome revenue from the island; last year 37,444 dollars, or 7,488£. were received here for homeward passages only, so that, if the outward passages were added, the Company's revenue cannot be less than 10,000£. a year.

Porto Rico, January 1, 1870.

[55] **Report by Consul Couper on the Trade and Commerce of the Island of Porto Rico for the Year 1870**⁶⁶

Trade and Commerce

The change in the Executive of this Government, which took place during the year 1870, produced immediate and general tranquillity, for groundless suspicions, and their inevitable accompaniments of arbitrary and vexatious measures, gave place on the part of the Government to a well, founded confidence in the peaceable intentions of the people: and measures of conciliation produced their effect in the increase of the commercial prosperity of the island. The debt which the late, Captain-General had contracted, of 400,000 dollars, by a species of forced loan, with the merchants, upon the security of the Custom-house duties, has been repaid; the duties upon breadstuffs, so injudiciously removed, have been reimposed: the *employees* have been paid; and the general course of things is fast returning to its normal prosperity.

The imports, probably, rather decreased in value, owing to the war. In 1869 they amounted in value to about 3,200,000£. In 1870 they probably fell short of 3,000,000£. It is of course impossible here to give a detailed account of every article of import. The principal were: prints, calicoes, linens, hosiery, ironmongery, machinery, cutlery, beer, saddlery, crockery, &c., from Great Britain; breadstuffs, lumber, and salt fish, from the United States and Canada; wine, oil, dried fruits, from Spain; *tasajo*, or dried beef, from the River Plate; butter and provisions, from Germany: and silks, wine, porcelain, from France.

The exports, however, increased to a remarkable extent. Their value in 1869 was 2,400,000£; in 1870, 2,952,569£. Their nature and value were as follows: 101,298 tons of sugar, against 81,372 tons in 1869, or an increase of 25 per cent; 7,293,011 gallons of molasses, against 5,969,020 in 1869, or about 40 per cent increase; 192,645 quintals of coffee, against 144,396 in 1869 or an increase of 30 per cent; 7,066 cwt. of cotton, against 4,966 in 1869, or about 40 per cent increase; and 64,973 quintals of tobacco, against 28,688 in 1869, or an increase of 100 per cent. There were only two articles in which there was a deficit—namely, in hides, from 7,456 quintals in 1869 to 5,499 in 1870; and in rum, from 31,225 gallons in 1869 to 2,458 in 1870.

The value of the imports has decreased and that of the exports largely increased and that of those to or from Great Britain and her possessions has followed the same course. The decrease in the imports is undoubtedly to be attributed to the war, and the increase in the exports to the extraordinary impulse given to the production of sugar here by the Cuban insurrection. The former is a temporary evil—the latter a permanent good. Porto Rico is not only the most prosperous, but the most promising of all the West India Islands. From the small number of its slaves, it has nothing to dread from their approaching emancipation: and from the indefensibility of the island, and, indeed, the general prosperity of the people, it is equally exempt from the fear of political disturbances. Indeed, nothing but the grossest mismanagement can arrest its progress; but neither its commercial or agricultural capabilities can be fully developed without some advance in the direction, of free trade—for example, by the removal of the differential duties imposed upon foreign flags, and by the establishment of banks to crush the usurers, who are the curse of the island.

During the past year the import duties upon provisions were reimposed, and the following export duties confirmed: -2½ dollars per hogshead of sugar, 50 cents per hogshead of molasses, 50 cents the cwt. of coffee, and 20 cents the cwt. of tobacco. These measures were absolutely necessary to restore the public finances to something like a healthy state, and they have thus far proved successful; but the policy of another, which came into operation upon the 1st July, appears to be more questionable. It is difficult to say whether it should be classed under the head of Trade or Shipping whether it should be considered as a measure for the reduction of the port charges, or as an indirect one for increasing the import duties. It

⁶⁶ PP 1871 [c. 402] LXVI. 1. No incluye tablas descriptivas.

is to the following effect: "From and after the 1st July, 1870, all vessels arriving in the ports of the island will pay, in lieu of tonnage, light-house, anchorage, harbour master's, and harbour-cleaning dues, hitherto collected, a duty of one dollar, Spanish currency, for every ton gross of cargo which they land. Vessels arriving in ballast, although loading produce, will not be subject to this charge or to the tonnage dues. The gross weight of the cargo in kilograms is to be expressed upon the vessel's certified manifest, to which no additions or correction will in future be allowed. For any omission or deficiency of the manifested weights exceeding 10 per cent, the vessel will be fined 25 dollars for each article in which such deficiency or omission is found".

When this change first came into operation there was an universal outcry against it, which has, however, gradually subsided; and I, therefore, presume that it has been more successful in its operation than was then anticipated. The undoubted advantages which it holds out to vessels in ballast has caused many "seeking" ships to call here that would not otherwise have done so; and, as no vessel pays beyond the weight of the cargo which it actually disembarks, it would appear although a novel measure, to be one based upon principles of equity. It is, however, an entire change of system, for it imposes expenses upon laden ships twice as heavy, in some instances, as heretofore, and entirely relieves others of any charge whatever. It does not follow that this is unjust; but, as the change was made without notices and caused considerable embarrassment to ships already under charter, this alone may account for the complaints at its first promulgation, and, at the same time, for their having since subsided.

The rates of exchange during the year varied from 4 dollars 80 cents the pound sterling to 5 dollars 20 cents, the average being 5 dollars.

Shipping and Navigation

Above 1,600 vessels of all nations entered the ports of the island during 1870, of which 568, of 83,086 tons and 4,446 men, were British, exclusive of the Royal Company's steamers, which call here twice a month.

By the regulations of the island all vessels must be provided with a manifest, expressing, both in figures and in writing, their class, flag, name, tonnage (in Spanish tone), captain, where from, shippers, consignees (consignments to order being prohibited), marks, numbers, kind of packages, contents and gross weight in metric decimals, if in ballast stating so, which must be certified by the Spanish Consul at the port of dispatch, and a duplicate must be given to him to forward under seal to the Intendente of this island, and a triplicate, not certified, is brought by the captain himself. Vessels arriving without the certified manifest are fined 100 dollars, and if the above-name details or any of them are omitted 25 dollars additional. Vessels in ballast omitting to present their manifests immediately upon arrival are fined 200 dollars, and if with cargo 500 dollars. Any goods found on board a vessel not manifested will subject her to a fine equal to their value, and they themselves will be confiscated. Every vessel must also be provided with a Bill of Health also signed by the Spanish Consul.

The levying of these fines is rendered oppressive by the vicious system of their imposition; it is not so much that the fines are unjust in themselves as that they are given as perquisites to the very employees who impose them. Foreign captains are not unnaturally suspected of bringing grief upon themselves by neglecting to conform to the regulations in force; but this is not the case, with some exceptional cases they are very particular in observing them, but they are nevertheless fined, and very unjustly so; for example, the offence for which fines in nine cases out of ten are levied, is the presentation of a ballast manifest without the Spanish Consul's certificate; now, the reply of every captain who has ever been fined for this is the same-namely, that the Spanish Consul had refused his signature to a ballast manifest as altogether unnecessary, notwithstanding which the vessel is fined 100 dollars, upon her arrival for the omission of a Spanish officer.

Agriculture

The productions of the island consist of those usual in the tropics, but for quality and amount, considering the extent of the island, they are probably unequalled; this observation will apply to the sugar and coffee with the greatest force, the production of the former during 1870 was very remarkable—certainly not less than 125,000 tons—and it is expected to be progressive; the quality of the coffee from the district of Aguadilla is second to none in the world; and tobacco is being cultivated with greater care, and is perceptibly improving. Cotton will, probably, at no distant period, cease to be a production of the island, the worm rendering it too precarious; whilst sugar yields a certain profit, the minor productions of rice, maize, yams, plantains, are all abundant, particularly upon the west and south sides; indeed, in all that relates to the vegetable productions, Porto Rico is highly favoured; but, as a rule, the animal productions of the island are scarce, and it is very remarkable how few wild animals or birds there are; the cattle, however, are very fine, and in such numbers that many of the West India Island are supplied from here.

The estates are well mounted with first-class machinery for sugar making and distilling. Ploughs and other agricultural instruments are in general use; but there is a vast field for improvement in the dwelling houses, whether of the proprietors or the labourers. Nothing can exceed the discomfort of the former, or the wretchedness of the latter.

Population and Industries

The population of the island is very large—upwards of 600,000; so that, although there are only 35,000 slaves, and not more than one-half engaged in field work, ample amount of labour for the requirements of the country can be obtained from the freemen at the low rate of 1s. 6d. to 2s. day, without food. On this account immigration has been discouraged as unnecessary. There are no factories in the island but those for making sugar, and there are no mines now at work, although so long ago as the time of the Islands gold and copper were worked in the mountains of Luquillo.

The people are otherwise employed as in other countries, with no special industries peculiar to this. Some are employed as *matriculados*—a sort of marine reserve, who have the monopoly of labour upon the wharves and afloat; but, like all other monopolists, they are idle rascals, and will not work for less than 2 dollars, or 8s. a day. When Sir Charles Bright was here with three large ships, besides one of Her Majesty's ships, he employed them on board with the submarine cable; but the work was so bad that he preferred the expense of taking his ship to St. Thomas, where he obtained labourers at a dollar a day, who did some work for their money. Unfortunately, merchant ships bound to this port are bound to submit to this infliction, and it would be very desirable if the Spanish Government could be induced to abolish these *matriculados*.

Public Works

The greatest public work of the past year was the landing of the two ends of the Transatlantic-Cable, one of which is working as far as St. Thomas, and is to go on to Demerara, and possibly to Brazil; and the other, which was to have united the island to Jamaica, and thence to Europe and to the Pacific. Unfortunately, this portion of the cable is broken, so that European telegrams reach here, by any opportunity which may present itself, either from Jamaica or Santiago de Cuba. The telegraph wires are now extended all round the island; but, as the Government retains full control over them, as well as those telegrams which arrive by the submarine cable, and will not permit of chiphers, no one can be sure of the receipt or transmission of any message, each being subject to the approval of the Government.

An American officer, Colonel Stewart, has recently introduced into the island a system of his own invention for the purification of sugar, by means of the fumes of sulfur. I have not seen it in operation, but I hear that it is simple and inexpensive, and has long been used in the United States. It is being extensively adopted, and I have seen some specimens of sugar made

by it, which appear very satisfactory. It is Colonel Stewart's intention to introduce his system into the English islands.

There are neither canals nor railways in the island. Streetcars on rails exist at Mayagüez, and are being introduced at Ponce. The roads and bridges sadly require, but they always do after the rainy season.

Porto Rico, January 1, 1871.

[56] **Report by Consul Couper on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the Year 1872**⁶⁷

Notwithstanding the many attempts which have been recently made to discredit the soundness of commercial transactions here, by representing the political reforms and the project for the final emancipation of the slaves as the harbingers of the ruin, I feel a very deep conviction that these changes, which from their sweeping nature may be termed revolutionary, although they appear to me necessary and inevitable, when once accomplished, will be hailed by both "Peninsulares" and "Insulares" as a grateful relief from a barbarous and untenable system, and that if no extraneous pressure is brought to impede their progress they will be attended by no derangement of the commercial or agricultural prosperity of the island.

Trade and Commerce

There have been some heavy failures during the year, entirely independent of political derangements and solely consequent upon the over trading of one particular house, which carried with it in its fall all those with whom it was intimately connected; no Spanish house suffered to any perceptible extent, indeed the principal ones are all remarkable for their frugality, economy, and judgement, and are not likely to be led into gambling transactions.

I regret to say that owing to unreasonable weather, particularly upon the south side of the island, there has been a considerable falling off in every article of produce, with the exception of tobacco, as compared with the year 1871.

Sugar, of which 128,878 tons were produced in 1871 fell to 110,318 tons, a large portion of this deficiency occurring in the important sugar district of Ponce, which suffered, in common with that of Guayama, very greatly from drought. 103,103 tons were exported in 1871 from the different parts of the island, and only 94,262 tons in 1872; the coming crop is expected to be a fair average one. The very high prices of sugars, averaging about 5 dol. the cwt. rendered it a very unfavourable article of speculation, and money was lost upon all shipments either to Europe or America.

Coffee also showed a diminished production, 210,566 quintals were exported in 1871, and only 177,208 in 1872, nor did it prove a better speculation than sugar, the extensive destruction of the plant in Cuba and the free importation to the United States stimulated speculation, and raised the prices so much that shipments as a rule turned out badly; the coming crop is expected to be largest ever known, and if the high prices obtained in 1872, 15 dol. the quintal, are maintained, and they are even likely to increase, it cannot fail to be a very profitable year to the coffee planters.

Molasses, cotton, hides, and rum have decreased in quantity, molasses from 7,390,915 gallons exported in 1871 to 6,087,550 in 1872; cotton from 210,066 in 1871 to 177,208 quintals in 1872, but it is probable that the planting of cotton will be ultimately abandoned; hides from 6,838 quintals in 1871 to 5,644 in 1872; and rum from 19,896 gallons in 1871 to 2,518 in 1872. The only article of produce -which did increase was tobacco, from 55,240 quintals in 1871 to 61,761 in 1872.

⁶⁷ PP 1873 [c. 828] LXV.1

The total value of the whole foreign commerce of the island may be quoted at about 6,010,565£., of which 3,150, 620£ may be credited to imports, and 2,859,945£ to exports, showing a decrease in the former of 349,380£, and in the latter of 258,547£; but should political arrangements not interfere the prospects of the coming year are particularly bright.

It is not possible to give a detailed account of the value of imports, or, indeed, of their quantity, so immediately upon the termination of the year, the chief articles are prints, calicos, linens, hosiery, iron mongery, machinery, cutlery, coals, beer, saddlery, crockery, and perfumery from Great Britain; breadstuffs, lumber, salt fish, ice, and provisions from the United States and Canada; wine, oil, dried fruits, garlic, from Spain; dried beef from the river Plate; provisions from Germany, and wine, silks, and porcelain from France.

The following is a statement of the nature, amount, and value of all exports during the last two years:

Year	Sugar	Molasses	Coffee	Tobacco	Cotton	Hides	Rum
	At 5 do. per Quintal	At 20 and 25 cents per Gallon	At 12 to 15 dol. per Quintal	At 8 dol. per Quintal	At 13 to 20 dol. per Quintal	At 14 to 17 dol. per Quintal	At 28 cents per Gallon
Amount in 1871	2,162,667	7,590,915	210,066	55,240	7,800	6,838	12,896
" 1872	1,885,211	6,087,550	177,208	61,761	5,139	5,644	2,513
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Value in 1871	2,062,067	303,636	504,878	87,424	20,180	19,176	1,061
" 1872	1,885,241	304,377	531,624	98,817	20,556	19,190	140
					£		
Total 1871					3,118,492		
" 1872					2,859,945		

In annual report made by the same person on the same subject, the same information and opinions must be necessarily oftentimes repeated, I therefore, upon this occasion, annex the local reports of the Vice-Consuls of Ponce and Mayagüez, both of them gentlemen of experience in comercial and consular affairs, whose observation cannot fail to be of value.

The rate of exchange was extremely high throughout the year, ranging from 5 dol. 20 c. to 5 dol. the £ sterling, this, and the fictious value placed upon gold, caused large quantities of silver to be exported, the want of which is now severely felt in all the transactions of life; it would tend greatly to simplify monetary transactions if Spanish silver were entirely withdrawn from circulation, the currency being, to all intents and purposes, the silver coinage of the United States, or that the Government would assimilate the coinage of its West India Colonies to that of the United States; there is still no bank in any part of the island, although it would prove a grand speculation if properly established.

The following is a statement of the import and export duties livied here:

Trees, nursery trees, and seeds.

Mineral coal and charcoal.

Jackasses, mares, stallions, as also all kind of woolly and stock cattle imported to improve the breed.

Guano and all sorts of natural or artificial manure.

Machines and mechanical apparatus of all kinds, whose object be the working and improvement of plantations from the carting of the cane to the mill and the grinding of the same, to package of the produce, and its conveyance out of the estate, also all the auxiliaries

of said machines and apparatus, if they are not applied to other purposes than those required on the plantation.

Machines and apparatus with especial application to cultivate coffee, cocoa, and cotton plantations.

Machinery for the especial purpose of drilling artesian wells.

Mills to trash recie and shell corn.

Live fish.

[...]

There is one subject in connection with the duties to which the attention of shippers should be drawn, some time ago a reduction of 6 per cent was made upon direct importations, this was understood to mean upon whatever cargo which might be brought in a vessel from the country to which she belonged, and the practice of the Custom-house was carried out in this sense until the 10th September last, when it was suddenly announced that the privilege applied to the cargo as well as the flag and that the former must be the production of the country from which the vessel arrived; the question arose upon some rice imported direct from Liverpool, and it was contended at the Custom-house that although it might have been East Indian rice, and consequently the produce of a British possession, it was not, and could not have been, the production of Great Britain itself. The Germans share with the British the hardship of this interpretation.

Shipping and Navigation

The total number of ships which entered the different ports of the island in 1872 was 1,854 of 329,362 tons, and 25,317 men, of which 496 vessels were British, of 76,669 tons and 3,863 men, which is a decrease as compared with the year 1871.

There has been no relaxation of the protective Spanish navigation laws as regards the colonies, but now that they are announced to be integral parts of the kingdom, and are called provinces, it is to be hoped that the laws will shortly be assimilated.

Agriculture

The anticipation of a deficient crop, which I expressed in my last report, has been verified, and every article of produce with the exception of tobacco, has fallen off. Planters, however, did not, suffer as the prices were exceptionally high, and it is satisfactory to add the coming crop is expected to be the largest ever known.

The horse epidemic, or as it is called here the "mala" had precisely the same character as it is described to have had in the United States, the cases of attack were very great, but the proportions of deaths inconsiderable, and confined, for the most part, to valuable imported horses and mules or to aged and sickly native horses. The estates did not suffer so much as might have been expected, as the work upon them is performed, for the most part, by bullocks; but inter-communication was stopped for some time, to the great inconvenience of the public in general.

Population and Industries

The following interesting census has just been communicated to me by the Government:*

This census is particularly interesting at the present moment, when fears are entertained of the consequences of the projected emancipation of slaves upon the agricultural prosperity of the country. The total number of slaves is given as 31,706 and in a note this is stated to be 665 more than are registered in the Government departments, which would in itself, under the provisions of the Preliminary Act, render them free, consequently, in a popu-

* La tabla no se transcribió. Para más detalles al respecto, consulte el documento original.

lation of 617,327 persons the vast majority of whom are daily labourers, less than 5 per cent are slaves, and I will venture to assert that should 5 per cent of any population be reduced by epidemic or other calamity it would be only temporarily felt; but when it is considered that one third at least of these slaves are domestic servants, entirely unconnected with agriculture, and that of the remainder about two-thirds are women and children, I repeat my strong conviction that the transition from slave to free labour here will be unattended by any serious shock, always on the understanding that the humane intentions of the Government are not factiously opposed hitherto all parties have received the Preliminary Act with the best feeling, and the Government and proprietors alike have aided in carrying out its provisions in the most honorable manner, 10,000 persons were liberated under its provisions, I have not heard a single word of discontent expressed respecting it.

When I stated in my last report that all the capital and commercial connections of the island were in the hands of European Spaniards or foreigners, I intended this to be understood in a general sense for some native planters are gentlemen of extensive capital; but what I meant to convey was that so much of both was in the hands of Spaniards, and was used by them with so much judgement and knowledge of business, that I believed the prosperity of the island to depend upon the maintenance of the Spanish connection.

Public Works

I regret that this part of my report, must still remain a blank sheet. Railroads, irrigation, drainage, &c., are still required and still in embryo.

Porto Rico, January 1, 1873

[56a] Report by Vice-Consul Gumbes on the Trade and Commerce of Mayagüez for the Year 1872⁶⁸

The falling off in the yield of the crops for this past year, referred to in my last report, has been amply compensated by the enhancement in prices of our products, as is shown by the statistical table accompanying this report.

The very strong competition in sugar, despite the continued advice from consuming countries, contributed to prices far at variance with those of markets of destination at any time, the spirit of speculation leading always to the hope of an improvement which was not realized, thus a loss to shippers at large.

In coffee something similar has occurred; the destruction of the plant in Cuba from civil war and the free importation of the product in the United States led to speculations, which but in very few instances have given any result shipments having already been made to the Island of Cuba at ready purchases of from 17 ½ to 18½ dol. per 100 lbs.

The sugar crop is considered to yield a fair average, the weather not having been very unpropitious, and will be commenced at the early part of next month.

The cotton crop will be a poor one, owing to the drought this year and discouraging yield last year in the principal district of its growth.

The orange crop will be a large one, and active shipments are now being made to the United States at a cost of 4 to 4½ dol. per 1000.

There is an active demand for old iron, and competition has advanced the price to 75 cents per 100 lbs. for shipment to the United States.

There has been an increase in the import trade as compared with the previous year, a favourable item in which is a larger trade with Great Britain in the general merchandise line, by several dealers who, heretofore, took their supplies from St. Thomas and San Juan, and to

⁶⁸ PP 1873 [c.828] LXV. 1. Informe del vicecónsul de Mayagüez. No incluye tablas.

which the establishment of a line of steamers, under Spanish flag, from Liverpool has largely contributed, the freight being moderate and the advantage in low duty being an important point. Doubtless the service of the royal mail steamers will, in the course of time, tend to enhance this trade, the performance of their services being very regular and offering immense advantages for commercial travelling, principally to Europe, notwithstanding the competition of several lines of Spanish steamers now viewing with each other in heavy abatements in their former rates of freight.

No public works have been erected this year nor are any in contemplation. The street rails proved a failure, the system-employed being one that has never been adopted anywhere. They have been taken up and shipped to the United States. It is said that we are to have others in March next, but this is very doubtful.

The only ships of war that have visited this port have been those of the Spanish navy attached to the service of the island.

The official census of the town or district has not yet been taken. A certain number of slaves, the exact figure of which I have not been able to obtain, has received freedom through the generosity of owners in many cases, and at their own expense in others. This preliminary emancipation has had no other effect than to enhance the price of labour, which is now readily obtained at about 2s. per day with food, and to judge from the active delivery of coffee the complaints so frequently raised of an insufficiency of labour are entirely ungrounded; moreover, as a more extensive cultivation of the cane is being actively pursued.

The average rate of exchange on London can be estimated at 5 dol. and 15 c. to the pound sterling at ninety days' sight; this high rate being attributable to the large amount of local enterprise at high figures for produce, in contraposition to the execution of foreign orders for produce, which would have thrown a large amount of sterling into the market.

The scarcity of small coin is felt, that only available being American silver, which is always paid into the customs for duties, to avoid the loss on Spanish ounces of about one per cent between the Government and local rates, and is remitted to the Treasury at San Juan. At times it has suited the customs to receive ounces at the local rates, but this is not of frequent occurrence.

[56b] Report by Vice-Consul Basenta on the Trade and Commerce of Ponce for the Year 1872⁶⁹

Trade and Commerce

The principal articles of imports are dry goods, hardware, machinery, dried and pickled fish, wheat flour, oil, butter, candles, hams, lard, Spanish fruits, wines and spirits, shooks, and lumber.

Several cargoes of dry goods have this year been imported from the United Kingdom, exclusively in Spanish ships, owing to the duty being 6 per cent in favour of imports in Spanish bottoms. Machinery and utensils for the use of sugar estates are free of duty, and are generally imported from Great Britain in British vessels.

Dry and pickled fish are almost exclusively imported from British North America; white pine lumber is also extensively imported from the same place. All other articles are generally imported from the United States and from Spain.

The commercial values of the imports in 1872 from various countries were as follow:

⁶⁹ PP 1873 [c.828] LXV. 1. Informe del vicecónsul de Ponce.

	£	£
In British ships from United States	36,100	
" " United Kingdom and British North America	98,000	
" " French colonies	120	
		134,220
In American ships from United States		72,675
In German ships from Germany		27,000
In Spanish ships from United Kingdom, dry goods	100,000	
" " Spain	148,993	
" " France	20,000	
" " St. Thomas (in coasting vessels)	10,000	
		278,993
In Danish ships from Germany		3,600
In Swedish ships from Germany		11,000
Total		527,488

Provisions, lumber, &c., are generally sold by cargo, at from 3 to 4 months credit for the former and from 4 to 6 months credit for the latter.

There are no public banking institutions in this district, and banking facilities are afforded by private establishments at from $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per month interest for money and often at 2 per cent per month.

Exchanges on Europe vary considerably in price, the lowest point being generally in the sugar season, between January and June, and the highest from July to December. Exchange on London averages from 495 dol. to 525 dol. current money for 100*l.* sterling ninety days. Bills on New York drawn for gold at 60 days are worth about 3 per cent, and are seldom offered. Merchants in America generally extend credits on London on favour in their agents in this place, to be drawn against purchases of produce made for their account.

Nearly every article that sells by weight is generally sold by the arroba or quintal (cwt.). The difference between Spanish and English weight is 2 per cent against the latter, viz., 102 lbs. English is equal to 100 lbs. Spanish. 25 lbs. Spanish weight, 1 arroba; 100 lbs. Spanish weight, 1 quintal or 4 arrobas.

Dry goods are generally measured by varas – the Spanish yard, which, is composed of 3 feet: a vara is equal to about $33\frac{1}{3}$ English inches. In comparing with English measure it is as follows: 108 Spanish varas equal to 100 English yards.

Shipping and Navigation

The number of British and foreign vessels that have arrived at this port in 1872 are as follow:

	Vessels	Tons
British	133	19,568
American	72	14,985
Spanish	85	10,780
German	15	2,500
Swedish	4	238
Danish	3	557
Total	312	48,628

There are 5 vessels, with a total of 225 tons, belonging to this port, employed in the coasting trade and in the trade with St. Thomas.

There is no wharf at which vessel can discharge and take in cargo, and no lighthouse to guide vessels into the harbour by night.

Schooners and sloops, fishing boat and lighters are built at this port, the frames of which are generally built of the hard wood of the country.

Agriculture

The crops in 1872, owing to dry weather, have not given a good yield. The exports were as follows:

	Quantity		Valued at	Total Value	
			Dol.	Dollars	c.
Sugar	Lbs.	39,900,153	5 per 100 lbs.	1,995,007	65
Molasses	Gallons	1,473,940	28 per 100 gals.	375,184	73
Coffee	Lbs.	3,277,893	14 per 100 lbs.	458,905	72
Tobacco	"	1,078,644	8 "	36,291	52
Cotton	"	121,510	20 "	24,302	0
Hides	"	31,202	20 "	6,240	40
Commercial value				2,945,932	2
Equal to, at 5 dol. per £ sterling				589,186 l.	8 s.

The exports in 1871 were as follow:

	Quantity		Valued at	Total Value	
			Dol.	Dollars	c.
Sugar	Lbs.	42,722,000	4 per 100 lbs.	2,361,795	0
Molasses	Gallons	1,988,325	22 per 100 gals.	397,665	0
Coffee	Lbs.	4,540,700	12 per 100 lbs.	544,384	0
Tobacco	"	1,536,302	7 "	107,541	14
Cotton	"	40,660	18 "	7,318	80
Hides	"	41,584	12 "	4,990	8
Commercial value				3,424,194	2
At 5 dol. per £ sterling, equal to				684,538l.	16s.

showing a considerable difference in favour of the crops of 1871.

The planters have been at a considerable expense in establishing irrigation works upon their sugar estates, by means of which they are enabled to secure average crops in seasons of drought.

The cultivation of sugar estates has greatly extended in this district during the last four years; and the crops have increased in proportion except the crop of 1872 which suffered from unfavourable weather as mentioned above.

Population and Industries

The population in 1870 was as follows:

White	Males	8,852
	Females	7,813
		16,665
Coloured, free	Males	5,706
	Females	5,785
		11,491
Black, free	Males	597
	Females	643
		1,240

Coloured, slaves	Males	540	
	Females	619	1,159
Black, slaves	Males	1,173	
	Females	1,047	2,220
Total			32,775

The present value of a slave is about 150 dol. to 200 dol. with limited demand. A free labourer obtains on a sugar estate at from 50 cents to 75 cents per day and one meal. Domestic servants are hired at from 6 dol. to 10 dol. per month, including board and lodging, but, like the free labourer, are not very industrious. There are no mines or factories worked in this district; the people are generally employed in cultivating lands belonging to planters, making roads, and occasionally, when the weather is favourable, planting corn, rice, or tobacco on their own lands (those who possess any), and those that are matriculated in the marine service are employed in loading and discharging vessels and in fishing outside the harbour; others are also employed in driving carts.

More than two-thirds of the work upon sugar estates during the crop season is done by free labourers; and therefore the owners of slaves will not find it difficult to entirely adopt the system of free labour when the slaves are liberated.

Public Works

There are no public works in operation in this district; the roads are kept in fair condition; only a few bridges are erected, and no steps have been taken for constructing new ones to replace those that were washed away by heavy floods now several years past. The telegraph line in connection with that at the capital works tolerably well, and is very useful to commercial firms.

General Remarks

There is no local or natural development of industry and production that can be brought into competition with the industry and production of the United Kingdom.

The crops for the year 1873 are in very good condition, the weather having been favourable, and a larger yield is expected than was obtained in 1872.

No sugars have yet been offered for sale; and the general opinion is that prices will open low.

Ponce, Porto Rico. December 31, 1872.

[57] Report by Consul Couper on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the Year 1873⁷⁰*Trade and Commerce*

Neither the emancipation of the slaves here, the anarchy prevailing in the northern country, nor the imposition of harsh and impolite taxes, have in any way affected the commercial prosperity of the island. The first has been an entire success, the second has not spread here, and the third has been irritating and vexatious rather than ruinous. The instability of Government at Madrid has no doubt so far affected the island that it has for the time checked speculation, merchants preferring to wait and see how things would turn out than risk anything in an unknown future; and in this they have only followed the example of the Provincial Government, which, either from policy or necessity, has striven to do nothing, except to impose unpopular taxes and to levy unjustifiable fines upon shipping. It is difficult to say what form of republic it has called itself, but as profound peace has been maintained under very exceptional circumstances, commerce can afford to be lenient to less important failures and to be indifferent to a name.

As a proof, however, of how very little the chief channels of business have been disturbed by the administrative ignorance and incapacity of the persons raised to power by the revolution.

It will be seen by this that in the first year of total emancipation more sugar, and infinitely more coffee, were exported than during the preceding last year of slavery; and although the total value was a trifle less, that was entirely attributable to the high rates of exchange and the extremely low prices of sugar, which, taking all qualities, did not average in 1878, at the very highest estimate, more than 4 dol. a cwt. whilst in 1872 it averaged 5 dol., so that 2,023,013 quintals this year were of considerably less value than 1,885,241 quintals were in 1872.

The price of coffee, on the other hand, rose in as extraordinary a manner as that of sugar had declined. It had already reached 15 dol. the cwt. at the end of 1872, and continued to rise until the end of 1873, when it sold at 20 dol. and prices still on the rise. Of course the prosperous condition of the coffee crop is a great advantage to the island, particularly to the western part, of which Mayagüez is the chief port; but sugar is the real staple produce of the country, and if prices continue at their present low rate, it will be impossible to continue producing it at remunerative prices.

Molasses naturally shares the fate of sugar. The same quantity was exported in 1873 as in 1872 -namely, 6,082,500 gallons; but in the latter year the value was 394,337£., and in the former only 143,118£.

Tobacco, although, not increasing in the amount of production, is certainly improving in quality, and the *Comerio* is to this island what the "Vuelta Abajo" is to Cuba. Cigars made exclusively of *Comerio* are very smokable, but it would require a great amount of patriotism to favourably compare them with the "Vuelta Abajo".

Cotton is an expiring production, literally driven out of the field by the worms.

Hides and Rum are unimportant in quality or value.

The differential duties upon foreign manufactures and produce imported in foreign bottoms render it almost impossible to give a really correct statement of the quantity, quality, or value of the imports. The whole of the imports upon which duties are leviable are brought here in Spanish vessels, but the proportion which have their origin in Spain is comparatively trifling, consequently if the amount of British, United States, German, or any other country's imports here is required, it must be extracted from the Spanish; and as the Intendencia publishes the "Balanza" but once a year, always twelve months after date, and then in a very unreliable state, I am in accord with my colleagues here in admitting that our reports upon imports must be guess work. I enclose the "Balanza" for 1872. A little care and greater punctuality would render

⁷⁰ PP 1874 [c. 1009] LXVII. No incluye tablas. Para más detalles, remítase al documento original.

it of great value: but this one, only sent to me in November last, calculated the value of coffee exported at 8 dol. the quintal, when, it was worth double the price, which is one instance only of its incorrectness.

The coal trade still remains exclusively in British hands, but, is changing the base of exportation. Until 1873 the coal imported came entirely from Great Britain; but in that year, of twelve British vessels arriving with coals in San Juan, eight were from Canada, and four only from Great Britain.

The total value of foreign commerce probably reached 30,000,000 dol., or say 5,600,000£; of which we know that the exports amounted to 2,821,808£., and may assume that the imports approximated to the balance of 2,778,002£.

Shipping and Navigation

The total number of vessels entering the different ports of the island from abroad in 1873 was 1,923, of 397,211 tons and 31,300 men, of which 567 were British, measuring 83,612 tons and carrying 4,212 men; exclusive of 182 mail steamers, of which 96 were British, 72 Spanish, 24 French, and 2 German.

There has been no relaxation of the protective laws applicable to the Spanish colonies, and although coercive political measures are put into operation upon the fictitious ground of the island being an integral part of Spain, the same argument is not considered valid when the introduction of the more liberal commercial policy prevailing in the peninsula is asked for, so that British vessels (in common with other foreigners) are virtually prohibited by differential duties from importing the produce and manufactures of their own country.

Bad as some of the laws are, they are carried out with a severity perfectly unbearable; and if a delicacy is shown towards Spain in not claiming redress from her, out of consideration of her present unfortunate condition, it is at the sacrifice of our commercial interests, for it is not to be supposed the vessels will continue to submit to extortionate fines, which it is in some instance impossible to avoid, if they can obtain freights from other ports.

This subject of fines has reached a point of tension which will bear no more straining, and the victims will soon put their "feet down", as the Americans say, and will not pay; then there will be seizures of ships, perhaps of mail steamers, and much more serious questions will arise to embarrass the Spanish Government than mere claims for justice.

Vessels rarely escape a fine upon the most frivolous pretences. The British royal mail steamers have been fined twenty times in six months, in amounts varying from 5£. to 60£; one British vessel was fined 5£. for not weighing a few planks which were placed betwixt the hatchway and the gangway to preserve the deck whilst loading and unloading, although the captain declared their measurements; a package containing two pairs of boots was by a clerical error described as "books", and the ship was fined 5£. The Germans have suffered in the same way; one vessel was fined 200£. for having declared the weight of some goods as so many kilograms instead of pounds; and another, 160£. for the same thing. The Americans have had sixteen vessels lately fined, and all other foreigners are plucked in the same way.

No redress can be obtained, and the foreign consuls at length addressed a joint remonstrance to the Minister of the Colonies, who was to have come here, but he was obliged to return to Spain, and no result has been obtained.

The law, which only came into operation at the beginning of 1873, is based upon false principles; hence all the injustice and confusion which has arisen. It removes all responsibility from shippers for erroneous declaration of contents, quality, weight, or measure; it parts with its lien upon the cargo by declaring it to the consignees; and it makes the captain responsible for that over which he cannot possibly have control; and consequently all fines already levied under the 6th paragraph should be peremptorily redemanded, and an inquiry instituted into the ground for levying the rest, for no argument in proof of the impossibility of compliance or the utter absence of intention to defraud is listened to.

Some of the fines are divided betwixt the *employés* who impose them; and it will always be remembered as a blot upon the character of a Government calling itself a republic, that

although this scandalous system has existed as a dead letter for years in the “Código de Comercio”, it only came into operation upon its advent to power.

Agriculture

In spite of the long drought which prevailed, and the panic caused by the emancipation of the slaves, the crops were beyond average, every article of produce exceeded its amount in the previous year, coffee to a very remarkable extent, and it is not improbable that as sugar has succeeded cotton, so coffee may succeed sugar, if the prices of the latter continue at their present low rate, indeed, the geographical configuration of the island would almost lead to the anticipation that some less succulent plant than the cane should supersede it in the district of Guayama; some of the most fertile lands of the island are situated in it, and in favourable seasons no other part of Porto Rico can rival its fecundity, but the island is divided from east to west by a range of mountains, the highest of which, Luquillo, is at the extreme east, and at the southern foot of this mountain Guayama is situated. The trade winds blowing from the north-east cause the rain clouds to strike the northern side of Luquillo, and they are carried along the northern face of the Sierra, a limited portion passing over their summits, to the south side. Thus Guayama and Ponce are subject to drought, in the rich and populous district of Ponce this natural impediment has been overcome by an efficient system of irrigation, but Guayama is less favourably situated in all respects; its position immediately south of Luquillo too often occasions the drought to continue until the soil is burnt up and divested of all fertility, and the residents are neither sufficiently numerous or sufficiently rich to artificially irrigate their lands, as their neighbours in Ponce have done; the consequence has been that the crop in 1873 was not more than one half of the average, and it is said that there will be none whatever next year; as regards the whole island an average crop is expected.

Population and Industries

The labouring classes do not appear to have been materially affected by the change from slavery to freedom of a portion of them; the agricultural labourer remains as heretofore cultivating the estates, nor do they demand extravagant wages, almost everything appears unchanged, the *libertos* work as well and as continuously as the freedmen did or do, but not so continuously as they did before emancipation, that was not to be expected, but they work from six o'clock in the morning till six in the evening, for from 2s. a day with breakfast to 2s. 6d. without it. I hear no new complaints of want of labour; where it was scarce before emancipation, so it remains, and, where it was abundant before, it is still so; what the proprietors have a right to complain of is that no steps whatever have been taken to repay them for their slaves emancipation, and they are naturally in want of money wherewith to pay their free labourers.

Two results of emancipation are very clearly defined; there are more thieves than there were, they were decidedly encouraged by the impunity afforded to them by the Government of the last Republic, or the last Republic of the Government; and secondly, everybody, hitherto the most rampant defenders of slavery, have been metamorphosed into abolitionists, and upon the fox-who-had-lost-his-tail principle, declare that it is a shame that the slaves in Cuba are not freed.

Public Works

During the whole of 1873 nothing could exceed the neglect with which all public works have been treated; the fine Macadamized road from the capital to Caguas, twenty-five miles in length, once the pride of the island, is now as rugged as an African track, the gas irredeemably offensive, telegraph wires and posts in a state of inefficiency, and railroads, irrigation, and drainage still matters for speculation.

Porto Rico, January 26, 1874.

[58] Report by Consul Couper⁷¹

The commerce of the island of Porto Rico can scarcely be said to possess a history prior to the commencement of the present century, for notwithstanding the advantages of its geographical position, standing as it does at the central point nearest to Europe of all the vast range of countries comprised within the arch of the Antilles, notwithstanding its many commodious ports particularly that of San Juan, and the security afforded by its hitherto impregnable fortress, the state of its agriculture and commerce was most deplorable, owing to the strictly protective nature of the Spanish commercial system; a system which at this time is perfectly incomprehensible, for not only were foreigners entirely excluded from trading under pain of death but they were prohibited from landing if they were not Roman Catholics. Prohibitory principles were applied to the Colonists themselves for none of the many outposts were allowed to engage in external commerce, the Capital alone possessing that privilege, and that was restricted to Spain; and the limited trade that was carried in betwixt port and port, was effected over almost impracticable roads; rarely was the permission granted to fetch cattle, or the small quantities of sugar, coffee and tobacco then cultivated, from even sea ports by sea, and as a rule this was done illicitly.

At the commencement of the present century, that is in the year 1804, the ports of Aguadilla, Mayagüez, Cabo Rojo, Ponce and Fajardo, were admitted to the privileges of minor ports, that is of engaging in coasting trade under a Royal Decree which had remained in abeyance from the year 1789; but the privilege was of no avail, agriculture could scarcely be said to exist, being almost exclusively confined to the rearing of cattle, and this, together with the facility with which the necessaries of life were smuggled from the adjacent islands, prevented the development of commerce. The revenues of the Custom-house in 1813 amounted to no more than 94,644 dollars, they now reach the sum of 2,379,964 dollars.

Hitherto, the minor ports had availed themselves but little of their privileges, but in 1813 they were placed upon the same footing as the Capital, that is in the category of grand ports and the concession being granted simultaneously with the revolt of the other Spanish Colonies, the Royalists immigrated in large numbers, bringing with them that knowledge of agriculture and capital, which were wanting here, and gave the first real impetus to that prosperity, which has never since failed.

Still, the relaxation of the system was only partial, that part of it relating to foreigners was retained in almost full vigour, with a dogged national blindness to cause and effect; for it might easily have been perceived that it would lead to the loss of those precious colonies, of which Spain was so anxious to retain exclusive possession and intercourse, for the restraints upon commerce, and consequently upon production, were sufficient to irritate the colonists and to cast the sympathies of the commercial nations upon the side of the Insurgents, whose trading interests were identical with their own; and so in fact it turned out almost all the colonies were lost, and the gradations in prohibition have slowly descended, from death to the milder but still irritating annoyances, of differential duties, and a practical system of fines.

These explanations are necessary to account for the absence of British commerce in the New World for so many years, but it is not to be supposed that efforts were not made both by the government and by individual to obtain by fair means their share in trade of these vast regions, and it was not until these failed, that the buccaneers tried to force it in their rough ways which in all probability obliged the Spanish Government to make its first Commercial Treaty with our own; this Treaty was signed at Madrid in 1667, and has ever since formed the basis of the commercial relations betwixt the two countries; it was renewed on various occasions up to the year 1783, and nothing could appear to be more liberal than its provisions; it conferred upon British subjects the right of trading "upon sea or upon land, to all and every the kingdoms, lands, countries, dominions, confines, territories, provinces, islands, planta-

⁷¹ PP 1874 [c. 912] LXVIII.347

tions, cities, villages, towns, ports, rivers, &c. "Nothing could be more satisfactory, which renders the fact the more astonishing, that we never enjoyed these privileges for 150 years after they were granted, and then only under restrictions which has rendered our intercourse one of uninterrupted vexation; the concessions of the Treaty unfortunately contained the words "where trade and commerce had been accustomed", which were either intended to restrict, or were afterwards taken advantage of to restrict, our intercourse with the colonies; the result was that the English had no legitimate trade with this island until the year 1824, and what existed then, must have been very insignificant, as no data exist upon which to fix its amount; on the 9th February in that year a Royal Decree, of ambiguous wording and incomplete character, was issued at Madrid permitting the American Colonies to trade with foreigners, this Decree when completed, was to be "equally agreeable to European Spaniards, American Spaniards, and to the traders of all countries"; nothing further was done until the 9th February, 1827, when another Royal Decree was promulgated "regulating the trade between Spain and her American dominions in Spanish and foreign vessels;" the order conferred the privilege of the carrying trade betwixt Spain and her colonies upon foreign vessels, but under such disadvantageous circumstances, that they rarely avail themselves of it, and the promised "complete execution" of the Royal Decree of 1824 having never appeared, our Treaty stipulations with Spain rest upon imperfect and unsatisfactory bases. One important modification was made in consequence of our Order in Council of the 18th August, 1852, namely, the equalization of the port charges upon Spanish and foreign vessels, but the differential Custom-house duties upon the flag remain in full force.

The fiscal regulations are probably the worst in the world, and the most difficult to understand; it would almost appear that they were expressly made so, that the heavy fines imposed for any breach of them, could not possibly be escaped. The arancel, or customs tariff, consists of 136 pages of closely printed foolscap, the first 50 of which are devoted to the Regulations of the Customs, composed of 16 chapters and 339 articles; these are followed by "regulations for the guidance of captains and supercargoes" which may be styled a trap to catch fines, and to which I shall again allude; then follows the list of merchandise subject to import duties, numbering 3,754 articles, and occupying 84 pages of foolscap closely printed; then comes the export duties filling 2 pages, and containing 80 articles subject to export duty.

The rules for the guidance of captains and supercargoes, require especial mention, for they are based upon a false principle, are in all instances difficult, and in some impossible to comply with and are executed with disgraceful and unrelenting vigour; they are based upon a false principle inasmuch as they transfer the responsibility of error from the shipper to the ship; thus, for example, if a shipper erroneously describes his goods or their weight on his bill of lading or does not minutely state the contents of each package, the captain is held responsible and his ship is fined, although the only data upon which he can possibly make out his manifest are the bills of lading, and his only limit of verification of their correctness, is the number not the contents of the packages; how is it possible that he could open each of them? and the same objection applies to weight; when and how could he weigh his whole cargo? what more could he do than accept the shippers' declaration on the bills of lading? Instead of attaching the goods, actually in their possession, which have been erroneously declared, and thus fixing the onus upon the real delinquent, the shipper, the captain is told to do that himself, after the lien has been taken from him, as best he can.

Then, the rules are executed with unrelenting rigor, no expostulation is listened to, no defense admitted. A notice is issued, weeks after the alleged offence, full of errors in date and name of vessel, simply calling upon the captain to pay a fine of so much the next morning without any statement of wherefore; at the Custom-house explanation is evaded, and at the Intendencia the case has been disposed of and cannot be re-opened. It is true that you are informed that you may appeal to Madrid, but *cui bono?* Appeals to Madrid founder at sea; at all events they are never heard of again.

The Royal Mail Company's ships are of incalculable service to the island, they are, nevertheless, fined almost every voyage; twenty fines have been imposed upon them during the last

three months; and the law has become so intolerable to all nations, that the foreign Consuls have signed a joint address of expostulation to the Minister of the Colonies respecting it; its immediate repeal should be insisted on, with a peremptory demand for a return of all fines under it, and for an inquiry into the manner in which the law has been carried into operation by the present accountant of the Custom-house.

The differential duties upon the flag effectually exclude British shipping from carrying British manufactures, and if our import trade here were estimated according to the flag, it would appear as if none were consumed in the island, and yet their value cannot be less than 500,000£ a year, all brought in Spanish bottoms; for example, to the present date this year, 126 British vessels have entered this port alone with cargoes, of these only five came from ports of Great Britain, namely, 4 with coals and 1 with machinery, upon which there is no import duty.

In alluding to the impediments to commerce, I cannot omit the question of pilotage, The Royal Mail Steamers, in special connection with this island, have Spanish pilots, engaged by the year, living permanently on board, for facilitating the entering and leaving each port, without the delay of awaiting one from the shore, notwithstanding which the ships have been forced to pay a second pilotage at this port and at Fajardo, although the pilots never go on board or are requested to do so, and this extra pilotage amounts to an annual tax upon the Company of 500£., and the fines being added, to 1,000£. a year.

This is the treatment *en grand* of a great and pre-eminently useful Company, but all our shipping is equally ill-used and discouraged; only yesterday the captain of the British brigantine "Salmas" complained, that having brought a few feet of lumber to protect her decks, worth about 2 dollars, he declared their measure, but not their weight, never believing it could be necessary to weigh timber, and for this omission he was fined 25 dollars; and a German ship was lately fined 1,000 dollars for an error in weight.

The terms "direct" and "indirect" trade, applied in the usual way mean, first, British vessels bringing merchandise from British ports; and second, British vessels bringing merchandise from foreign ports, or otherwise the carrying trade; it will be seen by the above remarks, that in the sense of applying the term "direct" to shipping instead of cargo, we have never had a direct trade from Great Britain to this island worth mentioning, but in a more extended and imperial point of view, that our direct trade is very great, for in addition to the 4 vessels which I have named as coming direct from ports of Great Britain, 101 arrived from British Colonies, almost all from the Dominion of Canada; 21, comprising the indirect port trade, arrived from ports of the United States; taking the whole Consular district, these numbers and proportions may be quadrupled.

The reasons why British vessels can engage in the direct import trade from the Colonies and from Great Britain, is entirely owing to the nature of their cargoes, the former consisting of provisions and lumber, and not affected by the differential duties, whereas, with the exception of coal and machinery, British manufactories cannot bear them, and a British line of steamers is now running regularly betwixt Liverpool and this island, under the Spanish flag to escape them; a few very valuable articles capable of bearing heavy charges are sometimes imported in the Royal Mail Steamers, but the imposition of the iniquitous fines, of which such just and general complaint is made, has caused me to recommend the Company to abandon the traffic.

There is nothing in the law to prevent the exportation of produce under any flag, but still the direct trade from this port to Great Britain this year has reached only 7 vessels, whilst 30 went to the British Colonies, most to Canada; 35 British vessels went direct to the United States and 54 to other parts, that is 37 ships were engaged in the direct export trade and 90 in the indirect, and these figures may again be multiplied by 4 to represent the whole island.

I trust that I have made it understood in the foregoing report, that in the past British trade had to combat the exclusive colonial system of the Spanish government, and that until the commencement of the present century, and, indeed, for twenty-five years afterwards, it could scarcely be said to have established itself; that in the present, after fifty years labour,

the proximate value of its import and export trade is about 1,000,000£. sterling and that it is capable of much greater development when the differential duties upon the flag are removed, and the abominable system of fines altogether abolished, and, I may add, when a thorough reform of its Custom-house tariff is accomplished.

Porto Rico, December 1, 1873

[59] **Report by Consul Pauli on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the Year 1874**⁷²

The decrease of exports for 1874, compared with 1873, may be accounted for by the long continued drought of the last months of 1873 up to June 1874, since which time the rains have been abundant, and the prospects of the coming crop remarkably good.

Trade generally has suffered, owing to the scarcity of money, failures of merchants, reduced crop of sugar, and low price. Coffee on the other hand, has been productive with fair prices, and on the whole the aspect to affairs presents a brighter appearance.

The want of an exchange or chamber of commerce seems to me to be one cause why trade does not flourish as it should in this fertile island.

Questions of interest to the mercantile and planting communities have no means of being ventilated here at present; the government *employés* arrange all matters as best suits their own interests, and the public at large have little or no voice in the management of their own affairs.

The customhouse regulation continue to be carried out with severity, and although felt as a hardship by the traders, no common action is taken to procure an alteration of these laws. This same selfish policy must prove very detrimental to all activity in business, and is as much the fault of the trading classes as of the Government. The latter may fairly plead that what people submit to without remonstrance cannot be very prejudicial to their interests. The few foreign merchants cannot take the initiative, owing to the proverbial jealousy of Spaniards to foreign intervention.

As I have only been at Porto Rico part of the year I will annex the local reports of the Vice-Consuls of Ponce and Mayagüez, whose observations are not only of value from their long residence in the island, but represent the condition of the south and west districts, where climate, and consequently crops, differ considerably from the districts to the north, the island being divided by a mountain range running nearly east and west, and intercepting the north-east trade winds and the rain clouds carried by them.

The want of a bank is much felt, but there seems no prospect of one being established here while affairs remain unsettled in Spain.

By a decree of the national government an additional duty of 5 per cent, on [the] amount of customhouse duties hitherto collected has been imposed both on imports and exports since October last.

The export duties are as follows, with 5 per cent added to these figures.

	Cents
Sugar	20 per 100 lbs.
Molasses	50 per 110 gallons
Coffee	50 per 100 lbs.
Tobacco	20 "

⁷² PP 1875 [c.1238] LXXVI. 1 Porto Rico

It may be useful to shippers and masters of vessels bound to this island or Cuba to state home of the very stringent regulations existing at these places.

All vessels bound here should bring with them a manifest, expressing in figures and writing class, flag, name, Spanish tonnage, where from, shippers, consignees (consignments to order are prohibited), marks, number, contents and gross weight in metric decimals of packages stating if in ballast. All this has to be certified by the Spanish Consul at the port of their dispatch, a duplicate must be given to the Spanish Consul who sends it by the same vessel under cover to the Intendente here. Captains must also present a third copy not certified, and no alteration or rectification is permitted under severe penalties.

Fines from 25 dol. to 1,000 dol. may be inflicted for breaches of custom regulations, and even confiscation of ship and cargo. Too much care cannot be taken to describe the contents of package minutely, as well as their nature, merchandise and other general terms are not admissible, and advantage is taken in every way of an omission or mistake, the whole code being a perfect web of snares for the unwary.

Coal, when carried as a sole cargo, is exempt from tonnage or discharge duties, but any other article on board (however small) will subject the whole cargo to duties.

A bill of health certified by Spanish Consul is also required.

The rate of exchange varies from 5 dol. 35c. to 5 dol. the £. sterling and gold carries a premium, but silver is scarce. The Custom-house requires to be paid in silver and in Spanish currency, or 5 per cent on the American money in circulation here.

Besides the chief articles of production, there is a considerable trade in fruits (oranges and cocoa nuts) to the United States, and cattle to the West Indian Islands hard woods are also exported, but no reliable information can be obtained of the exact amount realized by these articles, so I will confine my statements to the regular crop. The imports are very difficult to ascertain, but I should state them roughly at about 2,250,000£.

The articles free of import duty remain the same since 1871.

The price of molasses varies very much in different districts, being from 15 c. per gallon at San Juan to more than double that sum at Ponce and some other places, so that taking 25 c. as a fair average it will be seen that the value of molasses this year is in excess of last year although the quantity falls about of 1873 by 631,965 gallons, the average taken being for San Juan and not for the whole island in 1873.

Coffee also, has increased in price, being worth from 18 dol. per 100 lbs. to 22 dol. against about 17 dol. in 1873.

The prices of crops may be quoted as averaging for sugar 4 dol., molasses 25 c., coffee 20 dol., cotton 18 dol., hides 16 dol., rum 30c. the gallon.

Shipping and Navigation

The total number of British ships entering the ports of the island was 422 of 70,576 tons, and 3,550 men exclusive of the steamers of the Royal Mail Company. The preferential duty in favor of the Spanish flag as regards these colonies, causes much merchandise for Europe to be brought in Spanish vessels.

The Royal Mail Steamers call at most of the ports several times a month and French and German steamers touch at San Juan once a month each way. There are also Spanish steamers twice a month from Spain, and a coasting line of steamers of the same nation.

Agriculture

The long continued rains give great hopes of a fine crop. In fact the estates situated on the north of the mountain range have had more rain than they required, but in the district of Ponce, Guayama, and Mayagüez the prospects are excellent.

Labour is plentiful, but the rate of wages high, varying from 50c. or 2s., and one meal per day with lodging found, to 2s. 6d. and even 3s. in crop time. The libertos, or recently freed blacks, are obliged to contract themselves, often to their masters, and now are found working side by side with the white native and British black from our West Indian Island. These latter

are attracted here by the high rate of wages given and frequently I am assured by 8s. per week which they send to their relations at St. Kitts or Antigua.

The planters are desirous of obtaining more foreign labour, so that competition may reduce the high rate of wages, but the Government do not encourage this immigration and although they have not explicitly forbidden it, they place many obstacles to their entry. There can be no doubt that in a country where nature is so bountiful and wants so few, that the wages given are unnecessarily high and not justified by the price realized by the crops; but the rulers of the country do not understand the questions of supply and demand, and tax their own productions with a marvelous short-sightedness in every direction. The unfortunate planter has thus to compete with other countries, and is overweighed by high price of labour and heavy taxes, deficient machinery and bad means of communication.

The soil is generally most fertile, and the country well watered by streams, and producing excellent grass. The cattles are the finest in this part of the world, the beef tender and good.

In a ride from Caguas to Naguabo, a distance of about 80 miles, I crossed running water over forty times, and I saw cattle standing in the grass as high as their backs.

Population and Industries

The population is between 500,000 and 600,000, of which rather more than half are whites and the remainder coloured people. This is a large population for an island 100 miles long by 40 broad, and I see no reason why it should not support over twice the number. Much of the land is not under cultivation, and if opened out by good roads, would be capable of increasing its productions and of maintaining a large population.

With the exception of agricultural pursuits the industries are very few. Tobacco is made into cigars and cigarettes on a small scale, but the bulk is exported in the leaf to other countries. Germany and Cuba itself receive the largest quantities.

There are no mines or mineral productions worked here although there is no doubt that both copper and gold in payable quantities exist on the eastern part of the mountain range.

Public Works

The telegraph has been extended to all the principal towns of the island, and the West Indian and Panama Telegraph Company have stations at San Juan and Ponce for cable messages to most parts of the world.

There is a good metalled road from the city to Caguas, a distance of twenty-three miles and other fair roads for a few miles outside all the chief towns. Communication may be said to exist along the coast line for carts and carriages but often interrupted by the state of the roads after rain. The journey across the island can only be performed on horseback, and even in that way is frequently obstructed by breaches in the rivers and streams.

The towns of Mayagüez and Ponce are more advanced in many ways than the city of San Juan, the fortifications of the latter place prevent any improvements being carried out, all such ideas being sacrificed to the supposed necessity of keeping up those formidable looking but obsolete works.

The country is in a most backward state as regards public works. Even the safe and excellent harbour of San Juan has gradually become silted up with mud for want of dredging.

There has been much talk about railways and tramways, waterworks and irrigation, but the Government will do nothing in these matters, and a large sum put aside three years ago and partly raised by private subscription to supply the city with water remains still in the hands of the Government. Since then private enterprise is cautious about embarking in any undertaking.

Nothing can be done without permission from Madrid, and that entails so many preliminary charges and expenses, and is so uncertain after all, that it would be very unwise to put capital into any public work under the present system of Government.

[59a] Report by Vice-Consul Gumbes on the Trade and Commerce of Mayagüez for the Year 1874⁷³

The difficulties which the commercial community of this place had to contend with during the past year and the early part of this, in consequence of some failures of commercial firms, a reduced crop of sugar and its unremunerative prices, and of an erroneous supposition of disaffection to the Government, have gradually and partially subsided, the coffee crop having been a very large and productive one, more prudence than usual observed in speculation of produce, and a resumption of confidence based upon the undisturbed tranquillity of the department.

General trade has not been unsatisfactory as will be observed by reference to the subjoined returns of the imports and exports.

The stringency of the money market has continued to prevail, but to a less degree than during the past year, money lenders having discounted more freely and with more confidence, which is illustrated by the rather high rate of exchange prevalent until the fall of the year, and commencement of extensive operation in sterling to provide for purchases of coffee. That exchange reached the rate of 5 dol. 30 c. to the £. sterling, the average rate for the year being about 5 dol. at an approximate estimate.

There has been no falling off in the trade with Great Britain, those usually engaged in it having continued their importations without any abatement.

No failures have occurred, and two new firms have been established, one of which being the successor of a long established one.

The port continues to be visited regularly by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's ships by those of Herrera's from Havana, a coasting steamer of the same line, and the Liverpool Line which is specially for inward freight, all apparently working to advantage.

The boat from New York under the British flag has discontinued its voyages since last May, its service being too expensive to allow of a performance of the special requirements of this locality. The Royal Mail Company projects the establishment of a branch line to New York, which if effected, will increase trade at this port.

No foreign vessels of war have visited this port during the year, but frequently those of the Spanish naval station in the island.

Many of those engaged in agricultural pursuits have become convinced that the abolition of slavery has not caused their ruin as they apprehended, labour being abundantly available both from the free native and the liberated slave, at from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per day without food, under contracts enforced by the Government for the three years, of which two have expired, between the slaves and all desirous of employing them, and the opinion is almost general that at the final expiration of those contracts, a better result will be obtained without any further restraint. No disturbances of any nature have arisen, and the free native continues to work as heretofore with the late-slave, which has always produced a moralizing effect in this country.

Some sugar planters are still much embarrassed, not only from the disease of the cane, general in this district, and which source is yet problematical, without any of the measures adopted to destroy it, having proved entirely efficacious, but from previous extravagant expenditure in the enlargement and embellishment of their properties, in careless anticipation of a continuance of the high prices of sugar enjoyed for many years.

The average prices of coffee, sugar, and molasses may be estimated at 22 dol., and 3 3/8 per 100 lbs., and 30 dol. per 110 gallons respectively.

The coming crops promise favourably, especially of coffee. The cultivation of new and high lands for cane has been adopted with success, with a view to avoid the disease prevalent in low and old fields of many years' production.

⁷³ PP 1875 [c1238] LXXVI.I Mayagüez

The military barracks in this town are being enlarged. An iron bridge is expected from Belgium for the river which runs through this bay. The streets are undergoing extensive repairs, but the roads are in a deplorable state, especially those which lead to the principal coffee districts. A trainway is being laid between this bay and the town, by private enterprise, and the gas works have proved a success.

The saving bank is progressing rapidly under very efficient management.

There are four casinos or clubs in this town. One, the Spanish culture of the conservative party exclusively. Another, of the liberal party less exclusive in its class, and the two others of the coloured population, which certainly shows a desire for civilization.

The census of the population of this department has not yet been completed by the Town Council, and I am prevented from including it in this report.

Mayagüez, February, 1875.

[59b] Report by Vice-Consul Basanta on the trade and Commerce of Ponce for the Year 1874⁷⁴

The decrease in trade that has occurred during the year has been owing to the great scarcity of money, and to the credits on England having been withdrawn from commercial houses. The extensive failures of merchants last year, and of several firms during this year, having seriously affected the trade with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, will account for the limited amount of British tonnage that has entered the port this year.

The total value of the imports was 429,044£., of which amount about 100,000£. were introduced in dry goods, cutlery, and hardware from the United Kingdom in Spanish vessels, the import duties being 8 per cent less upon goods imported from foreign countries in Spanish bottoms.

The total value of the exports was 480,929£. 16s., against 602,886£. in the year 1873.

Shipping and Navigation

The total amount of British tonnage entered inwards was 76 vessels measuring 15,471 tons, against 96 vessels with 19,568 tons in the previous year.

Agriculture

The exports were as follows:—

		Quantity	Average Price	Value
			Dol.	Dol.
Sugar	Lbs.	28,244,000	4 per 100 lbs.	1,129,760
Molasses	Gallons	1,496,656	32 per 110 gallons	435,390
Coffee	Lbs.	3,934,700	20 per 100 lbs.	786,940
Tobacco	"	729,700	5 "	41,957
Cotton	"	58,900	18 "	10,602
Total		..	..	2,404,649
Equal to		..	..	480,929£ 16s

⁷⁴ PP 1875, [c.1238] LXXVI.1 Ponce

The sugar crop, owing to drought, was about 35 per cent less than that of the year 1873. The sugar crop for 1875 will be a large one, and will commence early in January next.

Population and Industry

The population of the district according to the census taken in 1872 was 33,235, of which were 16,992 males and 16,243 females.

There are about forty-four labourers and mechanics who have lately arrived here from neighbouring British islands, who are employed as follows: Field hands at 50 c. per day, sunrise to sunset, and one meal per day and lodging on estate; carpenters and masons obtain from 1 dol. to 1½ dol. per day, without meals; domestic servants, 5 dol. to 8 dol. per month, with board and lodging; grooms, 10 dol. to 15 dol. per month, with board and lodging.

There is no want of field labour, but planters are desirous of introducing labourers from abroad, so as to cause competition in the labour market. The Government is, however, opposed to it.

Several sugar estates are at present abandoned, the proprietors not having the means to pay for labour, and these properties will probably soon change hands.

The taxes are levied as follows: — The gross income of planters and others is ascertained by custom-house returns, from which the taxes are ascertained at the end of each year, when they are levied for the coming year. From the gross amount of income the previous year 35 per cent is deducted for expenses; the balance is then taxed as net income 5 per cent, upon which a further amount of 50 per cent is added for municipal tax, so that the actual tax on income is 7½ per cent. The mode of ascertaining the income is held to be unsatisfactory.

Public Works

A public hospital is being erected at a cost of 14,000£., the bequest of a native proprietor of a sugar estate. An English Episcopal Church has recently been established in the town; the cost of same, about 3,000£. The rector receives a salary of 600£. per annum from the congregation. The town is lighted with gas, contracted for with an English company. There is a telegraph cable between this port and Jamaica, in connection with Cuba and America, and from which communication with Europe is derived.

Ponce, December 31, 1874.

[60] Report by Consul Pauli on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the Year 1875⁷⁵

It will be seen by the annexed table of exports, that there is a considerable increase on every class of produce since last year's report, but the average prices are on most items considerably lower, so that the total value does not correspond with the increased production.

Trade is by no means in a flourishing condition, and the heavy taxes and customhouse regulations continue to oppress commercial operations.

The prospects for the next crop are not encouraging. The want of rain in the southern part of the island will be severely felt this year, and the great necessity of irrigation to supply the required moisture at the proper time, will cause a diminished production on the richest soils of the island.

During the last few months an evident desire for progress has been shown, and although no Chamber of Commerce has, as yet, been established, a purely mercantile paper has appeared giving reliable information on questions of the nature, and quoting prices and other information of foreign markets, and an account of arrival, departures, and prices realized by cargoes.

⁷⁵ PP 1876 [c. 1486] LXXV.1. Las tablas mencionadas en la primera oración no se incluyen.

The latest telegrams from Europe and America, so necessary in this age to promote business, are still unknown here, but a desire to obtain this information exists, and I trust that a more enlightened condition of conducting business will soon be inaugurated.

The great want of a bank for the island may possibly be supplied, since a committee to consider the rules and requisites of such an undertaking been sitting for some months. I am not too sanguine of the result, as the capital is to depend on the payment of the indemnity by the Spanish Government on the freed slaves, and of course on the acquiescence of the late proprietors to this arrangement.

A severe outbreak of smallpox throughout the island has called the attention of the inhabitants and authorities to the deficient sanitary arrangements in the towns, and which I trust will lead to good results. On the whole, it is satisfactory to note the decided wish for improvements on most subjects, and great credit is due to the community at large for the desire they evince to advance under most discouraging conditions, and their hearty acceptance of the abolition of slavery, which has without doubt caused a great, but I hope only temporary depression of trade, and decrease in the value of all properties.

The low prices of sugar (the main production) and the increased expenses of labour, and consequent force introduction of machinery, is against any rapid progress, but in spite of all this, there have been no great failures, but only an increase of caution in undertaking large operations.

The taxes on imports and exports are still very heavy, and but little of the proceeds are expended on permanent improvements, the means of communication being still in a backward state.

The average prices for sugar may be quoted at 3½ dol., or 14s., per quintal of 100 lbs., with a downward tendency, against 16s. for the last year; molasses in the same ratio at about 20 c. per gallon; coffee at 17 dol., or 3£. 8s., per 100 lbs., but depending so much on the quantity, as to be difficult to average; hides 16 dol., or 3£. 4s.; cotton 17 dol., or 3£. 8s.; cattle at about 10£. per head.

The total exports about 2,660,000£., against 2,414,000£. for 1874, is a marked improvement, notwithstanding the lower prices on most products.

The imports are very difficult to ascertain, as the Government reports for the past year are only published late in the next, but they will not I believe differ much from 1874, when they amounted to about 2,650,000£. This would give a slight excess to the exports.

It may be worthy of attention to compare the relative interests of Spain and foreign nations with the trade of Porto Rico, for which purpose I annex the following table:

Countries	Value £
To United States	850,969
Great Britain and colonies	757,441
Spain and Cuba	630,505
All other countries	422,150
Total	2,661,065

It should be observed that about 308,000£. out of the 630,000£. to Spain and Cuba, or nearly half, goes to Cuba, where a large proportion, especially of coffee and tobacco, is probably destined for the United States, Great Britain, and other countries, so that Spain itself

consumes but a small quantity of the total production, but derives benefit on the export duties of the whole.

On the other hand, the imports for 1874, which differ but slightly from this year's show that about one-third comes from Spain and of the other two-thirds, half arrives under the Spanish flag, preferential duties of 6 per cent being in their favour.

The total amount of duties realized in 1874 amounted to 425,352£., or about 10 per cent on imports and exports, and this year will be more, which does not include local taxes or Government taxes on property.

Shipping and Navigation

The total number of British ships entering the ports of Porto Rico in 1875, was 368, of 77,536 tons, and 3,402 men, exclusive of the steamers of the Royal Mail Company, which entered the different ports of the island 360 times in the course of the year. The above shows a reduction in the number of ships, but an increase in tonnage compared with 1874. Spanish, French, and German steamers likewise touch at the island, but the mails to Europe are carried chiefly by the steamers of the Royal Mail Company. The value of exports in British ships is about 769,035£., and of imports 337,8421£. The largest proportion of the imports are brought in Spanish vessels to benefit by the preferential duty in favor of the flag.

Agriculture

The crops have been on the whole very fair, but it is feared that there will be a great deficiency this year. The drought was very prolonged even on the north side of the island, but south of the range the want of rain has been felt severely, and in one district there will be hardly any crop at all.

The exceptionally dry seasons for the last few years have drawn much attention, and are here accounted for by the reckless manner of cutting timber; but although that is commonly acknowledged as a cause of drought, I cannot think that it applies to this island to any extent. Even the range of hills, nowhere exceeding 3,000 feet, would hardly explain why whole districts should have become almost deserts on the south side of the island, while the north should, as a rule, be almost too wet on the low lands, and this for the last few years only, and the decrease of timber on the hills, although perceptible as regards the large trees, is only partial, and not in proportion to the change in quantity of rainfall. I am more inclined to believe that the alteration is due to atmospheric currents varying in altitude in cycles of years, and carrying with them the rain clouds at a greater or less elevation. It is difficult to obtain information as to the past, as no records are kept, but I have heard that droughts were experienced many years ago, and before the loss of timber to which they are now attributed, which tends to prove my theory.

Although sugar is, and has been, the chief production, the cultivation of coffee has increased of late years, and might be much extended on land now almost unproductive on the hills and valleys of the table lands. The coffee of Porto Rico is of excellent quality, though not so well known in the English markets; it is much appreciated in Spain and Italy, and even now is exported to the value of 900,000£. from this island.

The low price of sugar at present barely pays expenses, but those who own the lands adapted for its growth, and the expensive machinery invested on its production, cannot dispose of them at present, so as to turn their attention and capital to coffee plantations, and naturally hope for a rise in sugar, and the return of the good prices of former years.

The rich low lands now in cultivation would grow grass for fattening cattle enough to supply the whole of the West Indies, and a small but very hardy and active breed of horses, which for endurance and absence of vice are well known in this part of America, could also be exported.

The nature of the soil and climate varies so much in different parts of the country that it might be useful to give a short report on the different districts, so as to describe more clearly this small but fertile island; which, although only about 100 miles long by 40 broad, produces more than 2,500,000*l.* yearly, and has a population of over 700,000.

Even under so many disadvantages of government and management, Porto Rico, with an area of less than one-sixth of Ceylon, produces 2,600,00 *lt.* against about 4,000,000 *l* in that island, and although considerably smaller than Jamaica, more than double the value of the latter's production are exported from Porto Rico.

The Province of Bayamón of which the Capital is San Juan

This district is situated on the north-east end of the island, and the capital San Juan, is the seat of the Government for the colony. The city is fortified, and the harbour very safe and tolerably commodious, although the entrance is narrow and the depth of water does not permit with safety, of vessels drawing more than 24 feet of water to enter.

The population of the town is about 27,000. The fortifications prevent the extension of the buildings, and consequently obstruct all improvements. The city is next to Havana the most substantially built town in the West Indies, the houses being all brick and stone, with flat roofs. Fires are almost unknown, and never destructive.

The district exports are sugar, molasses, coffee, tobacco, hides, rum, and cattle; sugar being the largest production.

There is good metalled road to Caguas, an inland town about twenty-three miles distant, and once of much greater importance than at present.

Bayamón is well watered with rivers and streams, and being to windward of the Sierra or range of hills, is seldom subject to long droughts, and the climate is generally cool and exposed to the north-east trade winds.

Except the one good road to Caguas, the means of communication are very bad, and in rainy weather the bye-roads are nearly impassable for cart or carriages. The soils in some places are very rich, and the crops produce well, suffering often from too much moisture. In other places the low hills are of little value for cultivation as at present understood here.

Province of Arecibo

The capital of the same name. This district is the largest in the area, and is situated on the north and nearly in the centre of the island. The town of Arecibo has perhaps 10,000 inhabitants, and is the only port in that province, if it can be called a port at all. It is exposed to the north winds and is little better than an open roadstead; vessels having to slip and put to sea if the wind veers to the north or north-east. Only small vessels put in for cargoes, and a great part of the produce has to be brought to San Juan for shipment. The land is well watered, and the climate is cool and rain plentiful. Sugar is the chief product, with a quantity of coffee and tobacco.

The want of a safe port and good roads tend to keep the district from advancing, although some of the sugar estates near Manatí are equal to any in the island.

The Province of Aguadilla

The capital of the same name and port of district is situated on the north-west of the island. The port of Aguadilla is tolerably good when once in, but has some outlying dangers. The town is small but neat, with a population of perhaps 8,000. It faces the west or Mona passage, dividing Porto Rico from Santo Domingo. The land is good, the chief production being first coffee, then sugar; a considerable amount of tobacco is also grown here. Both in size and population it is inferior to other districts, and its distance from the capital and difficulty of access, except by sea, is an obstacle to progress. The town of Aguada is one of the oldest in the country, dating from 1511.

The cultivation of sugar is decreasing and coffee is taking its place, showing a marked improvement in quantity for 1875. Tobacco is exported to Spain, Germany, and Cuba.

The Province of Mayagüez

This district is on the west and south-west of the island. The capital of Mayagüez is situated about a mile inland, being connected by a good road and latterly by a tramway (the only one in the island) with the playa or port. The anchorage is good and safe in most winds. The town is pretty and well laid out, and has a population of about 20,000. It is lit with gas and supplied with water, and is, on the whole, more advanced than any other place in the island. The productions are first coffee, to the amount of 860,000*l.*, next sugar, and the total of exports are higher than in any other district. The roads in the interior are deplorable, which remark applies to the whole island, a few miles outside the towns.

Commercial operations have been conducted with prudence, and no failures are reported this year; but both sugar and coffee are lower in price, and the imports show a decline of about 20 per cent, attributable to the curtailment of business by some importers of merchandize and hardware. Labour is plentiful at about 2*s.* per day.

The steamers of the Royal Mail Company touch here, as at most of the ports of the island, and the French line has lately made Mayagüez its place of call instead of San Juan.

Mayagüez, producing more coffee than other districts, has a more encouraging future than places depending on sugar only, at present prices.

The Province of Ponce

Situated in the south centre of the island, with Ponce the chief town, about one and a half miles inland, with a good road to the playa or port, where the custom-houses and stores are situated.

The town of Ponce is neat and clean, but the roads are very dusty, and often of late years part of the district suffers from drought. The port is tolerably good, but vessels lie far off. The population of the town is about 18,000, and the houses are convenient, but many being built of wood, fires have proved very destructive. There are some good public buildings, and on the whole, in spite of many difficulties, Ponce is a thriving place, and the district ranks next to Mayagüez in total value exports. Much of the imports come from Great Britain in Spanish vessels, and show an increase over last year.

The district has suffered from drought during 1875, and the prospects for the coming sugar crops are very unfavourable, and with the low price realized now, may even oblige many of the planters to stop cultivation.

A considerable quantity of coffee is grown, but sugar is the chief crop. Tobacco and cotton are also produced. The district of Guayanilla and Guánica belong to this province, and have suffered less from drought, which seems to increase to the eastward.

The Province of Guayama

South of the island. The chief town is Guayama, but the port of shipment is Arroyo, where there is an anchorage free from prevailing winds. The town of Guayama is four miles inland. This district suffers from drought, and although the land is very rich, it requires irrigation.

Proposals for obtaining water have been entertained, but have all failed hitherto from want of support from the owners of the estates, who are in consequence working their land at a loss. The crop will be very small next year.

Sugar is the chief product, and a considerable quantity of molasses and rum is sent to the United States. Business is very dull in consequence of the continued droughts.

The Province of Humacao

Is in the east end of the island, from north to south. The chief town Humacao, Naguabo, and Fajardo are also ports of entry. Sugar is the largest product, of which a large proportion is sent to Great Britain.

A considerable trade in cattle to the islands in the West Indies is done from here. The land is good, and has a sufficiency of rain, although suffering at times from partial want of rain.

The north part of the district near Fajardo is, like the rest of the northern parts of the island, open to trade winds and rain-clouds. The trade is not great, and the chief imports consist of goods for the supply of the estates. There are a considerable number of British coloured labourers from our islands employed in the district.

The Island of Vieques

On the east of Porto Rico, is not subject to the same law as Porto Rico. This island was for a long time supposed to be English, and only formally given up to Spain a few years ago. Many of the small owners of land are British subjects, but the island is considered a political place to exile, and is under a military governor, without whose sanction no one can leave or enter.

The trade is carried on in small boats to the adjacent islands. Cattle and rum, with a little sugar, are the principal productions.

General Remarks

The above short description of the different districts may be of use to commercial men in distinguishing between the various ports, and to give a general idea of their relative productions and importance. Some good houses of business exist in every town, but no large amount of trade is done anywhere at present.

Too much care cannot be taken by shippers to Porto Rico in complying with their regulations, so as to avoid fines, which are very strictly enforced. All vessels coming from foreign ports are required to bring a manifest, expressing in figures and writing their class, flag, name, captain, Spanish tons, where from, shippers, consignees (consignments to order prohibited), marks, numbers, kind, and weight of packages in metric decimals (if in ballast to be stated), also a list of ship's stores. Duplicate manifests are to be certified by the Spanish consul at the port of departure or within 30 kilos thereof. Captains are also obliged to present an uncertified triplicate. Any goods not manifested will subject the vessel to a fine equal to their value. The exact contents of each box or package must be mentioned; general descriptions, such as merchandize, provisions, &c., &c., are not allowed. A fine of about 5*l.* is levied on every package if its contents or weight be wrongly described. A bill of health is required. If no Spanish consul resides at or withing 30 kilos of the port of loading, the manifests must be signed by three merchants stating the reasons.

The following table shows the cost of sugar delivered on board here, including 5 per cent commission, and the exchange at 4 dol. 80 c. per £:— (no se incluye la tabla)

Population and Industries

By the last census issued the population is estimated at 635,677, of which 331,175 are whites and 304,502 coloured people. Large as this is for an island of the size, it is quite equal to support double the number. Industries besides agricultural pursuits do not exist. Cigars and cigarettes are made on small scale, and chocolate is also prepared, but more for home consumption than export.

Public Works

There are no public works of any consequence going on. Most roads are in a deplorable condition, and it is not possible to drive across the island in any direction from north to south. The ranges of hills, although not high, present more difficulties than are likely to be overcome at present.

There can be no doubt that foreing capital might be profitably invested in tramways and other works if Spaniards could be persuaded to concede any sort of advantage to those investing their money; but unfortunately the laws require so many formalities and occasion

so many delays that it would not be a helpful prospect at present. I trust the time may come when a more liberal policy may prevail.

A company for marine insurance, called "Lloyd de Porto Rico," has been established here during the year. Risks have been taken at Great Britain, 1 ¾ per cent; Spain 1 ¼ per cent; and the United States at 1 ¼ percent; north of Cape Cod, 1 1/3 per cent.

[61] **Report by Consul Pauli on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the Year 1876**⁷⁶

The exports from Porto Rico for the past year show a marked decrease on every production, except coffee, which has given a larger result than has ever been obtained here, and although the quantity of sugar is much below the average of several past years, the prices have risen very considerably, and the prospects for the next crop are most encouraging; rain has fallen in all parts of the island, and there appears to be every chance of a good season and high prices.

No considerable failures have been reported, yet business has not been in a flourishing condition, and the higher quotations for sugar arrived too late to improve matters most of the crop being sold at low prices, and the want of rain has reduced the production in some districts to almost nothing.

To add to these misfortunes the island was visited by a severe hurricane in September, which produced considerable damage in all districts, blowing down buildings and sheds, injuring machinery, and thus imposing new obligations on the already over-burdened, estate holders.

Besides causing great distress among the poorer classes, it has, I fear, done so much injury to the coffee plants, that the next crop will be at least 50 per cent below the average.

I will refer again to the hurricane, which is so far interesting to this island, that it swept its whole length from east to west and embraced the width in its circumference, and may thus, in a manner, be appropriated by Porto Rico as peculiarly visited, whereas the centre of the storm passed through this place.

No great progress has been made in any way, the heavy taxes still continue in full force, and the customs regulations are as obstructive as ever.

The mercantile world is still without a chamber of commerce, and the bank is not yet an accomplished fact, although chairman, directors, &c. are already elected.

A great stir has been made during the year by reports of the intention of Spanish Government to pay an instalment of the indemnity money for slaves, but after much flourish it ended in a payment of one year's back interest on the slave notes, and as the future of the bank depends much on these notes I do not think that we shall see its establishment in a useful form just yet.

Roads and all public improvements remain unaltered.

San Juan has again been supplied with gas by a private English company; this only restoring what we have before enjoyed, and which smaller towns like Ponce and Mayagüez have had for some time, and can hardly be called an improvement.

A considerable movement has been experienced in consequence of the arrival of two large Spanish steamers every month with troops, *en route* for Cuba, in addition to the steamers of the regular lines, but except to the owners of cafés I doubt if the place is much benefited by these visitors.

On the whole I should be inclined to describe the state of affairs as having arrived at a very low point, but that some elements of hope exist, and that in fact matters may improve if prices of sugar keep up and the favourable weather continues; against which the certain loss on the coffee crop must be taken into account, and the uncertainty of affairs in Europe my

⁷⁶ PP 1877 [c.1855] LXXXIII.3. Las tablas mencionadas no se incluyen.

react on this place, in a sense which it is difficult to predict; if unfavourable, there must be a general bankruptcy; on the other hand the quiet condition of the island, in a political point of view, may produce confidence, and the balance be in favour of a prosperous year.

In any case the producers are as over-weighted as they can well be, and deserve credit for the gallant struggle they have made against adverse circumstances, and the patient and manly way in which they have accepted the abolition of slavery, and even aided in bringing about the result so detrimental to their financial interest and the value of property, especially when coupled with the default of their Government in the question of indemnity.

I may here mention that the three years' term of enforced contract for the freed slaves, or "libertos," expired on April last, and that the labour market is not the least affected by this fact, while the wise delay has enabled the "liberto" to take his place in the country without observation or agitation of any kind.

Porto Rico may now fairly be classed among other West Indian islands, British, French, and Danish, as a country where slavery has ceased to exist, and with the additional advantage from its large relative population of being independent of imported labour, which is unnecessary here, and undesirable when it can be avoided.

Agriculture

The crops, except coffee, have been less than during many former years; the droughts have left their inevitable mark on the sugar productions, and consequently on molasses and rum. The bad prices of last year have prevented the estate owners from undertaking irrigation works on a useful scale; the production of cotton has become nominal from want of capital, and, generally, the results have not been encouraging.

During the year 1876 the fall or rain has been more plentiful, and if it had not been for the hurricane of September last very excellent hopes might have been entertained, but although certain districts have suffered less severely than would be expected, and some cane lands have even been improved by the accumulation of soil from the accompanying floods, the great injury to coffee will, I fear, be felt, and even the higher prices of sugar and the increased value of the remaining coffee may not counterbalance the damage done, and raise the average value of exports much above that of 1876.

It has been observed that since the hurricane, and in fact some short time preceding it, that the southern part of the island has received more rain than for many previous years, it is possible, and worthy of attention to note, if that result may not be attributable to the atmospheric disturbance, and whether the air currents, carrying rain clouds, may not have varied in altitude in consequence, in which case we might expect for a certain period a continued immunity from droughts south of the mountain ranges; the very rich lands in the Guayama and Ponce districts would then recover their former fertility and greatly add to the production of sugar in Porto Rico.

A considerable export trade in cattle to Cuba, British, and French islands from the districts of Bayamón and Naguabo has taken place, but the cattle, excellent in themselves, might be much improved by a little care and attention to the most common rules of preparing beasts for food, as well as more attention to the breed.

In regard to horses it is a very rare thing to see a gelding, and as all the horses are allowed to run at large with the mares; when not actually wanted for work, it has resulted in the deterioration of the stock in size and quality.

Province of Bayamón

The city of San Juan has suffered much from small-pox during the first part of 1876, and it is said that more than 2,000 persons died during a visitation of this malady, of about nine months' duration, but this fearful disease is now confined to a few places in the country.

A vessel from Pará brought three cases of yellow fever, two proved fatal, but by strict isolation the fever did not spread.

The need of an eligible place for quarantine ground was felt, and the island of Cabras, at the entrance of the harbour, has been selected a suitable place; nothing has been done yet

in the way of erecting buildings, although advertisements for tenders for the work have been published.

A public hospital is much needed, as is also a cemetery, the present one being full; a committee of the town council has been named to consider both these questions, but the supposed requirements of the fortifications will oblige the local authorities to go to some distance for a suitable site for both these objects.

The peculiar situation of the town on a narrow promontory and the exterior lines of defense prevent the extension of the city, which is densely crowded, to the discomfort and danger to the health of the inhabitants.

A tramway running into the country would be a great boon to all and would not only be a financial success in itself, but also a great benefit to the city by relieving it of its surplus population, and virtually increasing the trade by establishing populous suburbs.

The difficulty of all such enterprises is the obstructions put in the way by the authorities, and the necessity of arranging with so many officials whose position would otherwise enable them to stop the work at various stages.

The district generally being on the outside or northern semicircle of the hurricane, suffered less than some ports, but chimneys on estates, sheds for fuel, and other buildings were much injured in many places.

The rainfall of late has been even too abundant, and is now stopping the sugar grinding on many estates.

The roads are not improved, and some main roads are impassable to wheeled carriages and difficult to traverse on horseback.

Province of Arecibo

Situated to the westward of, and the course of the hurricane have been about W. by N. or W.N.W.; has suffered more than Bayamón, being nearer the centre as it travelled on its course.

The Vice-Consul reports that the crops have been fairly good, sugar showing 195,053 quintals for 1876, against 147,084 for 1875. Coffee and tobacco being less in quantity, he says that the growing crops promise well except coffee, of which he thinks there is 60 to 70 per cent lost. The health of the district is good, but small-pox was very prevalent during the first half of the year 1876.

The roads are bad, at times quite impassable.

The exposed situation of the anchorage obliged the vessels lying off the port to put to sea during the hurricane, with the exception of a Spanish schooner, which became a wreck; one British vessel, the "Martie B." has never since been heard of.

Province of Aguadilla

The vice-consul returns show a decided falling off in production, but the prospects are good for the growing crop, except coffee, which is estimated at one-third less than the average.

Trade has been dull, but no failures are reported. A British vessel, the "Mary A.D.," was washed on shore on the north coast during the hurricane, and found dismasted and bottom up; three bodies were also found.

No great damage was experienced at the town of Aguadilla, but the district suffered severely.

Province of Arroyo

This district suffered considerably from the hurricane of September, but it has since been fortunate in having a considerable quantity of rain, and the moisture retained in the soil from the floods will prove of vast benefit to the coming crops.

The last crop was very short in quantity, owing to previous droughts, and the Vice-Consul reports that the productions have been reduced to less than one-tenth of what they formerly were, on account of continued dry seasons.

Trade has in consequence been very dull, and must depend for improvement on increased production.

Great complaints are also made of fiscal regulations, which appear to be more than ordinarily severe and obstructive in that district.

Districts of Naguabo, Humacao, and Fajardo

These districts suffered more than any from the hurricane, the centre of which struck the island on the east end, after sweeping through Vieques; at Naguabo brick chimneys on estates were blown down, or so injured as to require rebuilding, few houses escaped loss of roofs, and sheds were swept away. Much machinery was injured, and it is wonderful that so little loss of life occurred, a few persons only being drowned from floods in rivers.

Fortunately most of the sugar had been sent away or the loss to this very productive district would have been ruinous; as it is, estate holders will be put to great expense to place their works in fair order, and much suffering must have been caused to the poor, whose huts were blown away.

The land has not suffered on the whole; the new young cane was either blown flat or covered with water on low grounds, but appears to have recovered wonderfully, and the general prospects are very fair.

Fortunately, no coffee is grown in the district, or it may be well believed that the plant would have been utterly destroyed.

Several vessels were wrecked, one being blown high and dry on shore.

A considerable quantity of cattle perished during the storm.

Shipping and Navigation

I enclose a list of British ships entering the ports of Porto Rico during the year 1876, which, compared with 1875, shows a reduction in vessels, tonnage, and crews, which may be accounted for by the increase of steamers of different nationalities. This does not include the vessels of the Royal Mail Company.

French, German, and Spanish steamers also call at various ports in the island with more or less regularity, and take a considerable quantity of cargo to Europe, chiefly coffee and tobacco.

During the past year five British vessels have been lost on or near this island, three during the hurricane, two of these with all hands; one was lost off San Juan from not knowing that the light had been extinguished while erecting a new lighthouse.

Vessels bound for the harbour of San Juan should be very cautious, as it is impossible to be sure that lights, buoys, or other marks are in their right position; the authorities do not seem to understand the importance of giving proper notice of any alteration, or even of the necessity of keeping buoys in their right places, and although a pilot comes out to every vessel, he never goes beyond the Bell Buoy at the entrance, the very narrowest and most dangerous part of the navigation.

British vessels trading with Porto Rico are mostly from Canada, or belonging to that colony, often entering their crews at some port in the United States.

During the sugar season vessels from Great Britain are chartered here.

It is worthy of notice that the crews of the latter are inferior in composition and give much more trouble than those from Canada, and even from the United States.

It is not a pleasing subject to observe the very marked deterioration in the merchant seamen of late years, and I am well aware that with the great competition and consequent necessity of making small profits that shipowners cannot afford to be particular as to the quality of their crews, but when one thinks of the great value of property at stake it seems

extraordinary that no greater interest is taken in selecting and even retaining the services of decent reliable men.

What railway company, or even private manufactory of any kind would engage a man to keep watch over valuable interests who could produce no character, might have been in prison a dozen times, and was drunk at the time of engagement? and particularly when the man must remain for at least some months, and cannot be discharged on the spot or even handed over to the police as on shore.

What also happens every day is to engage a foreigner who does not understand one word of the English language, and who, if on the lookout, could give no intelligible notice of instant danger, or directions how to avoid it; in some cases an entire crew of foreigners are engaged.

The whole question is a large one, and cannot be settled summarily by Act of Parliament, or by the action of one class alone, but must be dealt with by considering causes, correcting abuses, and by a generally expressed desire on the part of shipowners to obtain a better class of seamen, and to submit to wholesome, legislation to obtain that object.

The obvious remedy is to improve the social condition of the sailor, and give him an object to attain by keeping respectable, and the hope of a provision for old age.

No good can result from one-side views, or by setting one class against the other, the object should be always of making employer and employed fulfil their respective duties to each other and to their country.

It is not within my province to touch on such important questions as insurance, which probably has much to do with the whole subject, but I may be allowed to offer a few suggestions for the improvement of the condition of merchant seamen.

1st. To give them an object in behaving well and to provide for old age or injuries received on service, a pension fund might be established, and maintained by an appropriation of say, 1s. per month on every man entered on the articles of agreement either at home or abroad, and that the money should be collected at the time of discharge by the shipping master, that one half should come out of the seamen's wages and the other half should be the owner's contribution.

It should be called Seamen's Pension Fund. Consuls discharging men abroad should collect sums due and account to fund.

I do not think this would bear hardly on any class, and yet would amount to a considerable yearly sum, and by the time the first pensioners became eligible the fund would be well endowed.

2nd. All fines imposed by the Merchant Shipping Act during a voyage should go to the pension fund and not to the owner's profit. The unruly man would thus contribute to the support of the well-conducted.

3rd. That more restrictions should be imposed on payments of advance, so as to prevent the money from falling into the hands of crimps; for instance, payments of advance might only be made to or through the agency of sailors' homes, or to well authenticated members of the man's family.

4th. That except for disgraceful offences, which would destroy all chance of a pension, that imprisonment in a common jail should never be imposed on a sailor, but that for minor offences he should be sent on board a naval reserve ship, and undergo a good healthy course of drill and discipline, which would tend to render him useful for the naval service of his country if required, and avoid the contamination of prison life.

5th. That all ships should be obliged to have proper washing places for the crew, also clothes at a fixed price should be kept on board, that masters should make men shift their wet clothes and hang them up to dry, and that it should be generally impressed on them that cleanliness and attention to health is the root of discipline.

6th. That it should be required of all masters to show their official logs to consuls at every port during the voyage, that fines deducted, &c., should be inquired into and endorsed

as just or otherwise, without which they would not be allowed when the men are discharged at home.

This would act as a check on all parties, and avoid the too often condonation of offences in the hurry of discharge; besides the advantage of hearing cases fresh in the memory of those concerned, and keeping alive the sense of constant supervision abroad by proper authority.

I think that these suggestions are steps in the right direction, and conducive to commercial interests and the welfare of a large class of the community, and for these reasons I trust they may not be considered out of place in a report on trade and commerce.

General Remarks

It is very necessary for shippers to Porto Rico, as well as captains of vessels, to be most particular in making out the manifests to comply with the Spanish law, and to get their papers certified by the Spanish consuls at the port of departure; no allowance will be made by the Custom-house here, for any error however plainly innocent of fraudulent intention, but heavy fines are imposed without fail.

A bill of health is required, and all passengers must have passports duly certified, or the ship is liable to a fine, and the passenger will not be allowed to land.

Masters of vessels would do well to insert a clause in bills of lading, rendering shippers responsible for fines inflicted by Spanish authorities for wrong description of contents of cases; by the existing laws the fine in such cases is put on the ship, and not on the goods; it would be difficult and expensive to collect from consignees here, besides which, the shipper is the person who makes the mistake.

It is impossible to procure a reliable report of value of imports from here. The Government report, which is only published late in the following year, generally makes the value of imports nearly double that of the exports, this is such an evident mistake that I must content myself with giving an estimate of value of cargoes in British vessels, as given in return of British shipping.

The following is a list of the export duties on some of the articles of production:

Articles	Quantity	Price c.
Sugar	per 100 lbs.	21 ½
Molasses	per 110 gallons	53
Coffee	per 100 lbs	53
Tobacco	"	21 1/5

I enclose a list of duties on some articles of import coming from the producing countries, and distinguishing between Spanish and foreign flags.

Population and Industries

A census has lately been taken, but not yet published. I should put the population at about 635,000, rather more than half whites. There are no industries except cigar and chocolate making on a small scale.

Public Works

Except the gas works for the city I know of no public works undertaken during the year.

The roads are as bad as ever, and in wet weather it is impossible to travel from one side of the island to the other by land, and even when fine the journey must be done on horseback.

Remarks on Table of Exports

The average prices of exports are sugar 3 dol. 50c., the same as last year; coffee 18 dol., 1 dol. more, and with a tendency to rise; tobacco is 15 dol., against 11 dol., as a better class has been sent to Havana, about one-third of the whole being worth about 25 dol. The great increase has been on coffee, in quantity as well as price, and the loss of at least one-third of the next crop of coffee will, I fear, not be made up by the increase in price of sugar.

The whole value for 1876, 2,646,077l., is not much below 1875, and does not include the island of Vieques, about which there is no information. On the whole the coffee has saved the produce from being below the average.

Porto Rico, February 12, 1877.

[61a] Report by Vice-Consul Gumbes on the Trade and Commerce of the Port of Mayagüez for the Year 1876⁷⁷

The commercial condition of this district has been satisfactory during the year, in a general point of view, there having been an increase in the value, both of imports and exports, as compared with the preceding year.

Commerce with Great Britain and the British provinces has not experienced the least decline, but, on the contrary, an increase with the latter has taken place, and although there has been no British shipping direct from Great Britain, its products have been imported, with much more advantage as to duty, by Liverpool steam ships under the Spanish flag, and also by Spanish sailing vessels. The market has almost always been in a favourable position for the products of the British provinces, confined chiefly to Nova Scotia.

Local trade has continued to be healthy, and although complaints have at times been made of collections being somewhat in arrear, the delay has not been attended with any risk, and money has scarcely ever been above 1 per cent per month, which is the lowest usual market rate. No failures are to be reported.

With regards to exports, the falling off in the yield of the sugar crop, and the low prices which ruled for the product, have been fully compensated in an average point of view, by the large crop of coffee, and its very favourable prices. The prospect for the coming crops of those two products, to judge from the information given by planters, is very discouraging, as they estimate them both at one-half of the last, but experience shows that this prediction of short crops has been a yearly practice, with what aim, though difficult to define, it is easy to understand. The hurricane of the 13th of September last did certainly damage both the sugar and the coffee plantations, but not to the extent that has been propagated, and the commercial opinion is that the falling off will not exceed one-third of the last crops. Both crops have commenced, and prices are very favourable, select coffee being at 18 dol., and common sugar at 5 ¼ dol. per quintal respectively.

No cotton has been raised during the year owing to the drought in its district, and to the low price it has attained.

Tobacco is not grown in this district, or very little of it for consumption, but it has been brought here plentiful from other parts in the island for shipment to Cuban ports, mixed, it is said, with Santo Domingo tobacco.

⁷⁷ PP 1877 [c.1855] LXXXIII.3 Mayagüez

This district does not raise sufficient cattle for exportation.

No rum is exported, but on the contrary, is imported to some extent from the island of Cuba.

Field labour continues plentiful, and wages are from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per day, although for sugar boilers and other less ordinary work, 2s. 6d. to 3s. are paid.

No foreign vessels of war have entered the port, which is now favoured with more steam communication than it requires, in the shape of British, French, German, and Spanish mail and cargo ships. The French line competes largely with the Royal Mail Company, as they touch at a port in Spain, and at several in France, hence they always have the bulk of passengers for both countries, and of cargo for the latter; whereas, by the Royal Mail there is an extra duty on cargo for France via England, and Cherbourg is not the suitable commercial port. The French line also does not tranship at St. Thomas. The German boat has heretofore only been a cargo ship, and done a very limited business. A change is to be made by this company in January, and a line from New York to this port is announced to commence in February next.

A Spanish gunboat is constantly stationed at this port, and performs the coast service as far as Guánica, south, and Aguadilla, north.

Herrera's line from Havana is now increased to three ships monthly, and they have a very good traffic, both in passengers hence on their inward route, and in passengers and freight on the outward route to Cuban ports.

No public works are in course of construction beyond the enlargement of the barracks, which progresses slowly.

The iron bridge on this bay has been completed with success.

The roads continue in a very deplorable state, and the wooden bridges in the district menace ruin.

The streets of this town are in a tolerably good condition, and it is but fair to observe that it requires much more care and expense than is or can be bestowed on them to keep them in perfect order, on account of the constant rainy weather which is experienced.

The average rate of exchange on London for draughts at 90 days sight has been 5 dol. 10 c. to the £ sterling.

Mayagüez, January 6, 1877.

[61b] Report by Vice-Consul Gibbons on the Trade, Commerce, and Agriculture of Ponce for the Year 1876⁷⁸

The district of Ponce is principally devoted to the cultivation of sugar-cane, and like the whole of the southern coast of the island, has suffered considerably from the drought during the year 1875, consequently the crop of 1876 was far below the average, being only about 13,000 hogsheads against 45,000 made in former years; the low prices of the sugar market were also very disastrous for the planters; average price 3 dol. 75c. per 100 lbs., or 15s. per cwt.

The coffee crop was good, and prices ruling high, considerable profits were made in this article, average price being 17 dol. 50c. per 100 lbs., or say 3£. 10 cs. per cwt.

For the coming year the prospects are good, the district having been favored with rains which, although late, have done immense good to the canes, and it is calculated that the increase in production on the past year will be 80 per cent, and the current prices are also 40 per cent better.

The coffee crop has suffered considerably from the hurricane of September 13th, and will be about 50 per cent less than last year, current prices about 18 per cent higher.

⁷⁸ PP 1877 [c.1855] LXXXIII.3 Ponce

About 50 per cent of the sugar exported from Ponce goes to the United States, 25 per cent to Great Britain and British provinces, and 25 per cent to other countries, Spain, Germany, &c.

The molasses of this district all go the United States, with the exception of a very small quantity to British possessions in America. where they fetch a very high price.

The coffee exported is equally divided between Spain and Cuba, 40 per cent to each; to the latter place it goes at a very small duty under Spanish flag, and British vessels are quite shut out of this trade; the remaining 20 per cent is divided between Great Britain and Germany.

The small quantity of tobacco exported is equally divided between Great Britain and Spain.

There is a good trade between Ponce and the British possessions of North America in salt fish, lumber, &c., and large quantities of Manchester goods, hardware, and machinery, are imported from Great Britain.

Large importations are made from the United States of provisions, flour, hams, kerosene oil, lumber, coopers' stock, agricultural implements, &c.

Total value of imports for the year 1876, 3,262,214 dol., or 652.443£.

The port of Ponce has considerable steam communication; the steamers of the Royal Mail Company call here four times a month, twice bringing the correspondence from St. Thomas and Europe, and going on to Santo Domingo, and twice on the return voyages. This company received a subsidy from the merchants, and gets a large number of passengers and considerable amount of freight, principally coffee for Europe.

There is a line of steamers under Spanish flag running out from Liverpool every month (managed by White, Forman and Co.), and they bring out large quantities of dry goods from Great Britain. A line of German steamers call here twice a month, and in February a new French steamer will touch at this port in connection with the transatlantic steamers from and to Bordeaux.

A coasting Spanish steamer also calls here six times in the month, going round the island and on to St. Thomas at end of month.

The general trade in sailing vessels is about equally divided between American and British, with a few Spanish, German, and Norwegian vessels.

The population of the district is about 30,000 and the death rate 26.3 per thousand and of the births 50 per cent are illegitimate.

The town of Ponce with a population of 12,000 inhabitants, is situated about three miles inland from the port; it is well built, many of the public buildings being substantially constructed of brick and stone, but the private houses being mostly of wood, the basement only being of brick, the town occasionally suffers from bad fires, and the insurance companies doing business here, the "Royal" and the "Phoenix" have experienced heavy losses.

The plaza or square situated in the center of the town is a large open space, well planted with trees, and here the military band plays three nights in the week; in the middle is the church, built in the half Moorish style peculiar to Spanish churches here, and being coloured yellow and white, is not attractive to the eye; the interior, however, is well decorated, and kept in good order. The town hall is a large building, well constructed, standing on one side of the square; the theatre, capable of holding some 2,000 people, is a handsome building, with the interior well decorated.

The principal hotel is "La Marina", situated near the square; accommodation fair, and charges moderate; there are many cafés with billiard tables in the town, these are well managed and orderly.

The communication between the town and port is very bad, the road being intersected by the river, which has no bridge, and in times of rains communication is entirely stopped; this should be remedied by the erection of a bridge and construction of a tramway along the present road, which would be a great improvement on the dirty carriages and wretched horses now running, and no doubt a paying business to whoever undertook the work.

There is a considerable number of British subjects residing here, many of them coloured, coming from the neighboring islands; they earn a good living as skilled workmen, carpenters, masons, engine drivers, &c., also domestic servants, wages being higher here than in their own country.

A Protestant church has been erected by subscription, and the current expenses are defrayed by the Protestant inhabitants of the district, but at present it is badly in want of funds.

A new public hospital has recently been erected, the gift of an inhabitant who left 12,000£. for this purpose; only 8,000£. has been expended, and with the remaining 4,000£. waterworks are being constructed under the administration of the municipality and direction of the Government engineer, the rents from which will go to the current expenses of the hospital.

The town is well lighted with gas, the works having recently been carried out by the well-known contractor, Mr. Bower, of St. Neots, Hunts, England, who found the capital, materials, &c., the engineer and manager here being Mr. Steinacher; everything works well, and I believe the affair gives a return of 19 per cent or 10 per cent on the capital, and in time this will increase without doubt to 14 or 15 per cent.

The West India and Panama Telegraph Company have a station here with communication to Santa Cruz and Jamaica, but the office has now been closed for more than twelve months (scarcely for the benefit of the shareholders), but the company wants a heavy subvention from the merchants before re-opening the station.

The island communication is very bad, it being impossible to go to the capital, San Juan, except on horseback; there is one moderately good road going to Arroyo, but even this in times of rain is scarcely passable in a carriage; all the others are bad in the extreme, and five miles an hour is about the rate of progression.

The prospects for the 1877 crop are favourable, and would have been far better but for the hurricane that visited the island in September last, which did great damage to the coffee plants, sugar cane, and buildings on estates. However, since that time we have been favored with rather more rain than in former years, but the continued drought from 1871 has brought cultivation to a very low state; this combined with the emancipation (for which only a small sum as interest, has been paid by the Government) and low prices for produce, has nearly ruined Ponce.

In view of these continued droughts, what the planters require is a good system of irrigation, and this can only be carried out by combined action; some few planters have irrigations carried out individually, and at great expense with but little benefit to the owners; if the planters would collectively carry out a good work all would benefit, and at less cost than at present.

There is no exchange or mart where merchants can meet and discuss their affairs, business generally being transacted in individual offices or at the café.

Near Ponce are the celebrated hot springs and baths of Coamo, which place with good management under some enterprising American or German, might be made a first class hydropathic establishment and resort for invalids from the United States, but at present the accommodation is very bad indeed.

Ponce, January 1, 1877.

[62] Report by Consul Bidwell on the Trade and Commerce of the island of Porto Rico, and on the Produce and Trade of Province for 1878, with Reference to Preceding Years⁷⁹

The able reports of my predecessors on the trade and commerce of this island, during recent years, have treated the subject so exhaustively that one can hardly now confine one's observations within the ordinary limits of a commercial report without going over much old ground, and necessarily repeating much that has already been well said before.

The produce and trade of this province vary so little in their nature or extent from year to year that they afford small scope for new comments of interest even to those who have dealings with it. It is proposed therefore in this report to embrace some of the historical facts relating to this very beautiful and fertile island, which it is hoped may not be without interest to the traveler and public generally, if less so to the merchant or trader; while the commercial statistics and reports on trade will also be given as fully as possible.

In this attempt, information possessed by some must also unavoidably be repeated: but this circumstance it is trusted will be viewed with indulgence, in consideration of the desire to impart it to others to whom it may be of interest or of use. This remark will particularly apply to the few historical gleanings which it is proposed to embody in this report.

It is not easy in writing an account of place with which people are not intimately associated to decide how much or how little may be remembered or forgotten in regard to them. "Porto Rico, Cuba" is not an uncommon way for letters to Her Majesty's Consulate to be addressed. Perhaps they are so addressed under an impression that Cuba is a sort of post town to Porto Rico, or that Porto Rico is a port in that island. Certain it is that the Spanish Post Office not infrequently sends all the Porto Rico correspondence in the mail bags for Cuba. It might, therefore, almost seem necessary to mention that Porto Rico is not in Cuba; practically it is not very near it, even in these days of steam communication, for it is four days distant by steamer; in fact, 156,000 dol. per annum are now paid to Lopez's line of steamships for calling once a month at Porto Rico for the homeward mail on their way from Cuba to Cadiz.

Porto Rico, Santo Domingo or Haiti, and Cuba form one end of the chain of islands—once doubtless mountains—known as the West Indies, which extend from the Gulf of Maracaybo to the Gulf of Mexico; and Haiti lies between Porto Rico and Cuba. This is one of the facts, like others that may be cited, well enough known, doubtless, to persons dealing with the West Indies and Porto Rico. It is known to the Americans, who connect Porto Rico with molasses (as we connect Habana with cigars), and who supply this island, in return for refining sugar, with United States provisions of all kinds. It is known to the Canadians, who find here a good market for their codfish and timber, and a homeward sugar freight to Halifax or to an American port. It is doubtless known to many British merchants, who deal with the island, and to Scotch engineers who have for the most part supplied it with sugar machinery: such well-known names as Tait and Mirelees and Buchanan are to be seen on scores of sugar plantations; and it is doubtless too well known by those who were tempted by plausible planters, in times now gone by, when sugar was worth 6 dol. or 24s. per cwt. in port, to make advances on crops/and returns yet looming in the future; for sugars, as will be shown in this report, have now fallen to about 3 dol., with little prospects, in these days of competition, of a return to former prices.

This fall in the price of sugar is said to have caused what is spoken of everywhere as the "ruin" of the island. During my residence there I visited Porto Rico from north to south and east to west. There is hardly a town or village on the coast or in the interior that I have not seen, and everywhere, except perhaps in the coffee districts, the "ruin" of the island is deplored. The newspaper of the important district of Humacao speaks of Porto Rico "as a piece of

⁷⁹ 1878 PP 1878 [c.2088] LXXIV. 361 (xref 2421)

Spain, so rich in times gone by but never to return; and today so poor that it is threatened by imminent ruin" (January 26, 1879).*

The grave question will doubtless soon have to be considered whether it will pay to cultivate sugar in Porto Rico at the prices brought about by the world-wide competition of today (and this is a question which does not affect the Spanish colonies only). If, however, a foreigner might be allowed to form an opinion as to the effect of the high price of sugar in former years in Porto Rico, it would be that it was this very high price which conduced, in some measure, to the general depression from which the island is now stated to be suffering, and which is bemoaned from one end of it to the other. The wealth which Porto Rico enjoyed a few years ago was the wealth of a gambler, and it has disappeared as gamblers' gains usually do. The Spanish Government was taught by it to believe that the island could pay any amount of taxes and contributions, and could support a whole army of soldiers and *employés* from the Peninsula; but the taxes were not employed in making roads or public works beneficial to the province. The planters, if accounts are to be trusted, were taught to believe that neither prudence nor economy was necessary in the conduct of their business, and that they might live without thrift, make expensive visits with their families to the capitals of Europe, and even, when in the island, absent themselves from their plantations, borrowing money, if needs be, at 18 and 24 per cent per annum. Then came the bad years, the hurricanes, the emancipation of the slaves, the sugarcane disease and the fall in prices from the beetroot competition in Europe, and the extensive cultivation of sugar in all sugar-growing countries. Engagements were no longer kept; credit little by little was withdrawn; and failures have been abundant; but the contributions remain, and the roads and bridges and canals and railways have yet to be made. It is not too much to say that a large number of the richest planters of a few years ago are today involved in difficulties, owing in a great measure to expenses disproportionate to their legitimate income, into which they were led by the high prices of sugar; and the merchants have naturally suffered in their ruin.

Ten years ago my predecessor reported that there were 553 sugar plantations, producing upwards of 100,000 tons of sugar, and 60 coffee estates under cultivation. The price of sugar during the last 10 years was as follows: 1868 to 1872, inclusive, average 5 dol. per quintal; 1873 and 1874 4 dol.; 1875 and 1876, 3 dol. 50c.; 1877, 4 dol. 50c.; and 1878, 3 dol. 30c. There are now 385 plantations and estates in all, and the aggregate sugar exports for the last three years did not exceed 178,000 tons, whilst the price of sugar is now 3 dol. These are the discouraging facts with which this report must be commenced.

Ten or twelve years since attention was called by Her Majesty's Consul to the remarkable circumstance that there is a large British commerce with this island with no British merchant to conduct it, and that there is a large import of British goods, and but a small export of produce either to Great Britain or her colonies. These peculiar circumstances still exist, and may perhaps account for less being known about Porto Rico than about other distant places where English trade is less extensive than it is here.

387 years have passed away since the beautiful island of Porto Rico, called "Borinquen" by the aborigines, was discovered by Columbus, during his second voyage to America, on the 19th of November, 1493. It was named San Juan Bautista de Porto Rico, after St. John the Baptist. The capital, as well as the island, are alike called by this name, which we have translated as "St. John's". Porto Rico is the smallest of the larger Antilles, situated in the Atlantic Ocean between 17° 54' and 18° 30' 40" north latitude and between 59° 20' 26" and 60° 58' 52" longitude west of Cadiz, or in about the same latitude as Jamaica. Its form is that of a parallelogram,

* The principal newspaper in the capital thus writes on this subject ("Boletín Mercantil", April, 1879):—Every one observes with consternation that no single estate or sugar plantation is supported, so that every year, every month, every day valuable properties may be seen abandoned and turned into waste land-properties in which capital of large amount was employed in the factories and apparatus, and which represented the fortune of a multitude of families, ruined today".

about three times as long as broad, being nearly 100 miles in length from east to west, with a mean breadth of 38 miles, containing an area of 3,750 square miles, or, according to Spanish measurement, 170 kiloms. from east to west, and 65 kiloms. from north to south. The exact dimensions given by the Spanish authorities are 10,000 kiloms.

A survey of the conquest was first made by the Spanish captain, Ponce de León, a lieutenant of Columbus in 1508, and subsequently Ponce de Leon established himself on the island with some followers from the neighboring settlement of Santo Domingo, which had been conquered about a year previously to Porto Rico (6th December, 1492). In 1509 Ponce de Leon was appointed Governor in the room of Don Juan Cerón, who was first named to the government of the island. Ponce de León was, however, subsequently removed and he then turned his attention to Florida, seriously in search of the famous water, which, if bathed in, was to render mankind young and beautiful forever. He is stated to have discovered Florida at Easter of 1512. Hence the name from "Pascua florida". The name of "Ponce" has been given to the important port on the south of Porto Rico.

Since the date above mentioned to the present time, nearly 100 Spanish officers, some of the more or less celebrated in Spanish history, have governed Porto Rico, amongst them General Prim, in 1848.

Porto Rico is traversed from east to west by a chain of mountains passing nearly in the center of the island, and forming a backbone as it were, but of no great height. La Sierra del Yunque, the highest, is 1,520 meters above the level of the sea. It is situated near Luquillo, and serves as a landmark to navigators. From these mountains many rivers take their course and water the land; the larger rivers are said to number 47, and there are stated to be 1,300 streams. The soil is, with rare exceptions, most fertile, and away from the coast a temperate climate may be found, especially at the small villages in the hills, such as Aibonito, and Cayey, Luquillo, Lares, and Utuado; but where it is chilly from the damp, so that one is glad of a blanket during the winter months. Dampness prevails everywhere, and thus, owing to the constant moisture, the land presents the appearance of an English park in spring. Vegetation is abundant, and verdure is unceasing at all seasons. Soft green grass covers the soil, and a variety of pretty flowers bestrew one's path. The scenery indeed is as varied as one could desire: winding glades and glens, clear streams, and every kind of woodland. I know of no more picturesque landscapes than those to be met with during a morning's ride in this island.

Sugar, molasses, coffee, tobacco, cattle, and a little cotton form the principal exports; but Porto Rico produces everything grown in the tropics, and many fruit and vegetables of more temperate regions. Like the other West Indies, this island suffered in early days from repeated attacks of the Carib Indians, and from the nations with which Spain was at war. Hurricanes, epidemics, and plagues in due turn also inflicted their scourge on the island, including a plague of ants in 1518, which, after devouring every green thing, are reported to have attacked men and killed children. In later years may be mentioned the hurricanes of 1742, 1825, 1867, and 1874, which were peculiarly destructive. In 1855 cholera carried off 40,000 of the inhabitants. Yellow fever is an occasional visitor and smallpox is almost a permanent one.

The native indians appear to have been peaceably disposed and of a mild disposition. The Spanish historians speak of them as having been *flojos e indolentes* (weak and indolent), which, from the point of view of the conquerors, they probably were. Readers of Prescott and Washington Irving will not require to be reminded of the manner in which the early Spanish settlers settled their conquest, when the destruction of thousands of the aborigines were accounted acts of valor. The pacific Indians of Porto Rico, who are said to have numbered 600,000 at the time of the conquest, were first portioned out amongst their masters and set to work at the gold mines for their profit. Then there were the usual risings, followed by the inevitable wars of extermination. Hardly a trace of the early possessors of the soil now exists.

In the year, 1511 African slaves were first imported into Porto Rico to replace the Indian labour at the gold mines; and only after 359 years of bondage were slaves emancipated in this island.

In former times it would appear that gold in considerable quantities was found at Porto Rico, and this was the source of wealth which invariably attracted the attention of the early settlers. Gold is yet to be met with in the beds of the rivers near Luquillo and other places. The rivers in which it most abounds are El Mameyes and El Cibuco, and a tributary of this latter called Rio de los Negros, from which grains of a large size have been taken in late years, amongst others one nugget said to be worth 100£.

Other unexplored mineral wealth exists. Four concessions have been granted by the Government for the working of mines of copper mineral, and two have been worked to some extent in the district of Naguabo. The greater part of the mineral found there is carbonate of copper of different qualities; the best kinds are said to contain 33 per cent. In another district near the union of Rio Prieto and Rio Blanco another mine has been found, the mineral of which is sulphuret of copper, the best class of which contain 44 per cent of metal.

Sulphuret of lead has also been found near Mayagüez, but the mineral wealth of the island may yet be said to be unexplored. The workings thus far have been merely experimental.

The supreme local government of Porto Rico —everything with the exception of the administration of law and justice and finance— is centered in the Governor-General, who is also Captain-General of the island and who is appointed and removed by the Spanish Government, sometimes even on a change of Ministry. He is the chief of all the local branches of government, civil and military. As Governor-General he is President of the Provincial Deputation and Commission, and of the municipality, and he has power to appoint and remove the local alcaldes and their secretaries. He is President of the Board of Health, Sub-Delegate of the Post-Office, and Vice-Patron of the Church. In naval matters only, is there an authority to some extent independent of the Governor-General. Naval affairs are under the immediate control of a senior naval officer, holding the local rank of Brigadier of Marine, and subject to the senior naval officer at Cuba.

On the 28th of August, 1870, in connection with the emancipation of the slaves, Porto Rico was declared to be a province of Spain, and sends fifteen deputies and two senators to the Spanish Cortes; but it was not considered expedient then to make extensive to this island the Spanish provincial municipal law. On the 24th of May, 1878, a Royal Order was, however, published at Madrid, establishing a special municipal law for this island, defining the functions and duties of the various local authorities.

The Colonial Minister, in introducing to the Cortes the project of the law of May 24, 1878, said that it was necessary to organize the authority of the Government of Porto Rico in such a manner that it could intervene in all administrative acts; that it might sanction every initiative measure, and govern every important movement; that it might, in fact, be the central spring of every power. The minister added that without such an organization, it would be impossible to maintain in so distant a region the prestige of authority.

It will be seen from this that it is the intention of the Spanish Government that the Governor-General should be supreme in all matters, whether civil or military, and as a military man is always appointed to the post, it may be readily believed that this autocratic form of government is carried out to the fullest extent. Thus, even in regard to the municipalities the Governor-General is absolute. The people elect the corporation; the corporation choose their mayor; and the Governor-General, *quand bon lui semble*, appoints another in his stead.

Once a year the Governor-General personally visits the island, going to every town or village, or summoning the municipalities of adjoining districts to a neighboring place in his route, which is marked out beforehand. He then hears verbally the complaints of the corporations, and their suggestions; and anyone who has a grievance is invited to present it. Every school, public or private, in each place is also visited, and the pupils examined as to their proficiency. In this latter occupation much of the Governor-General's time is taken up. Public building prisons, barracks &c., are also inspected on these occasions. The Governor-General is usually accompanied by the Director of Public Works and certain officers of his staff, and he is met and accompanied to the boundaries of each district by the alcalde and municipality.

The Budget of the island for the year 1878-70 is composed as follows:

Expenses

	Dol.	c.
Current expenses	347,710	25
Law and justice	359,518	5
Army	1,438,533	24
Finance department	209,034	85
Navy	65,119	26
Government	942,246	32
Public works	253,954	51
Total	3,626,107	4

Revenue

	Dol	c.
Taxes and imposts	690,280	00
Customs	2,372,800	00
Licenses, stamps, &c.	258,600	00
State property	70,880	00
Various receipts	139,270	00
Total	3,531,830	00

The principal taxes are: the agriculture tax of 5 per cent, the house and town property tax of 6 per cent, and the commercial and industrial tax on a varied scale, according to the category of the merchant or trader, which was increased 20 per cent last year. The taxes on agricultural property are levied on the supposed profits of the planters. The gross income is ascertained by customhouse returns, and after deducting 35 per cent as expenses, the remaining 65 per cent is considered as profit, upon which 5 per cent is levied, and then a further amount of 50 per cent is added as municipal tax; thus the actual tax on supposed income is 7½ per cent. The planters generally complain of the unfairness of this assessment, and, according to the public papers, this matter is at present under the consideration of the General Government.

There are various other municipal and local taxes not comprised in those above mentioned, such as taxes on horses, carriages, octroi duties, residence permits, &c.

According to the Spanish Royal Order of April, 1878, the military force in Porto Rico should consist of 3,871 men. It is composed of three battalions of infantry of six companies each, the battalion numbering 730 men; one battalion of artillery composed of four compa-

nies of foot and one of horse, and numbering 640 men; one company of engineers of 120 men; 500 mounted troops of the civil guard; and the local volunteers.

The naval force consists of one sloop of war and three gun-boats, one of 130 horse-power and three guns, and two of 40 horse-power and one gun each.

Since the abandonment of the old colonial system, the increase in the population of Porto Rico, if any reliance may be placed on the figures relating to this matter, has been remarkably rapid. In 1778 the population was estimated at 80,650 souls; but actual statistics hardly date further back than 20 years. From the time of the conquest until 1759, nothing, in fact, appears to have been published, with the exception of a map of the island. In 1759 the Captain-General furnished the Spanish Government with a return of the number of towns and villages, and of civil, military, and ecclesiastical *employés*, and their salaries. The first census would appear to have been taken in 1765; others were said to have been taken only in 1778, 1782, 1803 and 1812, until 1846, in which year the population was estimated at 444,415 inhabitants, including 1,275 for Vieques. In 1857 the two islands were stated to contain 80,000 families, or 474,050 souls, of whom 11,158 mulattos and 32,250 negroes were slaves.

The census of 1860 seems to have been the first taken with full particulars. In that year the population of the two islands amounted to 583,308, being 2,979 for Vieques. The increase from 1846 was 139,894. This would be at the rate of 9,921 per annum. There were then 44,736 slaves.

According to the census of the 31st of December, 1878, the population of Porto Rico consisted of 729,445 inhabitants, of whom 367,832 were males, and 361,613 females. Of the males, 209,538 were whites, 118,833 coloured, and 39,461 blacks. Of the females, 201,323 were whites, 121,007 coloured, and 38,283 blacks. The population is thus composed of 410,861 whites of both sexes, and 318,584 coloured and blacks, comprised in 146,518 families. 8,034 foreigners are included in this census, of whom about 800 are British subjects. There are also many Germans, Frenchmen, and Danes amongst the number, and about 200 Chinese prisoners.

In an agricultural country like Porto Rico, where so many persons live on or near the plantations, it would serve little purpose to give the populations of the towns and villages. It may be mentioned, therefore, that there are, including the capital, seven towns, with their districts, having a population of from 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants, 17 with a population of over 10,000, 35 with a population of over 5,000, and 10 with a population of under 5,000. The capital contains 24,075 inhabitants; Ponce district, 37,545; Mayagüez district, 26,446. These are the three principal ports.

The city of Caparra, situated in what is now called Pueblo Viejo, on the opposite side of the bay, was founded by Ponce de León in 1500 as the original capital of the island; but it was abandoned 10 years later for the present site.

The town of San Juan stands on a declivity, encircled by strong fortifications, which are constructed on a small islet, situated on the north side of the main island, and separated from it by a bridge. These fortifications, by which the population are hemmed in, are a marvellous specimen of the achievements of slave labour. That a sufficient amount of free labour will ever be available for removing them may well be doubted; but there can be little doubt that their removal, in part at all events, would greatly conduce to the healthiness of the city. The islet is 5 kiloms. long, by 1 to 2 kiloms. broad, and in a space not exceeding half a mile square the inhabitants are enclosed. A recent calculation shows, in fact, that 10-80 meters only is the space enjoyed by each person.

The town is laid out in 12 streets at right angles, and within the *patios* or courtyards of the larger houses, the working people exist, often a whole family in a room of 8 or 10 feet square, having only the door for ventilation in which room they cook stale codfish with Catalan oil and garlic, smoke, eat, and sleep. Several of these abodes are to be found in some houses. I have been shown one house in which 200 persons are said to live. The common well and cesspool adjoin each other in the *patio*; and for one of these damp, sunless habitations, in which all known sanitary laws are set at defiance, 5 or 6 dollars a month are paid as rent.

A great deal has been said about the healthiness of Porto Rico and its superiority in this respect to other places in the West Indies, I think this characteristic is only applicable to the towns and places situated on the higher lands. After many years residence in tropical countries, including the Isthmus of Panama, I may be allowed to express an opinion on the subject, and in my opinion Porto Rico has no special claim to be considered a peculiarly healthy island. I never experienced anywhere greater heat than I have felt here, and Spanish naval and military officers who have resided in Cuba have stated to me that the heat is actually more oppressive here than there; but the inhabitants of Porto Rico are very boastful about the salubrity of their climate, and every town or village you go to is reputed to be the healthiest in the island. It is a well-known fact that where sugarcane grows malaria exists. Yellow fever generally requires an unacclimatised element to exist upon; but I have nowhere seen yellow fever cases terminate more suddenly than at Porto Rico, where even residents of old standing were carried off; while smallpox decimated the inhabitants of the infected districts.

The following data are the results of meteorological observations taken by the Local Office of Public Works:

	Degrees Centigrade
January, when the climate is most temperate-	
Highest temperature in the sun*	40.25
" " in the shade	32.2
Mean temperature during the month	26.14
Lowest " " "	20.6
September, hottest month-	
Highest temperature in the sun	41.8
" " in the shade	35.8
Mean temperature during the month	28.35
Lowest " " "	23

The stranger coming to this island should be careful not to indulge freely in spirituous liquors, which over-stimulate the system of the European already too robust for a tropical climate; and of all liquors the native rum is most to be avoided. Exposure to the heat of the sun or to the heavy night dew should also be avoided. It is a golden rule for preserving one's health not to leave the house without taking a cup of warm coffee or tea, and a not less important one is never to remain, after getting wet in the rain, with damp clothes on, unless while taking active exercise. Natives and old residents may, perhaps, neglect these precautions; but no person lately arrived from a temperate climate can do so with impunity. I have seen sev-

* The slight difference which exists between the "sun" and "shade" temperature is remarkable. It is explainable by the circumstance that the breeze tempers the action of the sun on the instrument. In fact, there is little difference experienced in the temperature indoors and out of doors.

eral cases of fever that terminated fatally which arose simply from neglect to change clothes after being exposed to the rain in this climate.

Both yellow fever and smallpox have existed in the island for several months during the past year, the former in the capital and Mayagüez and the latter in the district of Fajardo.

The following account of the breaking out of yellow fever on board an American man-of-war, which had passed a winter in the United States, after visiting the West Indies, is not without interest, as it tends to show that the germs of yellow fever may exist even in a cold temperature:

“Boston, April 3.-The United States steamship, ‘Plymouth’”, which left the Navy-yard here on March 15 for a cruise in the West Indies and the Spanish Main, has returned and is anchored off Nobska Point, Vineyard Sound, awaiting orders from the Navy Department. She had been in Boston during the winter, and as she had come from the West Indies last autumn, with yellow fever, she had been frozen out and fumigated. After passing through a severe south-west gale on the voyage out, she met with pleasant weather, and proceeded on her course until about 300 miles to the south-eastward of the Bermuda Island, when two cases of yellow fever developed on board. As the ship had not called in any port since leaving Boston, this development showed that the germs of yellow fever still existed in her, and she was headed north, being deemed unfit, under the circumstances, for cruising in the tropics. She went into St. George’s, Bermuda, for coal on March 25th, and left on March 27th for the north. On March 31, when less than 100 miles south of Gay Head Point, Martha’s Vineyard, she met with a very heavy gale from the north-eastward, accompanied with snow and hail and a heavy sea. One boat was lost and a lower boom, and the vessel leaked considerably through her upper works, but the next day the wind shifted to the north-westward, and though blowing a gale, the weather became better. In this gale, at its height, Peter Eagan, boatswain’s mate, was buried, he having died of yellow fever the previous day. On April 2, the weather having moderated, the ship steamed ahead, and anchored that evening off Nobska Point, Vineyard Sound. The ‘Plymouth’ is commanded by Capt. David B. Harmoney”.*

Export and Import Trade

In order to give as correct an idea as possible of the nature of the imports and exports of this island, and of the value and direction of the trade, a series of tables have been compiled from the most trustworthy data available; but for the object of giving a general notion of the trade it has been necessary to take the statistics of 1877, which are compared with those of 1876. All the returns for 1876, which are at present procurable, are also given.

Thus, according to the latest returns published by the Local Government, the total value of the trade for 1877 amounted to 123,915,310 pesetas 25 c., viz:

	Pesetas	c.
Imports	71,899,742	75
Exports	52,015,567	50

Showing an excess in the value of imports over that of exports amounting to 19,884,175 pesetas 25 c. (or 795,367£.).

It is difficult to explain satisfactorily this great difference which occurs year after year between the value of imports and exports, and to reconcile it with the solvency of the island. One of my predecessors, in referring to this subject ten years ago, considered that the excess in the value of imports over exports was only apparent. He remarked “that the former are

* *New York Times*, April 4.

taken from the custom-house where each article is specified in an absurdly protective tariff at exaggerated valuations, with the view of deriving a larger revenue upon the *ad valorem* system; whilst, on the other hand, the exports are always declared beneath their true value, that the planter may thus escape taxation; the island therefore always appears to have a balance against it, which is decidedly not so in fact." This is the explanation which is yet commonly offered and which probably must be still accepted. The *ad valorem* tariff which was formed 22 years ago is still in force. It was framed when Porto Rico was chiefly supplied with foreign merchandise from St. Thomas, where all goods were purchased in the second market. During this period of 22 years, the first cost of nearly all kinds of goods has been greatly reduced, and the supply is now obtained direct from the country of production; but the *ad valorem* tariff of 1857 is still in force.

On the other hand, it can no longer be said that exports are declared beneath their true value; for in the returns for 1877 sugar was valued at 4 dol. 50 c. per 100 lbs., and coffee at 19 dol. 50 c., ditto, which prices were quite up to the average value of these articles during that year, if not in excess of them.

Another explanation offered is that the actual quantity of the articles exported is not declared to the Custom-house, where by a percentage of the export duty is saved; but I believe that there is quite as much smuggled into the island as is smuggled out of it, and that therefore no explanation is afforded by this hypothesis. That a large amount of foreign capital has been brought to Porto Rico which will probably never return is doubtless true, and this difference in the value of imports and exports may not be altogether unconnected with the general "ruin".

The commerce with Great Britain apparently occupies the second place, while the first place would appear to be held by that of the United States; but if the amount of the trade with the British West Indies, which is included in that of Foreign West Indies, could be ascertained and could be added to British trade, the actual difference in the amount of the commerce of the island with the two principal countries would not be great.

The amount of the trade with England for 1876 was 24,395,021 pesetas 53 c., and for 1877 26,132,986 pesetas 20 c., showing a considerable increase in the latter year.

The trade with the United States was also greater in 1877 than in the preceding year.

The value of bonded goods is not comprised in the table above referred to. Their value was as follows, for the two years mentioned, viz.:

	1877	
	Pesetas	c.
Imports	1,180,793	90
Exports	289,226	85
Total	1,470,020	75*

The value of goods withdrawn for consumption in 1877 was 764,703 pesetas 80 c. In 1876 the movement in bonded goods was slightly less, viz.:

* 25 pesetas = 1 £.

	Pesetas	c.
Imports	1,095,892	2
Exports	273,344	40
Total	1,368,236	42

The value of goods withdrawn for consumption in 1876 was 968,226 pesetas 42 c.

Importation.-The imports in the island during the year 1876 amounted to 65,528,433 pesetas 26c., and in 1877 to 71,899,742 pesetas 75 c., showing an increase in 1877 amounting to 6,371,309 pesetas 49 c.

In regard to these imports it may be observed as follows:

1. Wines, spirits, and liquors are imported chiefly from England, France, Germany, and Spain. Beer, in large quantities, is received both from England and Germany, salt fish from Canada, and provisions from the United States.

2. Textiles and woolen fabrics are imported from Great Britain, France, and the United States. In these goods there was an increase in the year 1877 of upwards of 3,000,000 pesetas over the preceding year. Cotton goods would appear to have been imported in 1877 to about the value of 7,000,000 pesetas, linen fabrics to the value of 4,000,000 pesetas, and woolen and silk fabrics to the value of 1,000,000 pesetas.

3. Haberdashery and clothing are imported from England, France, and Spain; perfumery and hats from England, France, and the United States; leather from England, the United States, France, and Spain; marble from Italy and Spain; cement and pottery from England and Spain; chemicals and drugs from England, France, the United States and Spain, and manures from the United States.

4. Vegetable and mineral oils, of which there has been a considerable increase in the consumption during late years, are furnished, the former by the United States, and the latter by Great Britain and the United States.

5. Timber is imported from the United States and Canada. The consumption is large, and there was a considerable increase in 1877 over that of previous years.

6. Furniture and pianos are imported from Spain, France, and the United States; machinery, metals, wrought and unwrought iron from Great Britain and the United States. The value of metals imported in 1877 shows an increase of 500,000 pesetas. There is a decrease of about 2,000,000 pesetas in the value of the gold and silver imported, which is received from Spain and the United States. The gold coinage is Spanish, and the silver has hitherto been chiefly American, but American silver has now become exceedingly scarce in consequence of it having been used for remittances to the United States. American silver is now, in fact, as rarely seen as American and foreign gold. Its place has been taken by Mexican dollars which have been largely imported from the United States. They are reputed to be worth 84 c. each in New York, but by a recent order of the Local Government they pass current for 100 c. The consequence is that all other coinage is rapidly disappearing from circulation.

7. Jewelry, watches, and clocks are imported from France and the United States, and paper and books from those countries and Spain. Seeds and plants are received from Spain and the United States, but chiefly from Spain. Virginia tobacco is imported from the United States mostly for the use of the shipping; it is also mixed with Porto Rico tobacco in the manufacture of cigars. Tobacco is likewise brought from Santo Domingo and used in the adulteration of the tobacco of this island. Manufactured cigars and cigarettes are exclusively imported from Cuba.

The value of the imports in 1876 and 1877, and the countries from which they were imported were as follow:

	Pesetas	c.
1876	65,528,433	26
1877	71,899,742	75

The amount of direct imports from England is larger than that from any other country, not excepting Spain, for the year 1877. The value of imports from Great Britain in 1876 was 15,062,487 pesetas 93c., and in 1877 16,334,469 pesetas 5 c.

On comparing the value of the imports for the years 1876 and 1877, it will be seen that there was an increase in the latter year amounting to 1,272,481 pesetas. It may be remarked that there is continued and steady increase in the import trade of this island.

Exportation -The principal exports from Porto Rico, as previously stated, consist of sugar, molasses, coffee, tobacco, and cattle. Cotton in small quantities, hides, common spirits, and fruit are also exported from this island.

The total value of the exports for the year 1876 and 1877 were as follows:

	Pesetas	c.
1876	35,155,471	55
1877	52,015,567	50
Showing an increase in 1877 of	16,860,095	95

The Government statistics upon which these tables have been formed appear to show a considerable increase in the produce of the island during the year 1877 over that of 1876; but the increase refers rather to nominal value than quantity. In 1876 and previous years, a fixed estimated value was taken by the custom-house, which differed from the market value; but for 1877 the calculations were based upon the average value of produce in the market. Thus sugar in 1876 and previous years was always valued at 3 dol. or 15 pesetas per 100 lbs., while it was sold in 1875 at an average price of 4 dol. per quintal, and in 1876 at 3 dol. 50 c. In 1877 it was valued for the Government returns at 4 dol. 50 c. per quintal. There was a decrease in 1877, and an increase in 1878 in the amount of sugar and molasses exported, while the value of these exports in 1877 was greater than in 1876.

There was also a noteworthy increase in the export of cattle, owing to a large trade also which took its rise from the destruction of the cattle estates in Cuba during the civil war.

Shipping and Navigation

The movement in shipping during the years 1876 and 1877 was as follows:

1877		
	Number	Tons
Vessels entered with cargoes	1,064	332,600
" cleared " "	915	257,320
" entered in ballast	256	82,388
" cleared "	326	121,217
Total	2,561	793,525

1876

	Number	Tons
Vessels entered with cargoes	1,122	326,218
“ cleared “ “	1,058	289,330
“ entered in ballast	240	67,407
“ cleared “	309	99,688
Total	2,729	782,643

It will be seen from the above that there was an increase of 10,882 tons in 1877.

Complete returns for 1878 are not yet procurable.

Steam navigation has increased considerably in connection with the ports of this island; and there is now great competition between the English, French, German, and Spanish lines of steamers.

Arrivals and Departures of Steamers - A table (No. XV in the Appendix)* has been prepared giving the approximate dates of arrivals and departures from Porto Rico during each month, and showing the connections corresponding to each steamer, and the names of the companies to which the connecting steamers belong.

The natural result of this competition is that the European and intercolonial passenger and freight tariffs have been considerably reduced. In 1878, 95 steamers belonging to the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company entered this port; the net tonnage of these steamers was 81,165.

Owing to the great increase in the steamer traffic and the low rates at which these steamers now convey cargo, a considerable falling off in the entries of sailing vessels is taking place.

Merchants residing here, who had sailing ships running under time charters between this port and the United States, have discontinued their contracts, as the English steamers belong to the Quebec and Gulf Ports Steamship Company now convey their produce to and from America at about the same rate as the sailing vessels, whilst they gain the additional advantages that such shipments arrive quicker, do not lose so much in weight, and that insurance can be effected at a much lower premium. During the year 1877, 40 American vessels entered this port, whereas in 1878 there were only 29 entries of American vessels, which is attributable to the cause above mentioned.

Tariff and Customs Regulations - A full report on the tariff and customs regulations of Porto Rico was furnished last year. No changes [with] regard to these matters have taken place.

Ports - The ports of the island at which Custom-houses are established are San Juan (the port of the capital) and Arecibo on the north coast; Ponce, Arroyo, Guayanilla, and Guánica on the south coast; Fajardo, Naguabo, and Humacao on the east coast; and Mayagüez and Aguadilla on the west.

The principal ports are San Juan, Ponce, Mayagüez, Aguadilla, Arroyo, and Naguabo, in all of which there is sufficient water for vessels of considerable draught. The entrance to the port of San Juan is narrow, and caution is required, especially as the shoal-buoys are not always to be depended upon; but the harbour is spacious and affords sufficient anchoring room for vessels of large size. The ports on the north coast are subject to heavy ground seas, and when northers set in during the months of November, December, January, and February, vessels loading or discharging on that coast are frequently exposed to detention and danger.

* No incluye tablas. Para más detalles, remítase al documento original.

The port of Arecibo, in fact, is particularly dangerous during the winter months, and steamers do not make it a regular port of call. The harbour of San Juan on the north, and Guánica and Jobos, on the south coast, are however considered safe at all seasons.

The following observations will serve to give a general idea of the relative importance of the most important out-ports.

1. Ponce, situated on the south coast, nearly opposite to the capital. This port is much frequented by shipping, as it is the principal port for import and export on the southern coast. Ponce embraces an extensive sugar district in which there are 28 plantations with steam machinery, and 13 with mills worked by oxen. Agricultural wealth is estimated at 615,110 dol.; town property at 128,640 dol.; cattle at 35,545 dol.; and commerce and industry at 4,000,000 dol. This district contains 37,545 inhabitants.

2. Mayagüez, on the west coast, is also a rich sugar and coffee district. It contains 21 sugar plantations, 12 with machinery, and 19 coffee estates. The agricultural wealth is estimated at 281,305 dol.; house property at 113,437 dol.; and trade and industry at 400,000 dol. Population 26,446.

3. Aguadilla is likewise a sugar and coffee district, and one of the plantations contains a central sugar factory. Exports of coffee from the mountainous districts in the neighbourhood are made from this port. It is, like Ponce and Mayagüez, a port of call for steamers.

4. Arecibo is a rich sugar district. The agricultural wealth is valued at 386,178 dol.; town property at 33,821 dol.; and cattle at 14,608 dol. There are 15 sugar plantations, 13 of which have steam machinery, six coffee estates, and eight tobacco plantations. Vessels are frequently sent on from San Juan (weather permitting) to complete their cargoes at this port.

5. and 6. Naguabo and Fajardo, on the east coast, are also ports from which large shipments of sugar are made; 6,000 or 7,000 head of cattle are likewise shipped from these ports annually for the British and French West Indian Islands and Cuba.

7. Vieques is a free port. The agricultural wealth of this small island is estimated at 73,887 dol., and cattle 27, 740 dol., population 4,874, chiefly foreign negro and coloured labourers.

Lighthouses -There is one lighthouse of the third order on the Morro Castle, at the entrance of San Juan harbour, which may be seen at a distance of 18 miles, and one in course of construction on San Juan Point, which is also intended to be seen at 18 miles distance.

The following lighthouses are proposed to be erected, viz.:

One on the island of Culebra of the fourth order, to be seen at a distance of 12 miles.

One on Peña Borinquen of the same class.

One on Caja de Muerto of the third order, to be seen at 18 miles distance.

One on Mala-Pascua of the fourth order.

One on Isla Mona of the second order, to be seen at a distance of 22 miles.

[...]

Agriculture

Sugar Cultivation -There are at present 385 estates and plantations of all kinds in Porto Rico. The majority of the large sugar plantations use mills worked by steam machinery, which for the most part is of British manufacture. A few mills are worked by waterpower, and on the small properties mills worked by oxen are still in use. There are at this date five establishments having in operation improved plant and apparatus for the manufacture of sugar. One of these works is on a large scale, well-mounted and complete in every respect; it is equal to the working-up of 30 tons of sugar per day. This establishment and three other similar ones on a somewhat smaller scale are furnished with French machinery; on the other estate American machinery is used.

In the central factory first mentioned, a system of railway is employed for the conveyance of the canes to the works and for the carriage of the sugar to the port, which is giving

very satisfactory results in regard to the reduction of the cost of labour. In this and another establishment the triple-effect machinery is used, and a superior kind of sugar is produced, which is sold for home consumption at three times the price of ordinary sugar. The molasses are also worked up into sugar. These central factories are yet in their infancy in the island, and upon their success or failure will probably depend the fate of sugar cultivation in Porto Rico. The majority of the planters complain that at present prices sugar is grown and manufactured without any profit, and even at a loss. In a very few instances is it admitted that there is any profit, and these admissions are of course made by planters whose estates are unencumbered. That any business, especially agriculture, can pay when money is borrowed at 12 or 18 per cent per annum may well be doubted.

I have obtained from a gentleman, thoroughly and practically acquainted with sugar growing, the following valuable data on this subject, which I believe to be quite trustworthy.

As the bases of this calculation an estate is taken which in normal times and under ordinary circumstances produces on an average 500 hogsheads or 6,000 quintals of sugar, and 200 hogsheads or 22,000 gallons of molasses, which are estimated to be worth the following prices, viz.: Sugar, good refining, $3\frac{5}{8}$ dol. per quintal; molasses, 12 c. per gallon.

PORTO RICO

Gross Production

	<u>Dollars</u>
500 hogsheads, equal to 6,000 quintals, of sugar, at $3\frac{1}{2}$ dol.	21,750
200 hogsheads, equal to 22,000 gallons, of molasses, at 12c.	2,640
	<u>24,390</u>

Expenses

	<u>Dollars</u>
Cost of cultivation, as explained in Table A	8,500
Cost of manufacture, as explained in Table B	2,430
General expenses, as explained in Table C	14,370
	<u>25,300</u>
Deficit	910

In this account nothing is charged as commission for the sale of produce, nor for insurance; nor is anything charged for extraordinary expenses, overflow of the rivers, storms, earthquakes, fire, &c., and nothing for the maintenance of the owner of the plantation.

If from the above amount given as total expenses (25,300 dol.) the value of molasses sold be deducted, viz.: 2,640 dol., there remains as the cost of the production of 6,000 quintals of sugar, 22,600 dol., which makes the cost of the sugar 3,766 dol. per quintal, or 45 dol. 19 c. per hogshead; so that, at the price of 3 dol. per quintal, there is an apparent loss of 9 dol. 19 c. per hogshead, which certainly affords a very unsatisfactory prospect for the planter. It can

hardly be supposed in fact, that sugar making can be continued in this island upon former principles. On the other hand, I am informed that while common muscovado sugars are thus produced at a loss by the ordinary methods of manufacture, crystallized centrifugal sugars are made at the central factory above referred to at a total cost, delivered in the market, of 8 s. per cwt., thus affording a large balance of profit.

For the establishment of central factories, however, capital or credit is required, neither of which at the present moment Porto Rico enjoys to a very large extent.

In my own opinion, sugar cultivation in this island will continue to decline, and that its place will be taken, wherever practicable, by tobacco, the cultivation of which is steadily increasing, and which, at the price of today, is very remunerative. That there is room, however, for improvement in the manufacture of even the ordinary kinds of sugar may be readily believed; and in confirmation of this opinion I may quote the following passage from a letter lately written by a gentleman in Porto Rico well entitled to express an opinion on the subject:

"No one but an intelligent practical sugar-planter," he says, "can conceive, can believe at all possible, the enormous waste, the frightful loss, in producing cane sugar. The plant itself is almost in its wild state, for little or nothing has been done towards improving its natural conditions-in augmenting the saccharine richness of its juice, &c. Attention seems scarcely to have been at all bestowed upon this most important part of the subject. In the manufacture of sugar the incredible waste is beyond all precedent and beyond all parallel in any other kind of business-where the open pans are still used and muscovadoes are produced-when a tenth part of the shipped value of the produce which it has cost so much time, trouble, and expense to obtain is pumped overboard into the sea! The process is opposed to the most elemental principles of science, to the plainest deduction of common sense; and it is, to use the words of Mr. Fryer, 'not only costly, but as bad as it ever entered the heart of man to conceive. But, even under other circumstances, it is safe to calculate that little more than one-third of the sugar is obtained from the cane which it is quite possible to extract from it'".

I have dwelt at some length on this branch of the agriculture of Porto Rico, as it is one in which our own colonies are deeply interested.

Sugar-cane Disease - Sugar-cane disease, about which I sent home full particulars last year, does not appear to be on the increase, though it still exists in the infected district. Thus far the Spanish Government would seem to have done nothing in regard to carrying out the suggestions of the Commission, whose report was published in June, 1878. Dr. Grivot Grand-Court, an English gentleman from Mauritius, lately settled in Porto Rico, has, however, with indomitable energy and at great private expense, introduced new varieties of seed cane from all parts of the world, which have been planted at Mayagüez with most satisfactory results. It appears thus to be an established fact that the remedy for the sugar-cane disease consists in the introduction of new seed combined with an improved state of cultivation.

The gentleman above mentioned was a member of the Commission on Sugar-cane Disease, and he is a skillful and enterprising planter. He remarked to me on one occasion that he derived pleasure from watching the growth of his canes; "I can see them grow in this fertile country", he said.

Coffee Cultivation - To my mind, however, there is no branch of agriculture more interesting than that of coffee cultivation, which has the great advantage that it is carried on in the higher and more healthy districts, and amidst picturesque scenery; but one can hardly imagine the care and attention that is bestowed upon coffee before it arrives to the consumer.

From the time that the young plant springs up of its own accord from the fallen berry under the parent tree, until it ceases to bear fruit some 40 or 50 years afterwards, it is an object of the planters' solicitude and attention. When the seed-plants are transplanted into new ground it is under plantains and larger trees of quick growth, which have been prepared ready to afford the necessary shade. As the young plant grows the shade is modified or de-

creased to suit its strength. The first crop is borne three or four years afterwards, and is gathered in three successive months, each berry being picked by hand one by one. After the outer husk is removed in a mill, the inner berry, which is divided in two halves — except in the rare case of “caracoles” or shells, where only one berry is found— is laid out on the drying ground from sunrise to sunset. The berries are then put in a mill, which removes the inner husk. Then they are picked and re-picked until they get into the exporter’s hands, when they are all picked over one by one again, to suit his market. Those intended for the Mediterranean are put into a mill and polished, a little colouring-matter being added when necessary. This picking is all done by women in the merchant’s store; a given quantity being weighed out to each picker.

Tobacco - It will be seen by reference to the return of exports (Table No. XI) that there is a considerable quantity of tobacco exported, in addition to the large quantity consumed in the island. I have mentioned, when speaking of sugar, that there is a probability of tobacco forming a more important produce of this island. The plant thrives well here, and the quality, especially in the Rio de la Plata district, is very good; but it would appear that as yet the preparation of tobacco, after the harvest, and the manufacture of cigars is not sufficiently advanced for it to enter into direct competition with Cuban tobacco, though a great deal of the tobacco grown for export is shipped to Cuba, to be there made into “Havana” cigars. Tobacco requires great care and attention in its cultivation and in the cure of the leaves.

Labour - It is estimated that 60,00 persons are employed as agricultural labourers in the island. Table A shows the rate of wages paid on a sugar plantation. In the coffee districts the earnings are somewhat lower. The meal, when furnished by the planter, consists of 8 onz. of dried or fresh beef, or salt or fresh fish, with about 8 lbs. of vegetables; but when the labourers supply themselves they are contented with much less food; a little codfish with a plantain or a yam forms their meal, and they are often satisfied if they get a dram of spirits and a piece of tobacco to chew in the place of it. It is a question, however, whether it does not better pay the planter to see that his people are properly fed.

Since the emancipation of the slaves there has existed no law in Porto Rico which obliges a labourer to work for one hour longer than he chooses, or to comply with any contract that he may make with his employer. He may be engaged upon the understanding that he will work during the time necessary to get in the crop; but the law enables him to leave at a moment’s notice, and he can claim his wages for the period for which he may have worked. This is a matter of which the planters loudly complain, and it is said to be under the consideration of the Government, with a view of establishing a fixed period for labour contracts. Upon the whole, however, it may be said that there is no want of labour in the island.

My predecessor, in his report on the agricultural classes in 1870, aptly described their mode of life in which nothing has changed, “they enjoy nothing that we should consider comforts, and are deprived of much that we should regard as necessary; they work less than our people, but they earn less; they live in filthy boxes without ventilation, or dirty cages exposed to the inclemency of the weather; they are badly clothed, and utterly devoid of education or religious instruction; but, nevertheless, they appear contented with their filth, ignorance, and idleness”.

To all general rules there are exceptions; the Porto Rico labourers, when pushed, can do a fair day’s work — a good day’s work when the climate is taken into consideration: but there is an Indian proverb, which many of them have not forgotten, “Why stand when you can sit down, and why sit down when you can lie down? for the day is made for rest, and the night for sleep”.

Since the abolition of slavery, women are not greatly employed in agricultural labour; but it cannot be said that they are detained at home by household cares, for household cares must be few indeed in a hut devoid of furniture, where cooking is reduced to a minimum, and children are allowed to run about naked.

There are a considerable number of negroes in Porto Rico from the British West India Islands; but they are not understood, and they frequently get into trouble with their employ-

ers and the local authorities; and, as they are really not required, they would do well to remain at home. Too wide a circulation, in fact, cannot be given to the following notices on the subject lately issued by the Government of Antigua:

“Colonial Secretary’s Office, Antigua,
“14th January, 1879.

“In consequence of the difficulties which are constantly arising from the emigration of British subjects to the West Indian dependencies of foreign countries, His Excellency the Governor, in pursuance of instructions from Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for the Colonies, hereby warns the inhabitants of this colony that Her Majesty’s Government cannot undertake to be responsible for their protection after they have entered the possessions of a foreign Power.”

Animals used in Agriculture - Oxen are almost exclusively used in agriculture labour on the sugar plantations, and in conveying produce to the port. A yoke of oxen carries two hogsheads of sugar weighing something over a ton. Oxen are also employed in conveying provisions from the ports to the interior. These animals generally work without food or even water being supplied to them during the day. Horses and mules are used to bring down the coffee from the mountainous districts, and for travelling generally. The horses are only fed upon grass, and their power of endurance is quite wonderful. They are generally driven as fast as they can go; and up and down hill at full gallop. They are small and thin, and one would think it impossible, before starting, that they could perform the journeys they do. The cruelty of the drivers of horses and cattle in Porto Rico is, I should think, unsurpassed anywhere. Armed with a pole, to which a long point of sharp steel is fixed, the oxen driver goads his poor beasts unmercifully, and varies the operation by striking the animals on the face with the butt end of it; while the carriage driver’s whip is never at rest. I am glad to be able to state that an able and strong protest against this cruelty to animals was recently published in “La Prensa”, of Mayagüez,* in which the following comments were made, after describing graphically the cruelties practiced:

“That they should take place in lonely country roads, where there are no witnesses, is perhaps not to be wondered at; but what causes astonishment is that they occur in the middle of the street in the center of the town, in the presence of the police, and that everybody passes by with indifference, without there being a law or an order or even a compassionate voice raised in defense of the unfortunate animal”.

Public Works

Gas - The capital, Ponce, and Mayagüez are lighted by gas.

Water - Ponce and Mayagüez are supplied with water by means of aqueducts.

Tramways - A tramway is in operation at Mayagüez. One is in course of construction at the capital, and one is about to be constructed at Ponce.

Railways and Canals - There are neither railways nor canals in the island, and very few bridges. The rivers are for the most part passed by fording them, when not too deep. The deeper ones are passed by means of punts, in which horses, carriages, and passengers are hauled across by appliances of rope attached to either bank.

Roads - Roads are divided into three classes: (1) royal roads, which are supposed to be made by the Government; (2) local roads, which the municipalities are supposed to keep in order; and (3) private roads, which the public use, and which landowners are expected to keep in repair. The roads which have been made by the Government are well made, but their

* March, 1879.

extent is comparatively small. The municipal roads are for the most part indescribably bad, and at some seasons quite impassable. Holes, called "baches" form in the center during the rainy weather, which become filled with water, and which are repeated at a distance of a few feet. On these occasions travelling in a carriage is almost an impossibility: and the rider is lucky whose horse does not lose his footing and come down in one of these holes.

The so-called road is merely soft clay, worked up with the water by the heavy traffic of the oxen carts laden with sugar hogsheads. The side ditches, if they exist at all, soon become filled up, when drainage ceases altogether, except into the "baches". Sometimes one's carriage sticks in the clay, when it becomes necessary to procure, from the nearest plantation, yokes of oxen to extricate it, as the horses are powerless to do so. The inhabitants bear all this patiently from long habit. They say that there is no engineer like the sun, and in this they are right, for the tropical sun does, at all events, dry up the roads when the rains cease.

On one occasion an acquaintance of mine was crossing the river which separates the town of Ponce from the neighboring country and plantations, when both carriage and horses were carried away by the current to the sea; the two gentlemen in the carriage saved their lives by jumping out and swimming to the bank of the river.

When the Governor-General makes his periodical tour in the island a *Te Deum* is sung on His Excellency's arrival at each town or village. If this act of devotion were not otherwise explainable, it might readily be ascribed, in some instances, to gratitude to Providence for a safe passage over some of the roads which man has made for his fellow creatures to travel over, and which are the cause of more cruelty and torture being inflicted upon horses and oxen than can be imagined or described, in the driver's passionate efforts to proceed on his journey, which are, however, seldom of any avail. Even in crop time it is not an uncommon thing for the planters to be obliged to suspend their operations on account of the state of the roads, which the sacrifice of oxen in the conveyance of produce to the market forms an important item in the planter's expenses.

A section of the road which is in course of construction from Ponce to the capital was opened lately as far as Aibonito; but at present it is impossible to drive across the island. This work is, however, still being carried on by means of convict labour. Last year (1878) the Spanish Government invited tenders for the building of a railway round the island, or for sections of it, but thus far no one seems to have come forward to carry out this undertaking.

Bridges - On the road in course of construction from the capital to Ponce there are nine bridges made, and six or eight to be built: of those constructed six are of masonry, one of iron, and two of wood; the remainder are to be of iron.

From Cataño to Mayagüez 10 are made, viz.: four of masonry, three of iron, and three of wood; and three or four are yet to be made.

From Mayagüez to Ponce there are three wooden bridges.

Telegraphs - Telegraphic communication exists with Europe, America, and the West Indies, and between all the ports and principal places in the island.

Hospitals and Baths - There are hospitals at the capital, Ponce, Mayagüez, and other places, and a new one is being built at Cangrejos, near the city. Warm sulfur springs exist at Coamo and Ponce, where there are bathing establishments.

College - A college is also being built in the neighbourhood.

Theatres - There are theatres at the capital, Ponce, and Arecibo, and temporary ones in other places.

Banks

There are no banks in the island. The question of their establishment is under the consideration of the Spanish Government. There is a mercantile credit association on a small scale recently established in the city; and there are savings' banks in the capital and at Ponce. Exchange varies according to the supply of produce and demand for remittances. Bills on England, 5 dol. 30 c. per £.

Rate of Discount - Good bills, with two signatures, are discounted at 12 per cent per annum. Bills with doubtful signature at any price the usurers can exact.

Literature

Sixteen newspapers are published in the island: six in the capital, three at Ponce, three at Mayagüez, two at San Germán, one at Humacao, and one at Cabo Rojo; but here literature may be said to end.

One of these newspapers lately called attention to the significant fact that the value, according to the custom-house returns, of printed books of all kinds received in one year (1877) amounted to only 14,159 dol., or 2,831£. 16 s., whilst the value of playing cards introduced in the same period amounted to 44,292 dol., or 8,858£. 8 s.; yet gambling is prohibited by law.

Library and Clubs

There is one subscription library in the capital, and "casinos" or clubs, more or less political, in all the towns in the island.

Schools

The following particulars are illustrative of the state of elementary instruction. There are 363 schools, at which 12,144 pupils of both sexes attend, out of a population of 730,000. The ages of the pupils are as follow: 1,434 of six years, 1,497 of seven years, 2,362 of 11 years, 1,248 of 12 years 670 of 13 years, and 686 of 14 years.*

Of the above number of schools, 256 are boy's schools, free to those who cannot pay, and 18 are private schools, at which the following number of pupils attend:

	<u>Number</u>
Poor boys at public schools	5,376
private "	82
Boys paid for at public schools	2,147
private "	638
Total	<u>8,243</u>

There are 107 girl's schools, attended as follows (91 public, and 16 private):

	<u>Number</u>
Poor girls at public schools	2,672
private "	49
Girls paid for at public schools	809
private "	378
Total	<u>3,908</u>

It would thus appear that only 47 girls to 100 boys receive instruction.

The total sum paid by the municipalities for education is 129,457 dol. 30 c. viz.: salaries 103,078 dol. 74c., materials 26,378 dol. 56 c.; which is about one half the amount paid for police in the island, not including the Civil Guard.

* Statistics, November, 1878. (Balanza).

Law and Criminal Statistics

From the statistics of crime for the year 1877 it would appear that 3,997 cases were disposed of in the superior courts and courts of justice in the year 1878. The records of crime show that 1,610 persons were convicted, of whom 1,537 were males, and 73 females; 352 could read and write, 462 could only read, and 516 could neither read or write.

The offences committed were as follows:

	<u>Number</u>
Against religion	2
" public order	48
Forgery	16
Breach of trust by State employees in the exercise of functions	31
Against persons	231
" chastity	80
" honor	19
" safety and liberty	31
" property	798
Carelessness	4

Amongst the criminals there were 13 professors, 46 traders, 4 soldiers, 52 public employees, 26 clerks, 31 mechanics, 15 proprietors, 436 workmen, 461 labourers, 117 servants, and 836 of no stated calling; 232 were from the Peninsula, 1,146 were natives of the island, and 232 foreigners; 451 were whites, 652 coloured, and 417 blacks.

Industries

Local industries are limited to the manufacture of chocolate, pastes (such as vermicelli), soap, and matches, and these are all on a small scale. Almost everything, even furniture, is imported from abroad.

Fluctuation of Wealth

Porto Rico affords a remarkable illustration of the fluctuations of wealth. With rare exceptions, the large fortunes in the island have been made by persons who began life without money, and who have attained their present position by industry, energy, and providence. The owner of one of the largest properties, in whose carriage I was seated, pointed out to me with satisfaction a little shop on the road-side, where you could buy a pound of salt fish or a yard of calico, and said "That is where my father made his first dollar". On another occasion, as I was riding in a mountain pass, an old half-witted beggar came out of a hut to ask for alms; my friend, who gave him a few small coins and a bundle of cigarettes, said to me, as we rode on. "That old beggar's father left his sons 60,000 dol. (12,000£) a year". The first example I have quoted could be many times repeated, and with regard to the other, it may safely be said that very few persons who have brought capital to Porto Rico have done well with it. It would seem that to make a fortune here one must first learn the value of money — I had almost said the

want of it; but probably there are few places in the world where, with the qualities I have mentioned, fortunes have been more readily made than in this island.

Porto Rico, April, 1879.

[63] Reference to Previous Report, Commercial No. 4, 1884 (Trade Reports), Consul Hertslet to the Marquis of Salisbury, Porto Rico, October 19, 1887⁸⁰

My Lord,

I have the honour to enclose herewith my Report on the Trade and Commerce of the Island of Porto Rico for the year 1886, and I have, at the same time, to express my regret that the transmission of the same has been unavoidably delayed.

I have, &c.

(signed)Reginald H. Hertslet

Report of the Trade and Commerce of the Island of Porto Rico for the Year 1886.

Exports

The export trade of Porto Rico for the present year is in very unsatisfactory condition when compared with 1885, there being a falling off of no less than 750,000*l.*, or more than 25 per cent. This decline is observable in all the more important industries, and is to be largely attributed to the effects of a very bad season.

There are other reasons of an important character which have helped to bring about the present serious depression, and these I intend to refer to later on in my observations under the head of agriculture, contenting myself at this stage of my report with an analysis of the figures given in Table A.

In the first place, I would observe that the quantity of the sugar export is 25, 182 tons, or more than 25 per cent less than in 1885. During the last-named year, 63,489 tons were exported to the United States, and 17,379 tons to Great Britain and the British Possessions, all other countries importing 8,091 tons; whilst in the year under review, the exportation to the United States has fallen to 44,167 tons, and to Great Britain and the British Possessions to 13,145 tons; other countries also importing less in like proportion.

The coffee export has also declined to the extent of nearly 5,000 tons. Fifty per cent of this product found its way last year into ports of Spain and the Spanish Possessions, and more than the half of the export for 1886 has gone in the same direction. In 1885, France imported 3,759 tons, and in the present year 5,151 tons.

The volume of the molasses trade has declined 33 per cent. The United States have the monopoly, having imported last year no less than 28,007 tons out of a total of 30, 646 tons, and 17,543 tons out of a total of 20,238 tons in the present year. It is to be observed, however, that the United States importation in 1886 is a falling-off of more than 10,000 tons.

5,226 head of cattle, of an estimated value of 31,356*l.*, have been shipped during the year under review to the West Indian Possessions of France, Great Britain, and Denmark; the first-named importing 2,811 head, and the British and Danish Possessions together 2,415, in nearly equal proportions. The animals exported were of average quality, and intended for consumption. In 1885, 1,709 head of cattle were shipped to the French Possessions in the West Indies, all other colonies importing 2,802, the value of 27,000*l.*

Various other articles of export, classed under the head of "Other Articles," are oranges, cocoa-nuts, corn, saltpetre, horses, lumber, hides, and alcohol distilled from the sugar-cane; all of which are of minor importance, when taken separately, and as such do not call for special remark.

⁸⁰ PP 1888 [c.5252] CII.1 No. 238

Imports

The import trade of this island for the present year, as compared with 1885, shows a falling-off of over 125,000*l.* From an examination of the figures contained in Table B, we find, however, that British importations have increased during the period above-named by 16 per cent; the total value being estimated at nearly 750,000*l.* sterling, or about one-third of the entire import from all countries. This is an improvement of 6 per cent upon the position held by British goods in the year 1885, and gives them first rank.

I now propose to analyse the figures given in Table C, with respect to the quantity and value of the principal articles imported into this island in the present year, and in 1885. We will commence with cotton, raw and manufactured. These importations show a large increase upon last year's total. British goods take first place with 217,000*l.*, an advance of 91,000*l.* over 1885. The primary cause of the general increase is the lowering of the rate of duty in 1883, with a consequent heavy importation in 1884, a proportionately light one in 1885; to counterbalance which, large orders were sent in the year under review. A corresponding fall next year may be expected.

In woollen goods, the total import this year is 97 tons, as against 45 tons in 1885. The reasons for this increase are similar to those given for the large advance in cotton importations. Great Britain comes first with 43 tons, of an estimated value of 17,000*l.*, which compares well with last year's total of 31 tons. Spain ranks next with 41 tons, or three times the amount of her importations in 1885.

The volume of the jute, hemp, and flax trade has increased from 928 tons in 1885, to 1,285 tons in the present year, which is to be to contain sugar and coffee from next year's crops, which are expected to be unusually heavy. In 1885, two-thirds of this import was in British hands, but the present year the supply from Great Britain scarcely exceeds 50 per cent of the total amount brought into the country.

Great Britain has virtually the monopoly of the trade in metals, her imports this year reaching the high figure of 2,304 tons, out of a total of 2,871 tons, which is an excess of 40 tons over the entire importations of this class of articles in 1885. The value of the British import last year is estimated at 32,000*l.*; this year it is 65,000*l.*

There has been a decided fall in the rice importations, the figures for 1885 being 20 per cent higher than those for the present year. The bulk of the supply comes from Great Britain, which takes the lead with 9,189 tons, of an estimated value of 165,000*l.*; last year the British import amounted to 11,722 tons of the value of 211,000*l.*

The British colonies supply nearly the whole of the codfish import, the figures this year being 9,458 tons of an estimated value 95,000*l.*, or an increase of some 700 tons over-and-above the total quantity imported in 1885.

Flour comes mainly from the United States and Spain; the former country contributing 8,141 tons this year, and 8,353 tons in 1885, of the estimated value 208,000*l.* and 213,000*l.* respectively; the Spanish importations for the same periods being 3,755 tons and 5,802 tons.

The bulk of the import of other provisions comes from United States and Spain. In 1885, the first-named country supplied 5,426 tons, or 45 per cent of the entire import, Spain following next with 30 per cent, and other countries making up the balance. This year the United States have contributed 38 per cent only, whilst Spanish importations have advanced 7 per cent, other countries maintaining their position of 25 per cent. The British import has fallen from 1,502 tons in 1885 to 644 tons in the present year.

There is a decrease this year of no less than 155,000 gallons in the quantity of beer, wines, and spirits imported into this island. In 1885, Spain contributed 575,000 gallons, Denmark and Danish possessions taking next place with 80,000 gallons, whilst the supply of beer, &c., from Denmark and the Danish colonies has increased by 50 per cent. Other countries make up a total of 140,000 gallons, of which Germany takes the lead with 82,000 gallons, as against an insignificant import last year.

Coal is virtually a British monopoly. This year Great Britain and the British colonies supply 15,908 tons out of the total quantity imported of 17,361 tons. Last year, the British import amounted to 5,519 tons out of the total of 6,411 tons. The large increase is a natural consequence of a reduced supply in 1885.

Shipping

Return D shows the total number of all vessels which have entered and cleared the ports in this island during the present year, and in 1885. The figures in this return are taken from official statistics published by the General Finance and Customs' Department, which does not discriminate between steamers and sailing-vessels. By virtue of a Convention signed between Great Britain and Spain on the 26th of April in the present year, goods coming under British flag from Great Britain or British colonial ports have, since the 15th of October, the date when said Convention came into force in this island, paid reduced duties under the third column of the tariff. From the last-mentioned date, up till the end of 1886, there has been no increase in British shipping, which is scarcely surprising when it is borne in mind that British trade with this island has for so long been seriously hampered by excessive differential duties, and heavy fines for the most trivial inaccuracies or omissions in ships' manifest; but an improvement may be looked-for later on, if the provisions of the new Convention are strictly adhered to. Out of a total of 205 British vessels which entered this year, 71 came in ballast, with the object of taking in cargoes at various ports in the island; the remainder, for the most part, having arrived laden with salt fish and lumber, which articles pay moderate duties. The only steamers included under the head of British shipping are 11 vessels of the Royal Mail Steamship Company for 1885, of a total tonnage of 14,722 tons, and four with a tonnage of 5,727 tons for the present year.

The figures under the head of Spanish shipping include four visits monthly of the mail steamers of the "Compañía Transatlántica," which are advertised to sail from certain Spanish port for the Island of Cuba, via Porto Rico, on the 1st, 10th, 12th, and 22nd of every month. The mail steamers of the "Sobrinos de Herrera" Line, starting from ports in Cuba and Santo Domingo, also call at this island twice monthly; and, in addition, there are two lines of steamers owned by Messrs. Larrinaga and Co., and Messrs. White, Forman, and Co., of Liverpool — each sending one ship a month to Porto Rico, either direct or via ports in Spain. It is mainly by these vessels that this country receives the valuable importations from Great Britain referred to in Return C. American shipping may be said to include the visit of a steamer once a month, belonging to the United States and West India Line; and the figures given under the head of France contain two visits monthly to this island, of mail-steamer of the "Compagnie Général Transatlantique." These last-named vessels leave Marseilles and Hâvre on the 5th and 7th of every month, their routes respectively being (1) Havana via St. Thomas, Porto Rico, and Santo Domingo; and (2), Port-au-Prince, by Spain, the Canary Islands, French West Indies, St. Thomas, and Porto Rico (Ponce and Mayagüez).

Agriculture

The present serious state of the sugar trade of Porto Rico renders it incumbent on me at this stage of my report to give a further and more careful consideration of the position of this industry than was possible under the head of exports.

According to official statistics published by the General Finance Department, the sugar production of this island during the past ten years has exhibited remarkable variations. The highest figures recorded are 98,074 tons for the year 1884, and the lowest 46,260 tons in 1880; and I have already commented in another place on the falling-off of some 25,000 tons in the amount of this year's export as compared with that for 1885.

These differences are noteworthy as they serve to demonstrate the sensibility of the plantations to atmospheric influences, the great difficulties under which the cane is cultivated, and the pecuniary risks run by the planter. Prices at the present time are less than they were 10

years ago, and the sugar of the island is suffering heavily from the unequal competition which it has in Europe with bounty-fed beetroot sugar. Besides these drawbacks, the proprietor has to bear the burden of heavy and vexatious taxation. The rate ostensibly fixed by the Government simply deduct about 35 per cent for expenses of cultivation and take the balance as net value of production, which is manifestly unjust as most estates are being literally worked at a loss.

Municipal taxes vary with the locality. In St. John's, the capital of this island, the rate is supposed to be 50 per cent of the Government taxes, but, as a matter of fact, it is levied at nearly double this figure so as to cover deficiencies in the budget. There is an export duty also of 22c. per 100 kilos. At Ponce — the town next in importance to the capital, the General Government assesses in a sum proportionate to its needs. The municipality also charges a percentage on the estimated profits to meet their local budget. During the present year, the Government rate was 5 per cent and the municipal tax 14 per cent. The proprietor also suffers much from any cause to abandon the cultivation of a certain portion of his estates, the land left uncultivated is taxed to precisely the same extent as that which yields the crop; more than this, he is required to make up for the deficiencies caused by those who are unable to pay, and, accordingly, he not unfrequently finds himself called upon to bear the brunt of the taxes of an entire district. In view of the foregoing facts, it is not surprising that the island of Porto Rico is unable to produce the amount of sugar of which it is capable; and I venture to say that unless drastic measures are forthwith taken, in the form of an extensive reduction of taxation to remedy the difficulties under which cultivators labour, the rain of the sugar-cane may be long be expected.

Public works

The road from St. John's to Ponce, via Caguas and Coamo, referred to in Consul Stevens' report on the trade of this island for 1882, is nearly completed, one kilometer only of its projected length remaining to be constructed. This is the only really good main road in Porto Rico, but four others have been commenced, and plans exist for the making of four more. The want of well-made roads is a serious hindrance to the proper development of the resources of this country, and it is to be hoped in the interests of commerce that sufficient money will speedily be forthcoming, so as to enable the works already entered upon to be satisfactorily terminated.

For many years it has been in contemplation to clean and otherwise improve the port of St. John's, but beyond the collection of money for this purpose, which amounts to some 25,000*l.*, the committee in charge of the works has not so much as commenced active operations; the present time is the reverse of satisfactory, and much inconvenience to shipping will be experienced at a no distant date if the work of dredging is not taken energetically in hand.

NOTE

1,000 Kilogrammes = 1 ton.

1 litre = 0.880 quarts

5 dollars = £ sterling (par rate)

[64] **Reference to Previous Report, Annual Series No. 238, Consul Hertslet to the Marquis of Salisbury, Porto Rico, October 10, 1888**⁸¹

My Lord,

I have the honour to enclose herewith my Report upon the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the year 1887, and, in doing so, it is my duty to explain that the difficulty in procuring the required information, added to the injurious effects of an unusually hot and

⁸¹ PP 1888 [c.5252] CIII.1 No. 436

unhealthy season, have rendered it impossible for me to accomplish my desire to place the same in your Lordship's hands at an earlier date.

I have, &c.

(signed) Reginald H. Hertsler

Report on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the Year 1887

Exports

The serious depression in the export trade of this island, to which I drew attention in my report for 1886, has been followed by a revival in the present year, an improvement having taken place in every class of exportation, with the exception of coffee. This state of things is due to a good season, and the removal of the export duty on sugar and molasses. Compared, however, with the figures for 1885, the trade shows a falling-off amounting to 600,000*l.*, coffee having declined 500,000*l.* and sugar 100,000*l.*

By a reference to the figures in Table A, it will be seen that the sugar export this year is 17,015 tons in excess of that for 1886. Over 12,500 tons of this increase has to be credited to the United States, whose importation of this product now reaches 56,823 tons; 13,542 tons has been exported to Great Britain and the British colonies, which is a slight increase upon the figures for 1888; whilst all other exportations amount to 10,427 tons, of which Spain and the Spanish possessions have received 9,123 tons.

A falling-off, amounting to over 25 per cent, has to be recorded in the coffee export, but the explanation is to hand. The crop was an exceptionally fine one, and results were looked for which would serve to compensate growers for losses sustained by the bad season of 1886, but owing to unfavourable weather, and the disturbed state of the country at the time of picking, a large portion was either spoiled or left ungathered. Out of 12,551 tons exported, Spain and the Spanish possessions have received 7,864 tons and France 2,767 tons, all other countries importing 1,920 tons.

The quality of molasses exported this year is 40 per cent, in excess of the total for 1886. The whole of the export of 29,112 tons has found its way into United States' ports, with the exception of 1,984 tons, of which 1,843 tons have been imported into Great Britain and the British possessions.

Tobacco has this year been exported to the amount of 3,462 tons, an increase of 1,409 tons over the figures for 1886. The largest shipments have been those made by Spain and the Spanish possessions, Germany, and the United States, in the order named; the Spanish importations coming up to 2,301 tons, or above 66 per cent of the entire export, of which Cuba received 843 tons.

The number of cattle exported this year to the French, British, and Danish West Indian possessions, respectively, has been 3,284, 1,573, and 939 head. The French and British importations are a decided improvement upon last year's figures, but there is a falling-off in the case of the Danish possessions.

The exports included under the heading "Other Articles" are similar in character to those enumerated in my report for 1886. None merit individual attention, with the exception of hides, of which 355 tons, valued at 18,000*l.*, were shipped during the present year to various parts of the world, Spain and the Spanish possessions importing 245 tons, the United States 81 tons, and all other countries 29 tons.

Imports

The falling-off in imports, to which I drew attention in my report for 1886, has been further augmented by the decrease of 21,000*l.* during the present year, and, when compared with 1885, the trade is found to have declined to the extent of 146,000*l.* By a reference to Table B, it will be seen that the largest importations are those of Great Britain, Spain, and the United States, the total value in each case being almost identical, American goods taking first place

with 591,309*l.* The British import this year is 146,000*l.* below that for 1886, which is no doubt due, in some degree at least, to over importation in the year last named, but the main reason for the decrease would seem to lie in the fact that Great Britain has lost ground in every important branch of trade, woollens excepted, where her goods have hitherto held the advantage. The United States, on the other hand, has more than held its own, having improved its position by 110,000*l.* As compared with 1886 the value of the Spanish importations has declined 100,000*l.*, whilst it is noteworthy that Germany, whose average annual imports is less than that of Spain by 500,000*l.*, has increased her total by a like amount. The import from the Danish West Indian possessions is 11,000*l.* under the figures for last year, and nearly 30,000*l.* less than 1885. French goods, however, are advancing in favour, the import value for this year being three times that of 1885. The Italian importation has practically ceased, the total value for the present year being 910*l.* only.

A decline of 77,000*l.* has to be recorded in the cotton trade, which is attributable to over importation in 1886. Spain takes the lead in the reduced supply, with an estimated value of 137,000*l.*, 9,000*l.* in advance of Great Britain. This is an important change in the relative positions of the British and Spanish imports as compared with last year, former were valued at 217,000*l.* and the latter at 125,000*l.*, and it is due to the increased attention which has been given to Spanish calico and white dress material, prints, and shirtings, which can be imported duty free, whereas British goods of like class are heavily taxed. The last-named manufactures are still superior to Spanish in quality, and, as a whole, cheaper: were it not for these considerations they would not have held their own as long as they have done, with so much success, in competition with the highly-protected manufactures from the Peninsula. No less than 28,000*l.* has been levied this year by the customhouse upon the British import of merely nominal goods to the value of 106,000*l.* having been admitted free of duty, whilst the remainder have paid 1,250*l.* only.

In a reduced supply of woollen goods, Great Britain holds by far the larger share, the value of her importation being estimated at 33,000*l.*, 16,000*l.* in advance of 1886. The manufactures which have received most attention are merinos, damasks, alpacas, serges, fine cloth, and cashmeres. The other countries participating in this trade are France, Belgium, the United States, the Danish possessions, Spain, and Germany, but the combined value of these importations does not exceed 11,000*l.*, France taking the lead with 6,000*l.*

There has been a fall of 50 per cent in the jute, hemp, and flax trade, the total supply being 1,091 tons, of an estimated value of 74,000*l.* The largest importations are those from Great Britain, Spain, the United States, Germany, and the Danish Possessions, in the order named, the British amounting to 561 tons, of a value of 43,000*l.*, and the four remaining countries contributing 11,000*l.*, 9,000*l.*, 6,000*l.*, and 3,000*l.* respectively.

The rice importations this year amounts to 20,391 tons, of an estimated value of 367,000*l.* This is the largest for the last three years, and is an excess of 4,070 tons, or 73,000*l.*, over the total quantity brought into the country in 1886. Germany has the largest share in the trade, having imported 8,276 tons; the British import amounts to 7,851 tons, 3,523 tons come from the Danish possessions, and 741 tons have been furnished by Spain, Belgium, Italy, and France. Great Britain is losing ground, her supply this year being a falling-off of 18 per cent as compared with 1886, and 20 per cent less than 1885. Germany and the Danish possessions, on the other hand, are coming to the front, the large increase in orders for rice from the former country being due to the cheapness of the article as compared with British rice, the low freights charged by German steamship companies, and the long credit system.

The following figures show the relative value of rice importations from Great Britain, Germany, and the Danish possessions during the years 1885, 1886, and 1887:

	1885	1886	1887
	£	£	£
Great Britain	211,000	165,000	141,000
Germany	114,000	63,000	149,000
Danish Possessions	24,000	41,000	63,000

The import of flour this year has been unusually heavy, the total supply amounting to 12,625 tons. No less than 11,000 tons of an estimated value of 273,000*l.* have been brought from the United States, 1,600 tons only coming from Spain as against 3,755 tons in 1886, and 5,802 tons in 1885.

There is a falling-off of 2,470 tons in the codfish trade. In the reduced importation the British colonies have furnished 7,320 tons, of an estimated value of 73,000*l.*, a decline of nearly 25,000*l.* as compared with last year.

A large variety of articles are included under the head "Other Provisions," the more important being lard, cheese, jerked and salted beef, and butter. Lard comes from the United States and Spain, the export from the former country to the island during the year under review amounting to 1,377 tons, of the estimated value of 60,000*l.*, Spain contributing 5 tons only. Cheese is mainly supplied by the United States and Great Britain, which countries have furnished in the present year 134 tons and 131 tons, valued at 11,000*l.* and 10,000*l.* respectively; small consignments are also brought from Germany, the Danish West India possessions, France, and Holland. The Argentine Republic has virtually the monopoly of the trade in jerked and salted beef, having this year contributed 170 tons, valued at 24,000*l.* out of a total import of 34,000*l.* Butter comes principally from the United States, whose supply for the last 12 months has amounted to 99 tons, of an estimated value of 8,000*l.*, all other countries furnishing 43 tons during the same period. The provisions of minor importance not referred to in the foregoing consist of biscuits, preserved meats, fish, sweets, fruits and vegetables, olive oil, groceries of all sorts, and numberless miscellaneous articles which, when taken separately, are of insignificant value, but in the aggregate form an important item in the list of importations.

The quantity of beer, wine, and spirits imported during the present year has reached the high figure of 930,000 gallons. This includes a supply of wine amounting to 575,000 gallons, of which 530,000 gallons come from Spain; 200,000 of beer, of which Germany contributes 91,000 gallons, Great Britain 44,000 gallons, and the United States and Danish possessions 75,000 gallons in equal proportions; and 50,000 gallons of brandy, half of which is furnished by Great Britain, and the remainder by France and the Danish possessions. The entire import is over 300,000 gallons in excess of 1886.

The estimated value of raw and manufactured metals is 74,000*l.*, of which Great Britain contributes 48,000*l.* and the United States 13,000*l.* The principal articles of British import are forged iron plates, axles, tires, hoops, carriage springs, steel in bars, wire, nails, screws, tubes and hardware. Goods in the form of rails and machinery are referred to under the heading "Other Articles".

The quantity of coal imported this year is 9,400 tons, some 6,000 tons less than in 1886. During the year last named the British colonies furnished coal to the amount of 750 tons and Great Britain 16,000 tons, but the former importation has entirely ceased, while the latter has fallen to 6,200 tons. On the other hand, the United States has increased its supply of this article from 1,400 tons to 2,800 tons.

In addition to the foregoing, there is a large variety of other articles altogether too numerous to refer to in detail; of these, the more important are machinery, petroleum, paraffine and stearine, soap, and tobacco. The first named includes 420 tons of rails and agricultural machinery from Great Britain, of which 220 tons entered free of duty, and without any value being assigned; small supplies of similar character have also been procured from Germany and the United States to the amount of 1,580 tons. Great Britain, Spain, Germany, the Danish possessions, and Belgium, in the order named, have supplied 430 tons of paraffine and stearine; 1,500 tons of soap have been imported from Spain, and Cuba has furnished cigars and cigarettes to the amount of 135 tons.

From an examination of the returns issued by the General Finance and Customs Department, it would appear that the total number of vessels which arrived at this island during the present year is 1,340, with a tonnage of 1,023,686 tons, which, compared with 1886, is a decrease of 30 vessels and 15,000 tons. British shipping has, however, considerably improved, the number of vessels being 40 in excess of last year, and the tonnage having increased to the extent of 59,858 tons. This is largely due to the agreement between the United States and Spain of October, 1886, extended to British shipping in accordance with the most-favoured-nation treatment clause of the Anglo-Spanish Convention of April in the same year, which, from the advantageous provisions it contains, has induced the chartering of a line of steamers for the conveyance of general cargoes from New York to this island. These vessels have an average tonnage of 1,300 tons, and run at fortnightly intervals. The Royal Mail Steamship Company have discontinued for several months the bi-monthly service between this island and St. Thomas, and only three of their vessels have called during the year. This causes much inconvenience, since the mails detained, sometimes for weeks, awaiting the arrival of the French mail steamer due on the 27th of every month, or any other opportunity which may present itself.

Spanish shipping consists, as last year, mainly of large tonnage mail steamers, the finest being those of the "Compañía Transatlántica". Two of the last-named sail every month from Spain direct for Porto Rico and Cuba; another leaves Liverpool for Colon once in four weeks, touching at Havre, Vigo, this island and Cuba en route; whilst a fourth is employed exclusively for intercolonial purposes, and makes a trip to Porto Rico once a month. The important firms of Larrinaga and Co., and White, Forman, and Co. (now White, Genn, and Co.), of Liverpool, furnish one steamer each monthly, as in former years. Steamers belonging to the "Sobrinos de Herrera" line call at fortnightly intervals; and, once a month, the island is visited by a vessel of the Catalan Line, whose steamers trade between Barcelona and Havana.

French shipping includes one regular visit monthly of a mail steamer of the "Compagnie Général Transatlantique" Line, instead of two as last year, and the figures under the head of Germany are steamers only.

Public Works

During the year a lighthouse has been erected on the islet of "Caja de Muertos", on the south of the Island of Porto Rico. Its position 17° 51' 30" north latitude, and 60° 19' 15" west longitude. The apparatus is catadroptric, lenticular, of the third order, and the light, which is fixed white, with flashes every three minutes, has a range of 18 miles in the ordinary state of the atmosphere, and at less than four metres above the level of the sea. The elevation of the luminous focus is 90 and 74 hundredths metres above sea level, and 15 and 62 hundredths metres above the ground.

The building is in the shape of a double T, with a tower in the form of a truncated cone situated in the centre of the main portion; both are constructed of ordinary stone and brick, with panels, the latter painted light blue, and all the salient parts white. The doors and windows are likewise painted white. The orientation of the principal façade of the building is 65° north, 15' east.

Some steps have been taken towards carrying out the important work of cleaning the harbour of St. Johns, a contract having been awarded to a French firm for the supply at an early date of all the material necessary for the purpose of dredging. The operations are to be carried on entirely by Spanish officials and workmen.

NOTE

1,000 Kilogrammes = 1 ton.
1 litre = 0.880 quarts
5 dollars = £ sterling (par rate)

[65] Reference to Previous Report, Annual Series No. 1306, Consul Vecqueray to the Earl Kimberly, Porto Rico, April 22, 1895⁸²

My Lord,

I have the honour to enclose a Report on the Trade and Commerce of the Island of Porto Rico during the years 1892, 1893, and 1894, to which will be found annexed Reports by Vice-Consuls Gauslandt, Monefeldt, and Toro, on the Trade of the Ports of Aguadilla, Mayagüez, and Ponce. None of the other four Vice-Consuls within the jurisdiction of this Consulate have sent in any Reports.

No official statistics have yet been published for 1893 and 1894, and those for 1892 have only been obtainable within the last three months.

I have, &c.

[rúbrica] A. H. VECQUERAY

Report on the Trade and Commerce of the Consular District of Porto Rico for the Years 1892, 1893, and 1894.

No official statistics have been yet published for the years 1893 and 1894, so that I can only give those for 1892.

The total value of the exports and imports during the year 1892 was 6,631,584*l.*, which was an increase of 1,281,432*l.* as compared with 1891, and of 365,593*l.* as compared with 1890. The exports to all countries showed an increase, whereas there was a decrease in the imports from Great Britain, Spain, France, and Germany.

Exports

The export trade of Porto Rico during 1892 showed an increase of 1,238,063*l.* over that of the previous year, although there was a decrease in the amount of tobacco, cattle, and hides exported.

The increase in this crop, as compared with that of the year prices ruling, the area under cultivation showed no augmentation.

In 1892 molasses exported amounted to 19,124 tons, or an increase of 6,755 tons over 1891. The United States took the greater part of this crop as in previous years; only 837 tons were exported to Nova Scotia, 548 tons to French possessions, and 428 tons to Germany.

No less than 21,477 tons of coffee were exported during 1892, being an increase of 2,551 tons as compared with the previous year. Cuba was the chief importer, having taken 7,831 tons; Spain took 4,900 tons; France, 2,701 tons; and Germany 2,385 tons. Austria and Italy took respectively 1,478 and 1,470 tons, whilst the remaining 712 tons were distributed between England, the United States, and other countries.

⁸² PP 1895 [c. 7581] C.1 No. 1566

This export shows a falling-off of 493 tons. Spain only took 794 tons, as against 1,432 tons in 1891, whereas Cuba took 1,079 tons, as against 908 tons in the previous year. Germany took 26 tons, the Danish possessions 4 tons, and England 2 tons.

The French possessions imported from this island, during 1892, 2,184 head of cattle, British possessions 600 head, and Danish possessions 385 head. The total exported shows a decrease of 159 head on the previous year.

The export of hides fell from 431 tons in 1891 to 295 tons in 1892. Spain took 212 tons, the United States 73 tons, and Germany 10 tons.

The whole quantity of guano exported from this island in 1892 was sent to England, but it shows a decrease of 1,372 tons on the year before.

The following quantities of different articles were exported from Porto Rico during 1892:

Articles		Quantity	To
Tallow	Tons	124	Spain and Cuba
Corn	"	387	Cuba, 223 tons; Venezuela, 164 tons.
Aguardiente (raw spirits)	Gallons	35,428	Spain, 24,764 gallons; Danish possessions, 6,083 gallons; United States, 2,584 gallons; French possessions, 1,956 gallons; and the remaining 42 gallons to France and England.
Bay rum	"	7,439	United States, 7,184 gallons; Germany, 255 gallons.
Cocoa-nuts	Number	711,054	United States, 560,272; Spain 124,082; French possessions, 24,700; British possessions, 2,000
Cocoa	Tons	14	Spain, 12 tons; Germany, 2 tons.

Imports

The imports into Porto Rico during the year 1892 amounted in value to 3,416,322*l.*, showing an increase of 43,369*l.* as compared with 1891. There was a falling-off in the imports from Great Britain, Spain and Cuba, France and her possessions, Germany, &c., whereas there was a considerable increase in the imports from the United States. This was due to the treaty with Spain, which came into force on July 1, 1892, and which greatly favoured the manufactures of the United States. The imports from Great Britain and America were as follows:

	Value	
	1891	1892
	£	£
Great Britain	913,880	883,828
United States	721,123	1,074,471

The quantity of cotton imported during the year 1892 was 695 tons less than the previous year. 850 tons came from Spain, 834 tons from Great Britain, 57 tons from the United States, and 25 tons from France and Germany.

There was a falling-off in the imports of woollens to the extent of 27 tons. Great Britain sent 32 tons, Spain 13 tons, and Germany, France, the United States and Cuba 14 tons between them.

These goods have also decreased by 385 tons in the quantities imported. Great Britain sent 813 tons, Spain 312 tons, Germany 207 tons, the United States 157 tons, and other countries 11 tons.

The total quantity of rice imported in 1892 was less by 1,718 tons than in 1891, but there was an increase of 859 tons in the quantity imported from Great Britain, which amounted to 13,350 tons. Germany sent 8,558 tons, Spain 3,431 tons, and the Danish possessions, United States, and Italy 393 tons between them.

Imports of flour during 1892 declined 661 tons as compared with the previous year. They amounted to 13,827 tons, of which the United States furnished 11,590 tons, and Spain the remainder.

There was an increase in the quantity of dried codfish imported. In 1892 the imports of this article amounted to 10,008 tons, as against 7,912 tons in 1891. Canada, as usual, was the chief source of supply, having sent 8,428 tons, whereas the United States sent 1,385 tons, and the remaining 195 tons came from Spain, Germany, and England.

There appears to be an annual increase in the quantities of pork and hams which are imported into this island. In 1890 there was imported 2,424 tons; in 1891, 2,918 tons; and in 1892, 3,525 tons. During 1892 the United States sent 3,496 tons, Spain 24 tons, Germany and Cuba, each 2 tons, and Great Britain only 1 ton.

There was a decline of 88 tons in the imports of tinned goods during 1892. Spain sent 265 tons, the United States 93 tons, Great Britain 22 tons, France 16 tons, and Germany and Italy 4 tons.

Just 100 tons less cheese was imported in 1892 than in 1891. Great Britain, which in 1891 had risen from third to second place, rose in 1892 to first place, sending 270 tons. Holland and the United States each sent 103 tons, Germany 85 tons, and France 21 tons.

Other provisions, such as jerked and salted beef, butter, olive oil, vegetables, &c., were imported to the amount of 12,521 tons, of the value of 267,852*l.*

The quantity of butter imported was 147 tons, as against 112 tons the previous year. 56 tons came from Spain, giving her the first place in the list of countries from which this article is imported, whereas she only held fourth place the previous year. The United States sent 53 tons, Italy 14 tons, Great Britain 12 tons, Germany 10 tons, and France 1 ton.

Larger quantities of olive oil are imported every year, and the imports in 1892 amounted to 1,124 tons, as against 1,008 tons in 1891, and 885 tons in 1890. The United States sent 10 tons, but all the rest came in 1892 from Spain, whereas Great Britain did not send any in 1892, as against 88 tons in 1891.

5,919 tons of vegetables were imported in 1892, as compared with 7,633 tons in 1891. Spain was the principal source, sending 3,787 tons, the United States 1,239 tons, the remaining 893 tons came from different countries.

380 tons less were imported in 1892 than in 1891, the total amount having been 1,348 tons, of which 943 tons came from the Argentine Republic, 283 tons from Great Britain, and the remainder from the United States.

The value of preserved fruits, sweetmeats, and biscuits increased from 7,527*l.* in 1891 to 10,293*l.* in 1892. Spain sent 4,592*l.*; Germany, 3,311*l.*; Great Britain, 1,301*l.*; United States, 980*l.*; and France, 206*l.*

931,874 gallons of beer, wine, and spirits, valued at 136,911*l.*, were imported during 1892. Spain furnished 647,301 gallons; Italy, 15,545 gallons; France, 12,715 gallons; the United States, 4,547 gallons; Great Britain, 4,313 gallons; Germany, 1,406 gallons; and the Danish provinces, 264 gallons of wine.

The value of the beer imported is put at 24,428*l.*; in all, 156,201 gallons were imported, of which Germany sent 92,643 gallons; Danish possessions, 23,427 gallons; Great Britain, 16,305 gallons; the United States, 9,692 gallons; Spain, 8,954 gallons and Holland, 4,737 gallons.

The value of the brandy and rum imported in 1892 was 13,733*l.* Great Britain took first place, with 12,494 gallons whereas in 1891 she only sent 10 per cent of the whole quantity imported. Germany came second, with 9,334 gallons, whereas France which country sent in 1891 42 per cent of the whole imports of these articles, was in 1892 only third on the list, with 4,830 gallons. Spain sent 4,400 gallons, and the remainder was supplied by the United States and Danish possessions.

Compared with 1891 there was a considerable diminution in 1892 of the imports of metals into this island. Only 5,183 tons were imported, as against 8,124 tons in the previous year. The values assigned by the official statistics, however, do not show this great difference, the value of the imports in 1891 being put at 192,961*l.*, and in 1892 at 181,700*l.*, Great Britain sent 3,189 tons; Germany, 757 tons; the United States, 690 tons; and the remaining 547 tons came from different other countries.

The decline in the importation of coal has continued, and only 14,277 tons were imported in 1892, as against 17,111 tons in 1891, and 22,760 tons in 1890. According to the official statistics, the whole quantity of coal imported in 1892 came from the United States.

Petroleum from the United States was imported to the extent of 2,501 tons, valued at 28,232*l.*

Glassware, of which the largest quantity came from Germany, was valued at 18,658*l.* Germany sent 222 tons; the United States 108 tons; Great Britain, 45 tons; France, 29 tons; and Spain, 22 tons.

Stone and porcelain ware was imported to the amount of 321 tons, as against 281 tons in 1891, the value being put at 13,884*l.* Germany is credited with 165 tons; Great Britain, 77 tons; Spain, 43 tons; and the balance came from the United States, Belgium, and France.

Oils (principally linseed and cotton oils) were imported to the amount of 289 tons, valued at 14,430*l.* Great Britain sent 162 tons; the United States, 65 tons; and Spain, 36 tons; the remainder came from Germany, Belgium, and Italy.

Drugs and chemicals were imported to the amount 62 tons, and value of 16,435*l.*, France supplying 19 tons; the United States, 15 tons; Great Britain, 10 tons, and Spain and Germany the remainder.

Of nitric, muriatic and sulphuric acids, the amount imported was 950 tons, of the value of 13,139*l.*, of which Spain sent 767 tons; the United States, 132 tons; and Great Britain, Germany and France the remainder.

Spain supplied 2,739 tons of soap; Great Britain, 36 tons; and Cuba 13 tons. Total, 2,779 tons, of the value of 58,942*l.*

Of paraffin and stearine, Spain sent 3030 tons; Germany, 121 tons; Great Britain, 81 tons; and other countries the remainder, the total being 536 tons, of the value of 33,639*l.*

Writing and printing paper was imported to the extent of 348 tons, valued at 17,162, Spain being the principal provider, with 151 tons.

Of straw paper and board Spain furnished 301 tons, taking first place, which was held the previous year by the United States. Germany furnished 52 tons; the United States, 48 tons; Great Britain, 29 tons; and France 17 tons. Total imports, 447 tons, of the value of 26,415*l.*

816,966 cubic feet of timber came from the United States, and 250,882 cubic feet from Canada, the total value of the imports being 41,747*l.*

2,773 tons of hoops and staves were imported, valued at 44,361*l.*, of which the United States furnished 2,197 tons; Spain, 466 tons; Canada, 42 tons; Danish possessions, 24 tons; France, 23 tons; and Cuba, 21 tons.

Of the shoes imported, 176 tons, value 123,380*l.*, all from Spain, except 1 ton from the United States.

Of sugar and general machinery only 631 tons were imported during 1892, Great Britain sending 494 tons, as against 1,492 tons in 1891; the United States, 83 tons; France, 24 tons; Spain, 16 tons; and Germany, 8 tons. The total value of this import was 10,036*l.*

Perfumery was imported to the value of 15,062*l.* Spain sent to the value of 6,228*l.*; France, 3,401*l.*, the United States, 2,399*l.*; Germany, 1,581*l.*; Great Britain, 1,382*l.*; and other countries, 71*l.*

The value of umbrellas imported was 4,041*l.*, the great majority, to the value of 3,348*l.*, coming from Spain; Great Britain, France and Germany supplying the remainder.

Of hats, Great Britain sent to the value of 4,441*l.*; Germany and France, each about 2,000*l.*; Spain, 4,223*l.*; United States of Colombia, 3,341*l.*

The value of sewing machines imported amounted to 9,629*l.*, of which the United States supplied to the value of 5,839*l.*; Great Britain, 2,153*l.*; and Germany, 1,767*l.*

The total value of leather imported was 15,845*l.* Spain contributed 10,390*l.*; France, 1,311*l.*; Cuba, 1,547*l.*; and the remainder came from Germany, the United States, and Great Britain.

The total value of saddlery and harness imported was 8,864*l.*, of which Great Britain sent 3,229*l.*; Spain, 2,776*l.*; the United States, 1,525*l.*; and France, 1,064*l.*

Shipping and Navigation

Only 1,081 vessels, of 1,060,871 tons, entered the ports of this island during the year 1892, as against 1,311 vessels of 1,327,192 tons in the previous year. British shipping declined in numbers from 312 vessels in 1891 to 286 vessels in 1892, but their tonnage increased from 148,745 tons in 1891 to 164,796 tons in 1892. Spanish, American, French, and German shipping all declined, both in the number of vessels and in tonnage, but 10 more vessels of other countries entered than in 1891, showing an increase in tonnage of 6,869 tons.

In 1894 a new line of steamers under the British flag, called the Cuban line, commenced running from London and Antwerp to Porto Rico, Cuba, and New Orleans. At present the Cuban line have only two steamers, but they hope to increase their fleet in 1895. Their headquarters are in East India Avenue, London, E.C.

The charges for mooring and unmooring are 4.50 dol. for vessels up to 80 tons and increase by 1 dol. in accordance with the above scale for pilotage for vessels up to 2,000 tons. For vessels upwards of 2,000 tons the charges is 20 dol.

The duties for pilotage and for mooring and unmooring are payable on the gross and not on the register tonnage of the vessel, and the above scale includes the double service of entrance and clearance. Double fees are charged between sunset and sunrise.

The charge for change of anchorage is 2 dol. for each change of vessels from 80 to 200 tons, and 4 dol. for vessels from 201 tons upwards.

All mooring and unmooring must be effected under the charge of a pilot.

Public Health

According to the last census taken on December 31, 1887, the population of Porto Rico was 813,937.

Throughout the years of 1892 and 1893 the health of the island was good, but in June 1894 smallpox broke out in the capital and still continues. According to the press it has spread to other towns in the island, but no official statistics are obtainable to the extent of the epidemic or as to the rate of mortality. The measures taken by the authorities to prevent the spread of the disease are most meager and practically of no utility.

During 1894 yellow fever among the troops took the form of an epidemic, but it was not of a very serious character, and lasted only 2 or 3 months.

Public Works

The bank called the Banco Español de Porto Rico, which started operations in 1890 under a concession for 25 years, granted by Royal decree signed at Madrid on May 5, 1888, has continued to do sound and successful business. In 1892 it paid a dividend of 27.35 per cent; in 1893 a dividend of 19.52 per cent; and in 1894 a dividend of 27.12 per cent. Out of a total issue of 1,125,000 dol. in notes, there were in circulation at the end of 1894 only 603,100 dols.

On the whole this bank has proved of great assistance in business operations, but has shown itself deficient in some respect, especially in the matter of exchange, it being at times impossible to obtain any bills at the bank.

In September, 1894, another bank, called the Banco Territorial y Agrícola de Porto Rico, was started in St. Juan, with a capital of 2,400,000 dol. (say 480,000*l.*) in shares of 100 dol. Article 3 of its statutes states—

“The object of the bank is to assist owners, lessees, and part owners with a view to the special encouragement of agriculture and the perfection of the industries appertaining thereto, and for this purpose it will effect the following operations:

“1. Issue loans on mortgages on rural and urban properties.

“2. Acquire credit on the security of mortgages on such property.

“3. Issue mortgage coupons payable to bearer.

“4. Make all kinds of loans, in specie or otherwise, to agriculturist upon their standing crops, their crops in magazine, their cattle or nay other sufficient personal security or guarantee.

“5. Become guarantor for bills payable negotiated or discounted by owners and agriculturists.”

In the month of May, 1888 a contract was signed between the Government of Porto Rico and a Don Ibo Bosch for the laying down of a railway which would encircle the island by the following sections: St. John's to Mayagüez via Arecibo and Aguadilla; Río Piedras to Humacao via Fajardo; Ponce to Mayagüez via San Germán; Ponce to Humacao via Arroyo; Caguas to Humacao via Juncos. Don Ibo Bosch afterwards formed a company in Madrid for carrying out this contract, under the style of the *Compañía de Ferrocarriles de Porto Rico*. By the contract the Government guarantees the company an annual interest of 8 per cent on the capital expended (not exceeding 2,000,000*l.*)

The total length of the railway when completed would be 456 kiloms. or about 283 miles. Upon the end of 1892 fair progress was made with this railway, 191 kiloms. (about 119 miles) having been laid down and put into use. But little seems to have been done during the years 1893 and 1894, only 2 more kiloms. (from Hatillo to Camuy) having been added since 1892. At the end of 1894 the lines laid down and in use were, from the Capital to Camuy, and from the Capital to Carolina; from Aguadilla to Mayagüez; and from Yauco to Ponce.

The contract with the afore-mentioned company was for a period of 6 years, and consequently came to an end in May 1894, but since then every endeavour has been made on the part of the company to obtain a prolongation of the time accorded to them. So far their efforts have proved unsuccessful, the Government of the island apparently being dissatisfied with the rate of progress with which the contract has been carried out. The company, it is said, have now appealed to the Government of Madrid.

Along the lines already constructed some traffic is done, especially during the months when the cane crops are harvested and the chief export of sugar takes place. But upon all the different sections there is only one train per diem run each way, this being a mixed train of goods and passengers.

If ever this railway round the island be completed, and, perhaps, extended to the interior, there can be no doubt that it will be highly beneficial to the general interests of Porto Rico. In the centre of the island, throughout which the land is most fertile, large portions remain wholly uncultivated through want of means of transport. The roads throughout the island, with the exception of the main Government road from the Capital to Ponce, are of the most primitive order and during the rainy seasons quite impassable. A regular system of good roads and railway communication between the interior and the different ports around the island would make this one of the most prosperous of the West Indian group of islands.

The work of dredging the harbour was commenced in the year 1889, and has been carried on actively ever since so far as the limited supply of the necessary material would permit. This only consists of one bucket-dredger and two grapler-dredgers and a few lighters, &c. The point to the south-west of the harbour, known as the La Puntilla Point, has been

completely dredged to a depth of 29½ feet at low tide, whereas before these works were begun the depth of water at this point was only 4 or 5 feet. The entrance of vessels to their anchorage is thereby greatly facilitated. The dredging at the point opposite La Puntilla and known as the "Punta Larga" has resulted in a depth of 19 to 20 feet where formerly there was only some 7 or 8 feet of water. The whole of the entrance channel has been widened and now has a depth of 29½ feet throughout, and there is over 22 feet of water alongside the wharves; but large-sized vessels cannot get near the wharves on account of the sloping banks by which they are supported. From the commencement of the works 18,262,773 cubic feet of material has been dredged and 14,805,928 cubic feet of this has been used in forming new ground for extending the wharves. All the work is done with prison labour, the prisoners getting some 10c. (4½ d.) *per diem*.

On June 27, 1892, a contract was signed between the municipality of this capital and a company formed in London, granting to the latter a concession for constructing an aqueduct so as to supply the city with water. By the contract, the municipality guaranteed an interest of 7 per cent on the cost of the works not exceeding 90,000*l.*, and the works had to be completed in 2 years. Unfortunately, in consequence of many unforeseen circumstances, floods carrying away works already completed, difficulties with the municipality and other causes, the works did not make much headway, and the contract lapsed in June, 1894. The company have petitioned for a prolongation of the time by 18 months, but this has been declined by the municipality, and this much-needed improvement for the city seems now destined to be postponed for many a year unless, indeed, the British company are successful in their endeavour to obtain a prolongation of the time conceded by the original contract from some higher authority than the municipality.

Another British company, with its headquarters in London, was formed in 1875, with a capital of 36,000*l.* a concession was granted to this company, giving it the monopoly for 25 years of lighting all the public streets with gas. It is to be regretted that this enterprise has also been somewhat unsuccessful. The change from the American to the Mexican currency, and the continually increasing high rates of exchange for the last few years have been very prejudicial to the interests of this company. It has, moreover, been heavily fined by the municipal authorities on every occasion where, through some accident, a lamp has not been burning. The company is now endeavouring to obtain from the municipality more favourable terms for the 5 years still remaining by the original concession.

A steam tramway runs between the Capital and the town of [Río] Piedras, a distance of about 9 miles. Only a single line of rails is laid down, but there are several loop lines here and there to allow trains to pass each other. The trains run frequently throughout the day, and pass by the pretty village of Santurce, which lies about 4 miles from the Capital, and where many business men have their private residences.

General Remarks

At the present time the currency of the island of Porto Rico is the Mexican dollar, which in the year 1878 was given by the Government of the island an official value of 95c. of the Spanish dollar and the equivalent of the American dollar. The island thus became a good market for the American dollar, which depreciated in value year by year in other markets, and the result was that all gold and even Spanish and American dollars disappeared entirely. In 1885 the Government prohibited any further importation of the Mexican dollar, and declared as illegal tender any Mexican coinage bearing a date anterior to that year. In spite to this prohibition, large quantities of Mexican dollars have continuously found their way into Porto Rico with falsified dates so that the Mexican dollar still remains the only currency.

The average rate of exchange in 1889 was 5 dol. 75 c. to the 1*l.*; in 1892 it was 6 dol.; in 1893 it rose to 7 dol.; and in 1894 it reached 8 dol. 50 c. per 1*l.*

These high rates of exchange have been prejudicial to the general interests of the island, but they may be said to have been the mainstay of the sugar industry in that they have been the means of imperceptibly lowering the price of labour without the labourer being cogni-

zant of the fact. The price of labour has not undergone any change and the plantation owners and producers, who sell for gold in foreign markets, pay their labourers and expenses in the currency of the island. Still, it may be a question whether the fluctuations in, and uncertainty of, the Porto Rico currency have not conduced to keeping out foreign capital and to preventing new and improved machinery for the factories from being imported, by which cane might more profitably compete with beet sugar in European markets.

AGUADILLA

Mr. Vice-Consul Gauslandt reports as follows:

Commerce in this department of the island of Porto Rico is in far from satisfactory state, and appears to decline more and more every year. There are various reasons for this decline in the export and import trades: (1) The condition of the roads between the interior and this port is in every case wretched, and for 6 or 8 months of the year, that is to say, during the rainy season, traffic over them is almost, if not quite impossible; (2) The neighbouring ports of Arecibo and Mayagüez, having better roads, are able to compete with advantage against this port in the interior; (3) The indifference of the local authorities and of the commercial houses to bring about a change for the better and the want in this port of those enterprising and strong firms which are to be found in the neighbouring ports, and through whose energetic exertions the trade with the interior has deviated from this port to Arecibo and Mayagüez. It is to be hoped, however, that early next year the main road from Aguadilla into the interior will be repaired, or, at any rate, that the repairs will be commenced, as the funds voted for this purpose in 1892 have at length partially come forth.

The suspension during the year 1894 of the Commercial Treaty between the United States and the Spanish colonies and of the "modus vivendi" with Germany probably accounts for the decline in the imports. It is impossible to obtain any reliable statistics of the imports into Aguadilla as the customs authorities refuse to give details.

The quantity of sugar (centrifugal and muscavado) exported from Aguadilla amounted to:

Year	Quantity
	Tons
1894	816
1893	1,253
1892	2,079
1891	2,124
1890	1,411

The yield of the crop of 1894 was greater than the above figures would represent, but considerable quantities of centrifugal sugar were sent by rail to Mayagüez and are not included in these figures. However, it is impossible to disguise the fact that in consequence of the increased production of beet sugar in Europe prices are now so low that that the small plantations are doomed which only produce muscavado sugar, and it is only such plantations as those on which centrifugal sugar is made that will be able to subsist.

The coffee exported from here was:

Year	Quantity
	Tons
1894	1,437
1893	1,478
1892	1,928
1891	1,390
1890	1,684

And the amount of tobacco exported was:

Year	Quantity
	Tons
1894	19
1893	627
1892	328
1891	251
1890	449

But the bulk of the crop (which I calculate at about 1,000 tons) remains yet in store awaiting shipment to Spain for account of the Spanish Government, the only purchaser of this low class of tobacco.

Some cocoa-nuts are exported from here to the United States of America, but I understand that little business can be done as the Porto Rico cocoa-nut cannot compare in quality with the Cuban and Central American cocoa-nut.

The health of this port has been excellent throughout the year, no cases of yellow fever or smallpox having occurred.

RETURN of Exports from Aguadilla during the Year 1894

Destination	Sugar Tons.	Coffee Tons.	Tobacco Tons.	Cocoa-nuts Number
Europe	92	821	19	
United States	723	..	..	162,300
Cuba	..	172	..	..
Other ports in Porto Rico	..	444	..	..
Total	815	1,437	19	162,300
“ value £	9,500	145,000	600	390

MAYAGÜEZ

Mr. Vice-Consul Monefeldt reports as follows:

The progress of trade and commerce in the island of Porto Rico, like in nearly all the West Indian islands, depends chiefly on the development of agriculture, which, in this district of Mayagüez, is almost exclusively confined to the cultivation of the sugar-cane, coffee, cocoa-nuts, oranges, and other fruits.

Owing to the heavy decline in the price of muscavado sugar, both in Europe and America, during the last decade, which has principally been caused by the more extensive cultivation of the beet in Europe, the exportation of this produce from the district of Mayagüez has dwindled from a total of about 20,000 tons in 1882 to only about 5,000 tons in 1894. The greater part of this sugar is shipped to the United States and British North American provinces. After many plantations have been totally abandoned in this district, a few central factories have at length been established, producing grey and white crystallised sugar, which is exported to Spain. The total amount of sugar exported from Mayagüez during 1894 was 5,246 tons as against 5,172 tons in 1893.

In part compensation for the ruinous state of the sugar cultivation, the coffee cultivation on the neighbouring hills has been developing considerably, and with the yearly increasing consumption of the berry in Europe and the comparative decrease of supplies from Central and South America, the average prices during the decade have tended to enrich planters. Exports of coffee in 1894 were 5,134 tons as compared with 7,054 tons in 1893.

The cultivation of cocoa is meeting with more attention, the quality produced being very superior and highly appreciated in Spain. About half the two annual crops are exported to Spain, while the remainder is manufactured in the island into chocolate of very fine flavour. This chocolate is being extensively consumed and has almost superseded the importation from France and Spain of this delicious paste.

Cocoa-nuts, oranges, pineapples, and other fruit trees also grow abundantly in this district, the soil being especially favourable, and the fruit is exported in quantities to the United States.

The import trade has suffered very much from the decline in the sugar crop and also through the extraordinary of exchange, which in January was about 6 dol. 85c. per *1l.*, rose in September to 8 dol., fell in the latter part of the year to 7 dol 70c., and has now again risen to the unparalleled rate of 9 dol. per *1l.*

During 1894 the total number of vessels which entered this port was 820, of 334,080 tons, of which 506, of 31,007 tons, were coasting craft, whereas in 1893, 816 vessels, of 298,439 tons, entered, of which 509, of 2,175 tons, were coasters. British vessels entering this port numbered 59, 35,560 tons, as compared with 72, of 43,128 tons in 1893.

PONCE

Mr. Vice-Consul Toro reports as follows:

The district of Ponce is principally devoted to agricultural pursuits; sugar, molasses and coffee being the chief products. Tobacco is also raised, but on a small scale.

The result of the 1894 crop has been fair as regards yield of sugar, and very satisfactory as the prices obtained for coffee, the average being 27 dol. Porto Rico currency per 100 lbs.; for sugar, 3¾ c. per lb.; and for molasses, 28 c. per gallon.

The total amount of the crop was –

Articles		Quantity		Quantity
Sugar	Lbs.	27,000,000	Hogshead	8,000
			Barrels	14,000
			Bags	70,000
			Puncheons	13,159
Molasses	Gallons	1,908,520	Tierces	697
			Barrels	850
Coffee	Lbs.	1,756,300	Bags	94,164
Tobacco	"	14,000	..	

Representing the following values:

	Value Currency Dollars*	Value Sterling £
Sugar	1,046,250	209,250
Molasses	534,385	106,877
Coffee	4,742,010	948,402
Tobacco	211,000	42,200
Total	6,533,645	1,306,729
As against imports(about)	5,000,000	1,000,000

* 5 dol. 1/. par rate

The average rate of exchange throughout the year was 7 dol. 40 c. per 1l. for 3 days' drafts on London. This extremely high rate of exchange is due to the currency of the country, which is exclusively Mexican silver dollars and 50 c. and 25 c. pieces Mexican, besides 10 c. and 5 c. American mutilated coin. With the present depreciation of the Mexican dollar in all markets, higher rates of exchange must be expected. The Mexican silver dollar has an official value here of 95 c. Spanish silver, and at this rate it is accepted in payment of customs duties and taxes.

As in former years, trade with the Dominion of Canada, and especially Nova Scotia, has been of importance, no less than 42 cargoes per sailing vessels having arrived at this port with fish-stuff and lumber, besides a monthly steamer which has run between this port and Halifax, bringing dried and pickled fish.

Since the abrogation of the reciprocity treaty with the United States there has been a difference of about 75 c. per barrel on imports duties in favour of Canadian flour, and some trial shipments are being made to introduce it here. About 1,000 bags and barrels have been imported at this port from Halifax. The flour is suitable for this market as regards colour, but it

lacks strength when compared with American flour, and does not keep as well in this warm climate. If some attention were paid to this in Canada a good market might be secured, as the importations at this port amount, on an average, to over 60,000 bags per annum.

From the United Kingdom all sorts of manufactured goods and cleaned rice were largely imported during the year.

Exports to the Dominion of Canada were small during the year as compared with the imports from the same province.

During the year 1894 the following vessels entered this port:

	Number of Vessels	Tons
Spanish steamers	114	155,896
Other countries, steamers	108	113,705
Spanish sailing vessels	12	2,520
Other countries, sailing vessels	120	24,604
Spanish coasting steamers	60	19,450
“ sailing vessels	351	9,288
Total	765	325,463

Of the 120 foreign sailing vessels 75 were British, and of the 108 foreign steamers only 20 were British. This harbour can be easily entered by steamers of large tonnage. Vessels anchor at about half a mile from shore, loading and discharging out of and into lighters. The work is done quickly, as there are 61 lighters for the purpose, of an average of 25 tons capacity.

Since June, 1894, a tax is put upon each vessel of 50 c. per ton of cargo, in order to create a fund for dredging the port and building wharves. The Government contributes towards this fund 6,000 dol. and the municipality of Ponce 4,000 dol. per annum, and it is calculated that 52,000 dol. will be thus collected per annum. Some merchants have offered to advance funds towards pushing on the works. The Government has already appointed engineers, who are making the necessary surveys and plans, and estimating the cost. If some activity is shown by them, the work may soon be started. Coal is exempted from the tax of 50c.

Harbour dues are collected on cargo landed, and are for account of receivers, but when vessels are chartered for this port the charter-party should specify that harbour dues for account of charters, and the same precaution should be observed as regards tonnage (or loading and discharging) dues, “derechos de carga y descarga,” which are 1 dol. per ton of 1,000 kilos.

Pilotage is obligatory, and the following tariff is in force for entering and clearing (both included):

		Currency	Sterling		
		Dollars	£	s.	d.
Vessels up to	80 tons	9	1	16	0
Vessels from	81 to 120 tons	11	2	4	0
	121 " 150 "	13	2	12	0
	151 " 175 "	15	3	0	0
	176 " 200 "	18	3	12	0
	201 " 300 "	20	4	0	0
	301 " 520 "	25	5	0	0
	521 " 1,000 "	30	6	0	0
Vessels over 1,000 tons		40	8	0	0

and for shifting berth one-quarter pilotage is charged.

Port charges are as follows:

	Currency		Sterling		
	Dol.	c.	£	s.	d.
Signal dues	2	0	0	8	0
Interpreter	9	75	1	19	0
Hospital dues	8	0	1	12	0
Copy of manifest	6	0	1	4	0
Permit to discharge	0	27	0	1	1
" load	0	27	0	1	1
Passenger and crew list	1	6	0	4	3
Clearance (in ballast)	4	0	0	16	0
" (with cargo)	8	50	1	14	0

The 8 dol. hospital dues entitle the vessel to send to the hospital as many of the crew as may be in need of medical assistance without any extra charge for medicines as long as the vessel remains in port.

The city of Ponce, with suburbs, has a population of 42,000, as per last census in the year 1889. It is rapidly increasing and improving, with many new private residences built mostly of stone and bricks. As all houses have more or less large yards and metres of streets, of which the

greater part are well lighted with gas, and through all of them run water-pipes, giving a good supply of water from a well-built aqueduct with a pressure of 35 lbs. to the square inch. the water rate is 5 dol. per annum for $\frac{1}{4}$ inch pipes, 25 dol. for $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, 60 dol. for $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, and 80 dol. for 1 inch pipes.

Fireplugs are in all streets corners, and all the streets are daily irrigated with hoses during the dry season. The aqueduct extends as far as the port, which is about 2 miles from the city, and connected by a fine level road. A large and continuous traffic takes place along this road, as all imports and exports pass over it. It is hoped that electric cars will be started next year, the capital for this undertaking having already been nearly completed subscribed.

The Porto Rico Railway Company, a French company, 8 per cent per annum being guaranteed by Government, has also in its projects a railroad to connect the city and port, but as this company seems to be in financial difficulties, the completion of this railroad is indefinite. In this district only $21\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the projected railroad has been laid down. This connects Ponce with the town of Yauco, and trains run once daily to and from Yauco, but take $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours to cover the distance one way.

The health of the city and port has been good throughout the year, and there has not been any epidemic. There are four hospitals in the city, which are kept very well, and one of them is reserved exclusively for cases of epidemics.

There are 42 public schools, but they are badly organized; and there are a few well-managed private schools. We have also a well-organized fire brigade, which renders important services at times.

200,000 dol., or about 40,000l., have been subscribed in this district, in shares of 100 dol., to establish a savings bank, which, it is hoped, will be opened in February, 1895.

The customhouse duties on imports are enormous, no less than 743,000 dol., or about 148,600l., having been collected during the year at the customhouse of Ponce.

There is an Anglican Church in Ponce, but it is sadly in want of repairs, and the funds are not sufficient even to cover the chaplain's stipend.

[66] **Reference to previous Report, Annual Series No. 1306, Consul Vecqueray to the Marquis of Salisbury**⁸³

My Lord,

I have the honor to enclose a Supplementary Report on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico. I regret that I am still unable to furnish any details as to the Import Trade during the years 1893 and 1894, as no official statistics have yet been published.

I have, &c.

[Signed] A. H. VECQUERAY

Supplementary Report on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the Year 1894

[...]

Introduction

The annexed Tables A and B will show the quantities and total values, according to official statistics recently published, of the principal exports from Porto Rico during the first six months of 1895 as compared with those for the same period in 1894.

Unfortunately no details are obtainable as to the imports as to the imports into this island since 1892.

Some remarks, however, on the principal industries and products of the island may be found interesting.

⁸³ PP 1895 [c.7581] C.1 No. 1306

Sugar

The sugar industry, which has hitherto been the chief source of prosperity in Porto Rico, has for some years past been gradually languishing on account to the ever-increasing production of beet-sugar in countries where it is supported by large bounties. This is especially the case with the United States, which is the nearest and most natural market for the productions of this island. Still nearly all the sugar grown in Porto Rico continues to go to the United States, although it there pays a duty of 40 per cent *ad valorem* on ordinarily "muscovado", with a surcharge of 1 c. per lb. on refined or "central" sugars. This tax is almost prohibitive, but there is no better market, and, consequently, prices obtained here for sugar continue to fall.

The sugar crop of 1894 was short with respect to previous years owing to long spells of dry weather, to which this island is subject between the months of November and April, called the "dry season". The price of sugar for the crop of 1894 averaged 3 dol. 25c. (Mexican currency), or about 9s. 3d. per quintal of 100 lbs. for refined sugar.

The present crop of 1895 has been larger than that of the previous year, but for the first six months prices have been much lower, averaging only 2 dol. 37½ c. to 3 dol. per quintal of 100 lbs. Those prices will prove ruinous to many of the planters as they will not be able to cover expenses. It is even at the present time a sorry sight to see, when passing through the island, large areas of abandoned sugar plantations with their mills in ruins. In many cases the lands simply lie waste; in others a few cattle and horses are supported on the grass that springs up; but sheep are rarely to be seen, as the climate does not seem to suit them, and their wool degenerates into hair. It seems very probable that a further large area of land, which has up to now been used for growing the sugar-cane, will this year be abandoned.

The lowness in the price of sugar is further aggravated by the excessive taxes imposed up to the present on all properties where the sugar-cane is grown, these having to bear the gross burden of the property tax, whereas other lands escape with lighter rates. For many years the sugar planters have loudly called for a reform in this direction, and at length the mother country appears inclined to lighten the burden of this taxation on sugar. The manner, however, in which it is proposed to do so will, probably, be more injurious to the prospects of the island than if no reform were to be granted at all, for it is proposed to reduce the taxes on sugar-growing lands and place it on coffee plantations. The coffee industry in the island steadily increases year by year, and will probably be its eventual mainstay, replacing sugar, which can scarcely be grown now-a-days with profit, and that only in districts where there are large and well-mounted central factories with all modern improvements in machinery, &c. At present the mills throughout the island are generally of old fashioned and antiquated systems, little or no capital being left to their owners for repairs and remounting, and this may be attributed, in a great measure, to the existing monetary situation, which depresses all business and deprives the island of banks, credit, and all spirit for undertaking new enterprises.

For light central and muscovado sugars Spain herself might be an excellent market and help this colony of hers to prosperity, but, in consequence of the heavy duties imposed on sugar entering Spain, even from her own colonies, that market is nearly entirely closed to Porto Rico.

Coffee

Next to sugar the staple produce of this island is coffee, which bids fair to become the principal source of revenue if not stifled by excessive taxation. The coffee of Porto Rico, little known in England, unfortunately, is of the very best quality and fetches a higher price in the New York market than that of Cuba, Costa Rica, Brazil, or any other of the American States. Large and increasing quantities are exported to Cuba itself as also to Spain, and, owing to the good prices obtained for it, the cheapness and care with which it is cultivated and harvested, the lower taxes (as compared with sugar) on coffee plantation lands, and the decline in the

profits on sugar, the cultivation of coffee is extending throughout the whole of the island. There are still large areas of land quite unoccupied, and these will, undoubtedly, in course of time become new and productive coffee plantations. The cultivation of coffee requires little capital and little labour as compared with that of sugar, and in this respect thoroughly suits the habits and disposition of the natives.

Formerly the price of coffee was 18 to 20 dol. (Mexican) per quintal of 100 lbs., but the late crop has reached 28 to 34 dol., according to quality, the best qualities being very carefully selected by experts. To a very great extent, of course, this rise in the price must be attributed to the depreciation in the value of the Mexican dollar, which is the money current of the island, but as in the country districts the depreciation of silver has not yet been felt, and all labour and necessaries continue to be paid at the old rates, the price is still actually 50 per cent higher than formerly and profits correspondingly large. In many of the interior districts labour is not paid for in cash but in the fruits of the plantains, 50 of these being the pay of a labourer per day. The labourer, after feeding himself and his family on these fruits, sells the remainder in the nearest town and often loses one day per week in doing so, as, in some cases, he has to travel 20 miles to the nearest market.

It is to be hoped for the future prosperity of Porto Rico that the present proposed "reform" in taxation will not take place, viz., to tax all coffee lands heavily with a view to relieving sugar lands. Such a policy would be suicidal. A great deal of the coffee produced is grown by small planters, who have no capital to invest and who make use of the wild and waste lands on the hill sides to grow their coffee; but if any tax were to be put on these lands, the poor planters would be unable to pay it and the lands would revert to their former uselessness. Of these wild and waste lands there are still large areas which can be devoted to coffee growing but which are fit for nothing else, and if the extension of coffee growing is not checked by excessive taxation the island will become more prosperous than it ever has been with sugar as its staple produce.

Nominally there is no export tax on sugar, but even this produce has to bear the impost of what is called a "loading duty", which is imposed on all exports without exception, and amounts to 1 dol. (about 4s.) per ton of 1,000 kilos. In addition to this tax there is an export tax on certain articles; sugar is free of any extra charge, but coffee has to pay, beyond the "loading tax" a further dol. (about 4s.), tobacco a further 22c. (about 10 1/3 d.), and timber a further 15 c. (about 7d.) on every 100 kilos or 2 cwts. exported.

Tobacco

Tobacco is cultivated to a considerable extent in the island, but its cultivation might be extended almost indefinitely if it were not again for the old question of excessive taxation. The soil is of the very best for tobacco growing and quite equal to the best of the Cuban plantations, but as a rule there is some carelessness in the process of curing. Good tobacco requires no great labour in its cultivation, but considerable care and attention, especially as regards insect pests, and when the leaf is stripped, selected and dried. In all these the native of Porto Rico is exceedingly careless, and this it is which prevents so good a final product being obtained as in Havana. Still a considerable quantity of Porto Rico cigars find their way to the States, Spain, France, and England, but the tobacco trade is one which ought to be largely extended if only given proper facilities by the Government. Large quantities of the tobacco leaf are exported to Cuba to be made up there into the world-famed Havana cigars.

Cattle

The oxen of Porto Rico are very fine, and there are large breeding establishments throughout the island. These powerful beasts are used for all the heavy traffic; they are yoked in pairs with the ancient type of neck-yoke and horribly goaded to their work by the still more ancient ox-goad, a cruel and dangerous weapon. The fearful cruelty which these poor beasts have to endure is perfectly revolting.

The cattle are generally fine and easily fatten on the rich and extensive grass plains and valleys. They are celebrated throughout the West Indian Islands, and consequently are exported in fairly large numbers, especially to Martinique and Guadeloupe, and even to Cuba itself.

Some export business is done in hides, but its amount and value is not important. The skins themselves are often very large and thick, and are all dried, unsalted hides.

Horses

Horses are bred for use in the island. Generally their size is small, but they are very hardy and enduring in spite of the poor feeding and ill treatment which they get. A few American horses have been imported with a view to improving the breed, but there is not any export of horses from this island.

Mules are bred especially for use in carrying coffee to the ports from the hilly districts, work which the less sure-footed horses could not accomplish on account of the steepness and rockiness of the hills and of the even dangerous passes, not to mention the bad roads. But these poor brutes are not treated with any more compassion than other animals by the heartless native.

Bread-Stuffs

All bread-stuffs are imported from the United States, no wheat being grown in the island, while the import duties and charges on flour raise the price of it to treble the cost of placing it in any port in the island.

Maize is grown in the island but on a most moderate scale. There is not any reason why its growth should not be greatly extended. What is now used is mostly imported from the State.

Barley and oats come from the States occasionally, but the duty on them is so enormous that they are actually dearer than an equal weight of fine flour.

A small quantity of rice is grown in the island, but only in certain favourable localities; with irrigation the quantity might be quadrupled. This grain forms the principal article of food for the people, and immense quantities are imported annually from England and some from Spain.

Fruit

The native fruits such as the plantain, the banana, &c., are grown everywhere and are much used as food in the country, but there is not any large amount of export of these fruits, nor yet of the pineapple, which grows to perfection, when any care is taken in its cultivation. It is somewhat curious that the pineapple is not exported in larger quantities than is actually the case, as it is a fruit that could easily be shipped and carried the short distance to the United States, where it can command good prices.

The coconut grows in immense quantities all around the coasts of the island and to a considerable distance inland, but little or no use is made of it, and exports are few and far between. The contents of the green nut are much used as a beverage, but the great bulk of the crop, which has continuous growth, is allowed to go to waste.

The mango tree, covered with its green and golden fruit, is common everywhere, and lines the roadsides in many parts for miles and miles.

The Seville or bitter orange grows wild in the woods, but none of the fruit is exported, and by far the greater part goes to absolute waste.

Timber

All ordinary timber of construction such as deals and pitchpine is imported from the United States and Canada in large quantities as the majority of the houses throughout the island are built of wood. The hard wood of the island called "ausubo" is much used for superior

constructions in frames and beams, &c. The hills of the island are for the most part of volcanic formation, wooded to the summit with matted virgin forests, which contain a large number of different beautiful hard and ornamental grain woods adaptable for furniture, &c., but there is practically no export, and the want of good roads prevents enterprise in this direction. Palms of a variety of kinds are very plentiful and form prominent features of every landscape, but their wood, as a rule, is of no use whatever. The names of the other woods are too numerous to mention, but there are, amongst others, the hard and soft cedar, ebony, greenheart, ironwood, sandalwood, ausubo, hucar, &c.

Sandalwood is exported in small parcels occasionally.

[67] **Porto Rico, February 16, 1895, No. 4, Commercial**⁸⁴

My Lord,

I have the honor to enclose a short report on the origin and history of the monetary crisis through which this Island is now passing. The notes for this report have been kindly furnished me by a British Subject who has been resident for some years.

I have the honor to be with the greatest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

Humble Servant,

A.H. Vecqueray

Her Majesty's Principal
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

The Monetary Crisis in the island of Porto Rico

The money troubles of this Island are not only of today but reach back to a long series of years, the circulating money having scarcely ever been on a satisfactory footing.

In the beginning of this century the money in circulation was Spanish silver and gold, but the scarcity of either specie was great, and in 1814 the Home Government was compelled to issue a paper money especially for this island. This paper money, however, had no fixed guarantee and constantly depreciated in value as fresh issues were made till at length it was generally refused. From the very first this forced paper currency was objected to and, after only five month's existence, was put an end to in the following way. This island had, as it has and always has had, a large number of troops quartered upon it and they received their pay in this depreciated paper money. A mutiny, though a very quiet and orderly one, was the result. The troops formed themselves into companies and, leaving all their arms in the barracks, marched to the Palace of the Governor General to petition for payment in silver as formerly. On their way they chanted the following verse in which they had embodied their grievances:

No quiero papelito
ni tampoco papelón
Solo lo que quiero
Es plata de cordón

which translated, means

⁸⁴ PP FO 72/1900. No. 4382.

I do not want small paper
 And much less big paper
 What I require only
 Is silver in good coin.

In consequence of this "mutiny" of the troops the Governor General promised that in future they should be paid on silver coin. There proved to be, however, an insufficiency of Spanish coin in the Island Treasury and recourse had to be made to a large amount of a silver coin, roughly stamped but of good silver, emanating from various provinces of South America and Mexico which had been saved and stored when the provinces threw off their allegiance to Spain. This old money now obtained currency in the Island and was called "Macuquina" which means "clipped coin", and as it had equal value with the Spanish coin, it naturally assisted in further depreciating the paper money. The Government were at length forced to attempt to redeem the paper money but did so at such a large discount and gave such short notice for the holders to effect the exchange that a great part, if not the majority, of the holders of the paper actually lost the whole of its nominal value.

For a number of years this "Macuquina" money continued in circulation with only a discount of $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent on the Spanish and United States silver coin, but as it was uncoined —being flat pieces of silver (but good and pure) of irregular sizes and shapes, merely stamped with rude indications of the arms of Spain— clipping, filing and sweating took place to such an extent that the coin lost in value from 10 to 30 per cent. Moreover a good quantity of this coin appears to have remained in circulation in the Republican States of South America and to have been clandestinely introduced into this Island in clipped and mutilated form according as silver depreciated in value abroad. This led to merchants ultimately refusing to accept this coin and doing their business in "Vales" or Notes of hand from one to another —the coins being reserved for only the smallest or detail transactions. These "vales" became practically a private paper money, passing from hand to hand and led to much confusion, frauds and disputes, some firms without any real capital doing large business transactions by trading on these 'vales'.

Meanwhile all imports had to be paid for in gold and the Island thus became denuded of the gold that had been in circulation with the "Macuquina" and, a few years before 1857, the Government issued a decree that all customs' duties must be paid at the rate of 25% in Spanish gold and silver and the remainder in the common coin.

In the year 1857 the Spanish Government, without any previous notice or warning, sent over $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions of dollars in gold and silver Spanish coinage, and an order was issued that all the old 'Macuquina' money should within four days be brought in and exchanged for this Spanish coin at a discount of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent *by weight*. The Government had, however, greatly underestimated the amount of the 'Macuquina' in circulation and on the second day the $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions of Spanish coin were exhausted and the gold and silver of other countries —chiefly Mexican and American— which happened to be in the Porto Rico Treasury had to be made use of in order to effect the exchange. Even then the time (four days) granted proved too short for the operation to be effected throughout the Island, and a large amount of coin was never exchanged at all. However, the holders did not become losers as the bullion value of the "macuquina" was greater than of that given in Exchange and it was shipped as bullion to foreign markets, chiefly Paris. The Spanish Mint must have made a large profit on the transaction in consequence of the greater intrinsic value of the "Macuquina" to the Spanish Silver coinage.

From 1857 to 1863 the currency continued mixed and the gold coins stood as follows in 1864

	Dollars
Spanish (Isabella) piece	5
“ Doblón	17
Mexican (& other S. American States') Doblón	16.5
United States Double Eagle	21
French Napoleon	4
English Sovereign	5

but of the latter two there was very little in circulation.

As silver currency the uncut United States dollar, and its subdivisions, was used it having gradually displaced the Spanish silver, as the latter was officially valued at 5¼ per cent more than the former and hence was re-exported although in circulation it passed as dollar for dollar.

Gradually the entire currency became American gold and silver, with a fair proportion of Spanish gold but no Spanish silver. Money was plentiful and on a secure basis and the Island was prosperous. Had the American money been allowed to continue as the circulating medium, the Island would not now be in its present deplorable condition of depreciated currency. But in the year 1878, when silver had depreciated in value and the Mexican dollar was worth only 79 to 80 cents gold in New York or other markets, a Mexican coiner and certain powerful bankers in this Island entered into a speculation to introduce Mexican silver as currency and give the Mexican dollar in Porto Rico the same value as the American dollar. The then Governor General (a General Portilla) was induced to sanction the scheme and suddenly, without, apparently, consulting the provincial Assembly or the other local Authorities, he issued a decree making all Mexican silver coinage legal tender throughout the Island at the equivalent of the American dollar or 95 cents of a Spanish dollar, the only reason assigned being, what was hardly correct, that fractional silver money was scarce and that the change would be “convenient”.

At the time, no doubt, the Mexican dollar was intrinsically worth as much as or even slightly more than the American dollar, but as the latter was based on and backed by gold it was worth in foreign markets 100 cents in gold whereas the Mexican was only worth 79 or 80 cents and is now only worth 48 cents or even less.

Naturally a large influx of the Mexican silver coinage into this Island took place immediately with the result that all gold and even American silver quickly disappeared or could only be obtained at a premium. Probably few people foresaw the disastrous results that this change would have, and those who did dared not speak. Moreover the effect was not immediately felt on account of the fall in the value of silver being so gradual. Further, the plantation owners and producers of the Island benefited by the change inasmuch as they sold for gold in a foreign market and paid their expenses and labourers in the currency of the Island.

Thus things went on till 1885 and possibly, if not probably, matters would have regulated themselves and the Mexican dollar have found its proper level, had not the Authorities committed a further blunder in endeavouring to bolster up the coin already in circulation to the value of 95 cents officially given to it. In that year, 1885, in consequence of the continued influx of the Mexican dollar and its consequent depreciation in value commercially, the Authorities issued a decree prohibiting absolutely the further importation of the Mexican dollar under pain of total confiscation, and, further, declaring as illegal tender, and as not “Money Current”, any coins bearing later date than 1885.

Nevertheless, in spite of the vigilance of the Customs' authorities and in spite of some instances of heavy fines and confiscations (even to such a large amount as 10,000 dollars at one 'coup' occurring from time to time, the Mexican dollar still continued to be smuggled into the Island and even absolutely new coins bearing dates from 1885 back to 1860 (produced expressly for the purpose in Mexico and the United States) were introduced clandestinely into the country in large quantities. The foreign value of the dollar thus depreciated from \$5.75 per £ in 1889 to \$9.10 per £ at the end of January 1895.

From time to time the Provincial Assembly and Commercial bodies have sent petitions to the Home Government praying that some solution of the money difficulty in Porto Rico might be found and demanding the exchange of the Spanish coinage for that of the Mexican. But periodically for the last 14 years the Colonial Minister has merely replied, by telegram or otherwise, that he is "studying the question".

It is very certain that some solution of the difficulty must soon be found and the Home Government will have to move. Strikes and even public riots have recently occurred in consequence of the increase in the prices of all the necessaries of life and the entire press is clamoring for an immediate decision on the part of the Colonial Minister.

The three solutions proposed that have hitherto found most favor are those of Señores Salazar, García and Valdés which are as follows:

Salazar - To give the current Mexican dollars a value of 75 cents officially and issue paper money to the value of 25 cents to all present holders of Mexican dollar, the paper to be redeemed by the Government in 10 years and the loss (calculated at 2 millions of dollars) to be paid out of the Island Revenue.

García - All the Mexican coinage to be called in for recoinage into Spanish dollars at 60 official cents per Mexican dollar the holders being indemnified with 35 cents paper money to be issued by the Spanish Bank of the Island and to be redeemed in 8 years, the Island bearing all costs and losses.

Valdés - To give the Mexican dollar a value of 60 cents only and issue 40 cents in paper to all holders, the paper to be redeemable yearly by installments running over 10 years, the loss (calculated at 4 millions) to be borne by the Island Revenues.

There are many objections to all of these proposals and the adoption of a gold standard would probably be the only solution that would definitely do away with the money difficulty. But in any case the Island will have to bear all the loss incurred by whatever solution may be decided upon as it cannot be expected that the Home Government will consent to the General interests of the Mother Country being prejudiced in favor of this particular province.

British Consulate
Porto Rico
February 16, 1895

[68] Report of the Year 1896 on the Trade of Porto Rico by Consul Ge. W. Crawford to the Marquess of Salisbury⁸⁵

The official statistics for the year 1894 have just been published: this report, therefore, contains but limited information with respect to the general trade of Porto Rico during 1896.

The total value of the import and export trade during 1894 amounts to 7,441,824*l.*; imports being valued at 3,955,717*l.*, and the exports at 3,459,107*l.*

As compared with 1893, these figures show an increase of 491,627*l.* on the imports, and 110,028*l.* on exports, making a total increase of 601,655*l.* This increase in trade is still more important if compared with the average trade during the preceding five years; the imports show an increase of 608,726*l.*, and the exports have increased by 879,711*l.*, making a total of 1,488,437*l.* above the average.

⁸⁵ PP 1897 [c.8277] XCIII.

The total exports to Great Britain and her possessions show an increase of 109,366*l.*, being nearly double what they were in 1893, and about 12,000*l.* more than 1892, while the imports were 129*l.* less than 1893. This fall in the value of the imports is explained further on.

The total value of the exports from this island during 1894 amounts to 3,459,107*l.*

There is an increase in the exports to the following countries: Great Britain and her possessions (109,360*l.*); Cuba (96,866*l.*); Spain (44,903*l.*); and France (32,202*l.*); whilst the exports have fallen by 49,821*l.* to the United States, and by 27,332*l.* to Germany.

The quantity of coffee exported was 22 [ilegible] tons, valued at 2,382,608*l.*, being an increase of 581 tons over 1893. Cuba took 7,980 tons being 955 tons more than in the preceding year; Spain took 5,568 tons, an increase of 174 tons; France follows with 3,571 tons, being 345 tons more than 1893; Germany comes next with 3,292 tons a decrease of 240 tons; Great Britain held the eighth place with only 360 tons, valued at 37,413*l.*

There is an increase of 5,322 tons of sugar exported, as exported with 1893; the total exports for 1894 being 48,409 tons, valued at 656,973*l.* The principal consumers were the United States, 29,301 tons; Spain follows with 13,923 tons; and Great Britain and her possessions come next with 3,099 tons.

There is a falling off of 2,951 tons of molasses. This is chiefly due to the decrease in the production of Muscavado sugar, and to the large amount made into rum and spirits for local consumption. The total exports of molasses amounted to 7,238 tons, valued at 50,667*l.*, all of which was taken by the United States, Great Britain, and the British Colonies, the first-named country taking 6,667 tons.

The total amount of tobacco exported was 1,528 tons, valued at 128,388*l.*; being a decrease of 380 tons as compared with 1893. Cuba took only 263 tons, as against 443 tons the preceding year; Spain took 1,079 tons, a falling-off of 205 tons; Germany took 164 tons, or 28 tons more than in 1893; France took 10 tons, and Great Britain 4 tons.

There was a decrease of 835 head in the number of oxen and cows exported in 1894. The number shipped was 4,306 head, valued at 36,448*l.* The French Colonies took 2,243 head, a falling-off of 1,058 head; the British West India Islands took 1,186 head, being only 11 head less than in 1893; the Danish Islands followed with 565 head; and Cuba comes next with 253 head.

346 tons of hides, valued at 13,138*l.*, were exported in 1894, an increase of 96 tons. Spain took 242 tons; Germany, 79 tons; and France, 25 tons.

The exports of guano in 1894 amounted to 8,383 tons; valued at 151,005*l.*, as against 6,807 tons in 1893, valued at 122,529*l.* Great Britain took 7,951 tons; France, 404 tons; and Spain and Cuba the balance.

The other exports included the following articles:

Articles		Quantity	To
Indian corn	Tons	1,428	Cuba
Timber	"	68	United States, 46½ tons; Great Britain, 10 tons; other countries the rest
Tallow	"	49	Spain, 42 tons; Cuba, 7 tons
Old iron	"	73	United States and Spain
Old Brass	"	71	Spain
Salt	"	20	Cuba
Horns	"	3	Spain

Cocoa-nuts	Number	517,000	United States, 320,110; Great Britain, 143,650; and rest to Spain
Oranges	"	47,000	United States
Bay rum	Gallons	6,066	United States and France
Raw spirits	"	5,055	Spain

There is a difference in the monthly statistics of exports published previously, and the corrected figures given in the annual statistics for 1894.

The prospects for 1897 are of a considerable increase in tobacco. The sugar crop will not be less than during the last few years, but there may possibly be a falling-off in coffee and molasses.

As already stated, the import trade of this island during 1894 shows an increase of 491,627*l.* as compared with 1893. The only country that has materially fallen short is Cuba (25,234*l.*), Great Britain and her possessions still hold the third place. Spain stood first with an increase over the preceding year of 358,082*l.* The United States came next with 59,090*l.* more than in 1893; Germany held the fourth place with an increase of 95,750*l.*; France following also with an increase of nearly 12,000*l.*

Though the total imports from Great Britain and her possessions show a slight decrease, this falling-off was entirely in the India trade, as the statistics just published show an increase of 17,169*l.* in the imports from the British Isles, and the Colonies (India excepted) have also furnished 38,626*l.* more than in 1893.

There has been a falling-off in the following articles as compared with 1893, viz. manufactured tobacco (cigarettes principally), 34,605*l.*; iron roofing, &c., 34,293*l.*; olive oil, 2,801*l.*; plateglass, 2,011*l.*; and coal 446*l.* (406 tons). All the other principal articles of import show an increase, rice standing first with a difference of 54,990*l.* in favour of 1894; salt and dried fish an increase of 43,198*l.*; flour 38,908*l.*; pork, lard, and hams, 33,316*l.*; preserved meats and canned goods, 19,290*l.*; vegetables, 12,492*l.*; common soaps, 7,636*l.*; wines, 5,05*l.*; cheese, 2,052*l.*; and chocolate and cakes, 1,641*l.*

The increase in the imports of cotton stuffs is estimated at 958 tons. There had been a falling-off since 1891, but in 1894 cottons regained lost ground. Spain still holds the first place with 1,521 tons, valued at 407,852*l.*, an increase in quantity of 751 tons, or nearly double the amount furnished in 1893: Great Britain continues second with 905 tons, valued at 184,303*l.*, an increase of 240 tons. France increased from 19 tons in 1893 to 25½ tons in 1894, valued at 7,422*l.*; the United States furnished 16 tons (3,062*l.*), as against 60 tons in 1893; Germany, 13 tons (4,802*l.*), an increase of 2 tons; and Belgium, 2 tons, valued at 266*l.*

There was a decided increase in the imports of woollens, Great Britain furnished 36 tons, an increase of 2 tons as compared with 1893; Spain follows with 30 tons, or 17 tons more than in the preceding year; France comes next with 9 tons; Germany, 7 tons; and the United States, 1 ton.

The value of silks imported into Porto Rico in 1894 was 42,041*l.*, of which Spain provided 19,970*l.*, Great Britain, Germany and France the rest.

The falling-off in jute, flax and hemp goods has continued in 1894. The decrease was 266 tons in 1893, compared with 1892, and in 1894 there appear a further shortage of 203 tons. Great Britain leads the list with 627 tons as against 781 tons in 1893; Spain follows with 197 tons; Germany, 113 tons; the United States, 88 tons; Cuba and France together, 6½ tons.

The quantity of rice imported in 1894 was 32,965 tons, valued at 461,505*l.*, being an increase of 3,928 tons. There is an increase of nearly 50 per cent in the imports of this grain from Germany during 1894, but it must be borne in mind that most of this "German" rice

comes originally from India. Great Britain (British India) lost her first place, and stands second, with 11,997 tons, as against 9,150 tons in the preceding year; Spain maintained her third place with 5,341 tons, an increase of 1,923 tons; Denmark follows with 802 tons, an increase of 534 tons; and the United States, Belgium, Japan, and Italy sent 274, 49, 27, and 5 tons respectively.

There is an increase of 2,780 tons in the imports of flour during 1894.

There was a decided increase in the imports of fish during 1894, which amount to 1,662 tons as compared with 1898, and 1,496 tons over 1892. Canada sent 9,890 tons, an increase of 48 tons; the United States sent 1,522 tons, or more than three times the amount furnished in 1893. This increase is due to the reciprocity treaty, which was still in force in 1894. Spain furnished 56 tons, a decrease of 80 tons, and other countries supplied 35 tons.

Spain furnished 252 tons of preserved fish: the United States, 39 tons; Great Britain, 10 tons; France, Germany, and Holland together, 10 tons.

The amount of pork, lard, hams, and pickled meat imported in 1894 was 4,412 tons, valued at 225, 074*l.* The United States sent 4,366 tons; Spain, 36 tons; Uruguay, 4 tons; Great Britain and her possessions, 3 tons; and other countries the rest.

There was a considerable falling-off in the imports of jerked beef, the total imports amounting to 471 tons (13,177*l.*), as against 1,128 tons in 1893. The Argentine Republic provided 173 tons; Uruguay, 160 tons; Spain, 118 tons; Great Britain only 18 tons, as against 80 tons in 1893, and 283 tons in 1892. Germany and Denmark supplied the remainder.

The imports of cheese amounted to 600 tons, valued at 71,977*l.* Of these Holland furnished 452 tons, an increase of 23 tons; Italy sent 36 tons; Germany, 30 tons; Spain, 30 tons; the United States, 29 tons; Great Britain, 17 tons; and France, 6 tons.

Butter shows a slight decrease as compared with 1893. The imports in 1894 amounted to 135 tons, valued at 12,000*l.* The United States sent 53 tons; Spain, 31 tons; Great Britain, 17 tons; Italy, 11 tons; Germany, 9 tons; Denmark, 8 tons; France, Holland, and Cuba the rest.

The decrease in the imports of olive oil has continued. The amounts imported in former years were: 1890, 885 tons; 1891, 1,008 tons; 1892, 1,124 tons; 1893, 990 tons; and 1894, 940 tons (valued at 42,216*l.*). Spain furnished 936 tons; France, 3 tons; and Germany and Italy together, 1 ton.

The increase in the imports of vegetables and garden products continued in 1894. In 1892 these amounted to 5,919 tons. They rose to 6,788 tons in 1893, whilst in 1894 they reached 8,196 tons, valued at 77,715*l.* Spain furnished 6,141 tons, as against 5,267 tons in 1893; Great Britain and her possessions sent 943 tons, which is a rise from the fourth to the second place; the United States supplied 636 tons; France, 244 tons, as against 500 tons in 1893; Uruguay, 70 tons; and other countries the rest.

Some 349 tons of preserved vegetables and garden products, valued at 27,885*l.*, were imported in 1894. Spain sent 291 tons; the United States, 28 tons; Great Britain, 20 tons; France, 8 tons; and Germany, 2 tons.

The quantity of fruit imported was 472 tons, valued at 9,434*l.* Spain supplied 440 tons; the United States, 13 tons; Canada, 10 tons; and France and Santo Domingo the balance.

Indian corn, birdseed, oats, barley, and millet were imported to the value of 4,310*l.* (631 tons). The United States sent 520 tons; Spain, 110 tons; and other countries the remainder.

Corn-meal, and a small proportion of oatmeal, &c., were imported to the extent of 1,581 tons, valued at 15,807*l.*, of which the United States furnished the bulk (1,564 tons); Spain, 16 tons; and Great Britain and Germany, ½ ton each.

The amount of soup pastes, &c., imported in 1894 was 398 tons. Spain sent 240 tons; the United States, 142 tons; Italy, 6 tons; and France and Great Britain, 5 tons each.

Canned goods show an increase of 108 tons over the imports in 1893. 256 tons, valued at 46,000*l.*, were imported in 1894, Spain sending 143 tons; the United States, 94 tons; France, 11 tons; Great Britain, 4 tons; and other countries the balance.

The amount of biscuits, sweetmeats, chocolate, &c., imported into Porto Rico in 1894 was 567 tons (51857*l.*). Spain furnished 395 tons; the United States, 139 tons; Great Britain, 14 tons; France, Cuba, and Germany the rest.

There appears an increase of 382 tons of common soap imported in 1894 over the amount imported in 1893.

The imports were 2,204 tons, valued at 44,078*l.* Spain sent 2,171 tons, an increase of 424 tons; Great Britain furnished 19 tons, and the United States the remainder.

Wax and stearine candles to the value of 46,338*l.* (643 tons) were imported into Porto Rico in 1894. Spain supplied 463 tons; Great Britain, 50 tons; Cuba, 49 tons; the United States, 35 tons; Germany and Holland, 22 tons, each.

Chemicals, drugs, and mineral waters imported into Porto Rico in the years 1893-94 are compared in the following table:

Country	1893 Tons	1894 Tons
France	23	36
United States	18	204
Spain	17	82
Great Britain	16	40
Cuba and other countries	6	29
Total	80	391
	£	£
“ value	11,546	17,081

280 tons of fertilizers, valued at 1,523*l.*, were imported in 1894. The United States sent 211 tons; Great Britain, 31 tons; Germany, 22 tons; France and Spain the rest.

The amount of machinery and agricultural implements imported was 1,378 tons (55,305*l.*). Great Britain sent 778 tons, as against 667 tons in 1893; the United States, 325 tons; Belgium, 120 tons; Germany, 69 tons; France, 59 tons; and other countries.

Compared with 1893 there was a falling-off of 1,178 tons of metals imported in 1894. The total imports of the latter year were 6,263 tons, valued at 171,835*l.*

Spain furnished beer and cider, 19,517 gallons; wine, 857,721 gallons; spirits, 12,182 gallons; total, 919,420 gallons. Germany, beer, 68,971 gallons; wine, 71,685 gallons; spirits, 6,522 gallons; total, 147,178 gallons. France, a total of 21,755 gallons; Cuba, 19,766 gallons; Great Britain, 16,910 gallons; the United States, 13,075 gallons; Holland, Denmark; and Italy the balance.

Spain furnished 184 tons of printing paper, 54 tons of board, 787 tons of wrapping and miscellaneous paper, and nearly all the other items. The United States sent 51 tons of printing paper, 200 tons of wrapping and miscellaneous papers, and small proportion of the other kinds. Germany sent 51 tons of printing paper, 66 tons of board, 150 tons of wrapping and miscellaneous kinds, and a little of the rest. Great Britain provided 59 tons of board, and a very small portion of the other articles. France completes the remainder with a little of each class.

The imports of common grades of timber, such as pitch-pine, white pine, spruce, hemlock, &c. amounted to 16,503,000 superficial feet of re-sawed timber, and 7,883,000 superficial feet of "dressed" timber, making a total of 24,386,000 feet, board measure, valued at 122,471*l.* The United States furnished 14,753,000 superficial feet (76,752*l.*), and Canada sent 5,744,000 superficial feet, valued at 27,323*l.* The balance came from Cuba and Germany.

The same grades of timber manufactured into several articles were imported to the value of 47,216*l.* (622 tons). The United States sent 543 tons; Spain, 51 tons; Germany, 14 tons; and Great Britain, 11 tons.

Of fine woods in logs and boards, 189 tons were imported, valued at 5,312*l.*, of which the United States provided 170 tons; Cuba, 12 tons, and other countries the rest.

Fine woods manufactured (furniture principal), 153 tons were imported in 1894, valued at 58,447*l.* Spain supplied 59 tons; the United States, 54 tons; Germany, 29 tons; and other countries the rest.

According to the official statistics 652,000 loose staves, valued at 24,774*l.*, were imported in 1894. The United States furnished 415,000, and Canada the rest. Of hoops and staves in bundles, 3,349 tons were imported in 1894, the bulk coming from the United States (2,471 tons); Canada sent 147 tons, and other countries the rest.

Of cement, chalk, whiting, &c., 1,747 tons (10,484*l.*) were imported in 1894. Germany sent 877 tons; Spain, 385 tons; the United States, 364 tons; Great Britain and Colonies, 91 tons; and Belgium the balance.

During 1894 the imports of bricks, tiles and earthenware amounted to 484 tons (2,617*l.*). The United States sent 212 tons; Spain, 215 tons; Great Britain, 54 tons; other countries the rest.

Of marble and such stones 205 tons were imported. Spain furnished 80 tons; France, 70 tons; Italy, 18 tons; the United States, Great Britain, and Belgium the remainder.

The amount of porcelain and stoneware imported was 329 tons, valued at 18,150*l.* Germany sent 120 tons; Spain, 114 tons; Great Britain, 49 tons; and other countries the balance.

The quantity of glassware imported was 1,241 tons, valued at 31,592*l.* Germany furnished 492 tons; Spain, 384 tons; Great Britain, 102 tons; Denmark, 68 tons; France, 47 tons; and other countries the rest.

The total amount of paints of all descriptions and varnishes imported was 359 tons (19,152*l.*) Great Britain furnished 134 tons; the United States, 89 tons; Spain, 81 tons; Germany, 50 tons; France and Holland the remainder.

Linseed, cocoa-nut, and other vegetable oils (olive oil excepted) were imported to the extent of 151 tons, valued at 8,066*l.* Spain sent 79 tons; Great Britain, 50 tons; the United States, 21 tons; France and Cuba together, 1 ton.

Crude petroleum was imported from the United States to the amount of 1,287 tons (9,657*l.*) and of refined mineral oils 495 tons, valued at 11,869*l.*, were imported in 1894. Other countries only furnished 3 tons (79*l.*) of mineral oils.

Only 28 tons of turpentine were imported of which 25 tons came from the United States. Great Britain sent 2 tons, and Spain and Germany the rest.

Of resinous substances, 3,616*l.* worth (178 tons) were imported in 1894; 86 tons coming from the United States, and 75 tons from Spain. The remaining 17 tons were sent by several countries.

The amount of pitch and tar imported was 768 tons, valued at 3,842*l.* The United States sent 757 tons; Spain and Great Britain the remainder.

As stated in the introductory remarks on the general import trade coal fell short of the amount imported in 1893. The imports in 1894 amount to 17,107 tons (18,818*l.*), of which 14,852 tons came from the United States, 2,134 tons from Great Britain, [illegible] tons from Denmark, and 22 tons from Germany.

Straw hats were imported -from Spain, 2,260 dozen; France, 667 dozen; Germany, 511 dozen; Peru, 141 dozen; Austria, 100 dozen; Great Britain 78 dozen; and Cuba and the United States.

Felt hats were provided as follows: Spain set 9,774 dozen; Italy, 2,421 dozen; Great Britain, 985 dozen; France, 739 dozen; Germany, 624 dozen; and the United States, 503 dozen.

Caps were imported in the following proportion: Spain, 1,475 dozen; Great Britain, 333 dozen; France, 234 dozen; Germany, 33 dozen; and Cuba, 2 dozen.

The number of umbrellas and sunshades imported was 9,268 silk-lined, valued at 4,636*l.*; and 50,012 common ones, valued at 5,000*l.* Spain furnished 8,793 of the former and 48,997 of the latter; France, 139 silk-lined and 829 common umbrellas; Great Britain, 128 and 170 respectively; Italy, 112 silk-lined; Austria, 96 silk-lined; and Germany, 16 common ones.

The value of perfumery imported was 12,030*l.* (74 tons), as against 11,200*l.* in 1893. Spain sent 46 tons; France, 12 tons; the United States, 8 tons; Great Britain, 4 tons; and Germany, the remainder.

In 1892 the imports of shoes were valued at 123,380*l.*, and they rose in 1893 to 176,808*l.*; consequently there was a falling-off in 1894 as compared with the preceding year. Besides the above, 16,255 dozen pairs of cloth sandals with rope soles were imported in 1894, valued at 6,502*l.*

Spain furnished 39,440 dozen pairs of boots and shoes, and 15,972 dozen pairs of cloth sandals (alpargatas). The United States sent 370 dozen pairs of boots and shoes; France, 237 dozen ditto; Great Britain, 31 dozen pairs of boots and shoes, and 283 dozen pairs "alpargatas"; Germany supplied the balance.

There was an increase of 16 tons of leather over the amount imported in 1893. The quantity imported in 1894 was 56 tons. Spain sent 44 tons., and other countries the remainder.

The imports of saddlery and harness, travelling-bags, &c., amounted to 13,495*l.*, principally from Spain. Great Britain stood second with 2,325*l.* worth.

According to the official statistics, 1,030 vessels with 1,185,365 tons. entered the ports of this Island in 1894. Of these 683 were steamers and 347 sailing vessels.

The figures in 1893 were 4 vessels more, but 176,783 tons less. The departures are given at 1,017 vessels with 734,377 tons. This apparent discrepancy, which was also noticed in Mr. Consul Vecqueray's report last year, is due to many steamers coming from foreign ports calling at several ports on this Island, at each of which the entry is registered as from the foreign and not from the Island port she last come from, the departures for foreign ports only are given.

The nationalities of these vessels are not given in the statistics for 1894.

Of the 1,030 vessels that entered the ports of this Island, 841 (600 steamers and 241 sailing vessels) brought 142,100 tons of merchandise, and 803 (478 steamers and 325 sailing vessels) took away 81,203 tons of produce. The balance either arrived or sailed in ballast.

The number of vessels arriving from Great Britain and her possessions was as follows:

From	Number of Vessels	Tons
British Isles	120	176,301
Colonies	135	42,548
Total	255	218,849

The departures to British ports were:

To	Number of Vessels	Tons
British Isles	8	5,489
Colonies	88	12,635
Total	96	18,124

The public health of Porto Rico during 1896 was fairly good. At the beginning of the year there were a few cases of yellow fever amongst the troops, but there has been no recurrence of the disease since. Smallpox, too, has only occurred in a sporadic form, without spreading. At present the only disease that prevails is the measles, and some deaths have been registered. Steps are being taken to control the sickness.

The contract for the waterworks with an English company lapsed some time ago, and the municipality solicited tenders for the "material" necessary for commencing the works under the supervision of the city architect. The contract was let on June 30 last, and the tenders included about 3,197 tons of cast-iron socket pipes of various dimensions.

72 tons of 50 cm. flanged pipes, T's, bends, angles, &c., for all the above.

64 sluice valves, 31 assorted valves, 9 air valves, 11 drinking fountains, 202 hydrants, 1 spiral staircase, 2 twin compound duplex, high and low pressure pumping engines, each capable of raising 100 litres per second to a height of 50 metres, through 850 metres in length of 50 cm. pipes. Two multitubular boilers for same, and the requisite suction and delivery pipes and other items.

Three bids were made for the above, one representing English manufactures, another representing Scotch and American interests, and a third representing a Belgian manufactory. The first-named was for very first-class material and was too high, there being a difference of about 2,000*l.* in the total amount as compared with the Belgian tender. Another drawback to the English tender was that the metric dimensions were substituted by English tender was that the metric dimensions were substituted by English sizes, and 20 inch pipes were offered instead of 50-cm. pipes, 14-inch (35.5 cm.) instead of 35 cm., and so on. The second tender lost the contract of the pipes for a matter of about 6*d.* a ton, but obtained the contract for the pumping-engines and boilers. The Belgian tender was for 5*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* per ton, cost, freight, and insurance for the 3,269 tons of pipes, and 8*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* for the pieces of special construction.

The telephone systems of San Juan, Ponce, and Mayagüez, have been recently contracted for by local syndicates.

A company was formed in this city with the object of presenting tenders, for the telephone systems at Ponce, Mayagüez, and San Juan. They obtained the concession for San Juan and Mayagüez, but at Ponce another tender was accepted.

An American company obtained the contract for the material, and there are 100 stations already connected and in operation in this city, and it is expected that in another month 200 more will be in operation.

The harbour works at San Juan have progressed very slowly in 1896. The principal improvement was the building of a fine iron shed on the new wharf extension, but so far this shed is of little use, and will not be for some time to come.

The dredger, lighters, and tugs are in a very poor condition, and are to be sent to St. Thomas for repairs. This will occasion much delay, and little work of any importance will be done in 1897.

An English manufacturing firm has obtained contracts for improved sugar machinery, and has erected it on several sugar plantations in 1896.

Owing to the troubled state of affairs in Cuba, and the destruction of the tobacco plantations in Pinar del Río, prices here have increased abnormally. The commonest grades even,

which a few months ago sold for 4 dol. per 100 lbs. are now sold at 25 dol. per 100 lbs. In consequence of this a very large amount of tobacco has been planted in this Island, and the crop which has just now begun to be cut will be the largest ever known here. The plants look very healthy, and the quality promises to maintain the high standard produced by Porto Rico.

The scarcity of good roads in Porto Rico will be slowly remedied. Works are in progress on the principal roads, and many are projected. The "consumption" tax on liquors and petroleum has been ceded by the State to the Municipalities exclusively for repairing and improving country roads. This will be a great help to the country.

The Government tried to obtain tenders for several light railways, but the subsidy offered was not a sufficient inducement for anybody to undertake the lines offered. A company has been formed for building a narrow gauge railroad between the towns of Río Piedras and Caguas, in connection with the line that runs from this city to the first-name town. There are some hopes of this scheme being carried through, as I am informed that the Government has promised its co-operation, and will probably grant a subsidy.

The change in the currency of this Island has so far not been a success. Exchanges was for a little time stationary, but as soon as the exports grew less the rate rose accordingly. This proves that the Mexican dollar was not the cause of the rapid fluctuations in exchange. The average rate during 1896 was 7 dol. 65c. to the *1l*, sterling, but it has since been as high as 8 dol. 5c. to the *1l*.

The Banco Español has continued to do a large business. The balance sheet for 1896 shows a net profit to be distributed of 151,427 dol. 30c.

The paid-up capital was only 25 per cent of the amount subscribed, and as the bank has recently contracted with the municipality for a loan of 500,000 dol., the directors recommended that the bank's capital should be increased to 50 per cent of the subscribed capital.

This was done, and its capital will now be:

	Amount
	Dollars
Paid-up capital	750,000
Reserve fund	112,500
Total	862,500

The Banco Territorial y Agrícola has been in some difficulties in 1896, owing to the financial crisis produced by the failure of the coffee crop. There was a "run" on the bank, which was met by funds subscribed by the merchants of this city and by the principal shareholders. The paid-up capital of the bank will be increased by 6,000 shares, 100 dol. each, that are now being subscribed. These shares are payable in four yearly payments of 25 dol.

The number of cattle and animals of all kinds on the island in October, 1896, was as follows:

	Head
Horses and mares	65,751
Mules	4,467
Asses	717
Oxen and cows	303,612

Sheep	2,055
Goats	5,779
Swine	13,411

The present Governor, General Marín, is taking interest in extending the system of public education. The number of public schools in the island is not really deficient, but the system is not a success, and as no steps have as yet been taken to make education compulsory, it is to be feared that for many years to come the lower classes will continue uneducated.

There have been no new sections of the French Company's railroad opened to traffic during 1896, however business has increased on their lines.

At present there are four sections running daily trains, viz.:

	Kilometres
San Juan to Camuy	100
Martín Peña to Carolina	14
Aguadilla to Mayagüez	46
Yauco to Ponce	35
Total	195

Making a total of a little over 121 English miles

137,422 passengers travelled in these lines during 1896, about 16½ per cent more than in 1895.

The gross receipts increased by 18,262 dol. (about 3,652l., at 5 dol. to the 1l.) over those in 1895 and amounted to 251,191 dol.

The concession was revoked last year by the Spanish Government, but I understand that the Company is endeavouring to have the revocation cancelled and obtain a new extension of time to complete the original contract of about 283 miles in length.

The Committee of Agriculture has just published its official statistics on the cultivation of the rural districts in Porto Rico.

In the explanatory remarks the Committee says:

“In speaking in general terms of the products cultivated by Porto Rican Agriculturists, it should be borne in mind that in the island there is none of the stability and fixedness to be observed in Europe, where lands are cultivated with the same products from year to year.

The only fixed crops in Porto Rico are coffee and cocoa, the latter on an insignificant scale. Even sugar cane and tobacco can hardly be considered such, if the value of the crops in a certain town is to be estimated.

Taking sugar plantations, for example, it is to be noticed that great extensions on some are abandoned to pasturage one year, whilst on others pasture lands are cultivated with sugar cane which had never before been.

When the price of tobacco is small the crops are abandoned. This accounts for the great difference in exports from one year to another.

Of the other products only Indian corn acquires some importance when prices are favourable. In consequence the exact value of the crops changes entirely from one year to the following.

The total quantities of "declared" land cultivated is as follows:

Crops	Area
	Cuerdas
Sugar-cane	61,498.23
Coffee	122,399.76
Tobacco	4,264.07
Lesser products	93,511.08
Vegetables, &c.	16,277.23
Pasture	1,127,537.55
Others	661,273.37
Total	2,089,761.29

NOTE: It must be taken into account that these figures change considerably from year to year. The total land declared is 2,089,761 20/100 cuerdas, which reduced at the official equivalent, is 852,578.50 hectares; but as the corrected equivalent is really 821,359 hectares, or about 8,213 square kiloms. (3,171 square miles).

The island of Porto Rico is about 9,500 square kiloms. in extent (about 3,268 square miles). The difference between the rural property and the total extent of the island is thus 1,287 square kiloms. which are taken up by the towns, roads, rivers, bays, &c.

Sugar cane is cultivated to the extent of 25,090 hectares. The districts where sugar cane is produced on the largest scale are:

	Area
	Hectares
Ponce	2,618
Juana Díaz	1,718
Vieques	1,398
Arecibo	1,391
San Germán	1,993

There are about 49,937 hectares of land on which coffee is cultivated, two-thirds of the whole being cultivated in the following districts: Utuado, Las Marías, Adjuntas, Maricao, Ponce, Lares, Mayagüez, Yauco, San Sebastián, Ciales, Barros, and Juana Díaz. Of the seven districts in which the Island is divided, Ponce, Mayagüez and Arecibo are the largest producers. It is estimated that every hectare of coffee plantations average in production 476 kilos.

In Annexes C and D will be found the total distribution of lands in the seven departmental districts of Porto Rico and their declared values.

MAYAGÜEZ

Mr. Vice Consul Monefeldt reports as follows:

Trade and commerce in the district of Mayagüez, Porto Rico, have not developed satisfactorily during the year 1896, as the crops of coffee and sugar have continued dwindling in importance, particularly the latter, as compared to former year's average yield.

The exports of coffee from this port have been

Year	Quantity
	Tons
In 1896	6,057
" 1895	5,134
" 1894	7,954

While sugar exported has fallen off from

Year	Quantity
	Tons
In 1894	5,246
" 1895	5,555
" 1896	4,013

Imports have been in sympathy with the poor outrun of crops, and affected most injuriously by the continued high rate of exchange which has been on the average of 7 dol. 55c. to the 1l. sterling during the year.

The total number of vessels which entered this port during 1896 was 776, of 309,081 tons burthen; of which 598, of 176,855 tons, were coasters and other Spanish craft, and among them there were 66 British vessels, steam and sailing, aggregating 47,703 tons burthen.

The value of imports by British vessels during the year have been

	Value
	£
Direct	27,736
Indirect	120,292
Total	148,028

While the exports have been in British bottoms

	Value
	£
Direct	6,359
Indirect	50,434
Total	56,793

The direct trade being principally with Nova Scotia.

There has been no new work on the line of the Porto Rico Railway Company during the past year, so that the extension carried out as far as Hormigueros, to connect with Yauco, not being open to traffic, is as if it did not exist.

The Compañía de Ferrocarriles de Vía Estrecha de Mayagüez has been prosecuting energetically the opening up of the road from Añasco to Lares and as additional share capital is being called in the completion of the enterprise in the course of next year is probable.

The Urban Tramway Company continues working satisfactorily, and the Electric Light Company referred to last year has been inaugurated successfully.

PONCE

Mr. Vice Consul Toro reports as follows:

As in former years, sugar, molasses and coffee continue to be the principal exports of this district.

Tobacco, which so far had been cultivated on a comparatively small scale, will add greatly to value of exports of next year, as large fields of it have been planted in anticipation of high prices owing to the insurrection in Cuba. The quality of the tobacco is good, and its principal markets now the Island of Cuba and Spain.

The sugar crop was larger than last year and higher prices prevailed. As a natural consequence exports of molasses were also larger and prices better.

Coffee also showed a much larger yield compared to last year's crop thus on the whole 1896 can be considered a prosperous year, for this district.

Average rate of exchange on London was about 7 dol. 40 c., to the 1l. sterling.

Trade with the Dominion of Canada continues to be of importance, with Nova Scotia especially, from where lumber, potatoes, dry and pickled fish are continually and largely imported 29 cargoes per sailing vessels, besides a monthly steamer from Halifax always with full cargo, were received during the year.

Cleaned rice and all sorts of manufactured goods continue to be the principal imports from England, it is, however, almost impossible to obtain locally from the customhouse an exact value of those goods.

During the year the following vessels entered this port:

	Number of Vessels	Tons
Foreign sailing vessels	90	21,187
Spanish	17	5,253
Foreign steamers	133	187,366
Spanish	108	227,982

Coasting steamships (Spanish flag)	102	24,652
“ schooners	264	7,525
Total	714	473,965

Of the 90 foreign sailing vessels 52 were British, of the 133 foreign steamers only 24 were British.

Pilotage and port charges continue unchanged.

Harbour works progress but slowly, the harbour dues at the rate of 50c. per ton of cargo landed gave during the year 20,654 dol. 41 c., adding to this the yearly Government subsidy of 6,000 dol., and the one of the municipality of Ponce of 3,800 dol., gives a total of 30,454 dol. 41 c., of which sum only 12,489 dol. were expended on the wharf which I reported last year as being constructed, and which continues yet in construction. The balance of funds went principally to pay salaries, rents, &c., at this rate many years will pass before anything definite is done.

A company has been formed to establish electric light in the city and port of Ponce, the necessary capital (60,000 dol.) has been subscribed locally, and the plant ordered from New York.

A private party has obtained from Government a concession to run electric cars between the port, and city of Ponce, covering also a few of the principal streets, in all about four miles; no contracts for building the road have as yet been made.

A mine of magnetic iron ore of fine quality has been found at a short distance from this city, but so far the owner of it has not decided whether to work or sell it.

The savings bank mentioned in last year's report continues working successfully, and gave a dividend of 12½ per cent.

Customhouse duties are enormous about 1,250,000 dol. were collected by the customhouse of Ponce during the year.

Public health in the port and city has been good throughout the year and free of epidemics. A large military hospital has been constructed this year, there are thus now five hospitals in this city, all well kept.

POLÍTICA

LA DURA TRANQUILIDAD COLONIAL

Fue en el plano político que los cónsules extranjeros fueron peor recibidos –en todo el sentido de la palabra– en Puerto Rico. De hecho, pasaron siglos antes de que el gobierno español se dignara a considerar la posibilidad de tolerar un representante de la diplomacia extranjera en las colonias que tan celosamente protegía. Y aún a fines del siglo 18, los representantes comerciales extranjeros que admitió España en sus colonias, no osaban utilizar el título de “cónsul” por temor a ofender a las autoridades. Dicho título tenía demasiadas implicaciones diplomáticas (entiéndase “políticas”) por lo cual utilizaban el de “agentes comerciales” para no lastimar las sensibilidades españolas.⁸⁶

Aún entrado el siglo 19, los cónsules británicos en Puerto Rico se quejaban del resentimiento del que eran objeto por parte de las autoridades españolas si intentaban inmiscuirse u ofrecer su opinión en asuntos que no fueran puramente comerciales. De manera que quizás la mejor postura que un cónsul extranjero pudiera adoptar durante su servicio en una colonia española era la del logo de la Foreign Office: “Never complain. Never explain”. Sin embargo, esto no impedía que tuvieran opiniones personales, ni que hicieran partícipes de esas percepciones a sus superiores.

En general, la opinión que tenían los diplomatas extranjeros de las autoridades españolas en Puerto Rico, no era nada halagadora. Las sensibilidades francesas y anglosajonas, imbuidas de un orgullo ilustracionista, encontraban que la política que perseguía España en su pequeña colonia era elitista, nacionalista, nepotista y anticuada. Tal política colonial favorecedora del comercio de la metrópoli en detrimento del extranjero, era, sobre todo, una política retrógrada, hostil a las modernas ideas relacionadas con el libremercado que habían hecho de las potencias del Atlántico del Norte poderes económicos envidiables y ejemplos a seguir.

Es fácil ver la paja en el ojo ajeno y es interesante comparar la política colonial seguida por España con la británica, por ejemplo.⁸⁷ Veríanse entonces ciertas discrepancias entre la política económica liberal seguida en el ámbito doméstico, y una realidad mucho más restrictiva en la esfera colonial.

Pero no nos toca aquí juzgar la sinceridad de los cónsules ni sus conocimientos sobre la política económica que seguían sus respectivos países en sus colonias (Queda claro que en el caso de Estados Unidos, no existía en aquel entonces una política colonial como tal). Lo que importa es la opinión que tenían sobre la situación política operante en Puerto Rico durante las últimas décadas del siglo 19. En cuanto a esto encontramos ciertas semejanzas y ciertos contrastes en los documentos que publicamos en este tomo.

Es notable la diferencia, tanto cuantitativa como cualitativa en los documentos disponibles de los tres consulados de la época. Resalta enseguida, lo prolífico de la obra corresponsal de algunos de los cónsules franceses (Emile Coste y Le Brun). Detallaban, mejor que sus colegas, los altibajos de la política colonial española en Puerto Rico y de la

⁸⁶ Roy F. Nicols, “Trade Relations and the Establishment of the United States Consulates in Spanish America, 1779-1809”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. XIII, no. 3, 1933, pp. 298-299.

⁸⁷ Ver comentario relacionado con las actitudes y la forma de gobierno de Gran Bretaña hacia sus colonias en Emma Dávila Cox, “Este inmenso comercio”: *Las relaciones mercantiles entre Puerto Rico y Gran Bretaña, 1844-1898*. Universidad de Puerto Rico e Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1996, pp. 319-321. Véase también, D.K. Fieldhouse, *Colonialism, 1870-1945*. Londres, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981, *passim*.

opinión pública puertorriqueña. Cada vez que había un cambio de gobernador, el cónsul francés rendía un detallado informe sobre la actitud personal de éste hacia la colonia, sobre sus tendencias políticas, sobre sus intenciones en cuanto a la economía de la isla y cómo éstas comparaban con las de su predecesor. Sin embargo, es interesante notar las fechas de dichos informes franceses. Todos los publicados en esta sección pertenecen a la década del 1870, muy importante para la historia del país.

Desde el punto de vista económico, la década de 1870 fue un período de transición. Corresponde a la época de la gran crisis azucarera: la oferta aumenta de forma inusitada, mientras que la demanda crece de manera mesurada; los precios, por ende, bajan drásticamente. Las grandes fortunas de las elites criollas puertorriqueñas, fundadas en el azúcar, enfrentan un serio problema. No hace mucho que empezó la guerra de independencia en Cuba contra España (1868-1878), avivada, en cuanto a lo económico, por razones idénticas. En Lares se vivió una situación de rebelión contra el sistema colonial. Importantes sectores de la sociedad puertorriqueña llevan años exigiendo la abolición de la esclavitud que, en palabras del cónsul francés, resulta ya, a esas alturas un anacronismo social y un símbolo de falta de civilización. Y más importante aún: la esclavitud, al menos en Puerto Rico, ha dejado de ser un sistema económico viable. Añádase a esta receta el conjunto de dificultades y sublevaciones políticas, sociales y económicas por las cuales estaba pasando España en esta azarosa década, y entendemos por qué los prolíficos cónsules franceses de los 1870 nos presentan un panorama de inestabilidad política en el Puerto Rico de aquella época.

Es cierto que la cantidad de detalle que ofreciera sobre tema alguno un cónsul tenía mucho que ver con su carácter personal y su dedicación e interés en cuanto a su puesto. Charles T. Bidwell, entre los cónsules ingleses, era amigo de los informes detallados y ofrece comentarios amplios sobre la sociedad, economía, política y hasta la historia de Puerto Rico a la Foreign Office. Pero, en general, no deja de ser notorio lo reducido del número de los comunicados consulares británicos y norteamericanos sobre asuntos puramente políticos, sobre todo en la turbulenta década del 1870, que sus colegas franceses cubren tan eficientemente.

En contraste al panorama de inestabilidad que nos presentan los cónsules franceses, los británicos insisten que en la Isla reina la tranquilidad. El comercio británico con Puerto Rico en el siglo 19 era mucho más amplio que el francés. Este comercio era el interés primordial de los representantes oficiales del gobierno británico y mientras la situación política no tuviera consecuencias nocivas en los trámites mercantiles, a los cónsules poco les interesaba rendir detallados informes sobre la política local. Por lo general, dedicaban un párrafo introductorio en sus informes comerciales anuales a resumir la situación política y cómo ésta afectaba el comercio.⁸⁸ El cónsul Cowper resume bien esta actitud en la primera oración de su informe comercial de 1871: "The frequent changes in the Executive Government, although producing a vibrating influence upon the political parties in the island, do not appear to effect [*sic.*] its commercial stability".⁸⁹

Los cónsules estadounidenses muestran un poco más de interés en la política local que los británicos, pero tampoco le dedican demasiada atención. Critican la falta de democracia del gobierno colonial con más vehemencia y moralismo que sus colegas

⁸⁸ Véanse los informes comerciales anuales de los cónsules británicos publicados en este volumen en la sección de "Economía y Sociedad".

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

británicos y franceses y ciertamente, antes del 1898, bien podían darse ese lujo. Censuran, al igual que los otros cónsules, los fraudes electorales y el nepotismo y hacen alguna mención sobre sentimientos pro-americanos en la Isla, algo que también comenta en alguna ocasión el cónsul francés, pero que los británicos jamás mencionan.

En general, la visión que nos brindan los cónsules extranjeros sobre la situación política en el Puerto Rico de fines del siglo 19, es sobria. Hasta los detallados informes franceses de la década del 1870 repiten en varias ocasiones que en la Isla reina la tranquilidad a pesar de los numerosos cambios de gobierno y los disturbios políticos de la Península. La posibilidad de una rebelión armada al estilo de la cubana les parece a todos muy remota, y aunque están de acuerdo en que los hijos del país resienten muchos aspectos del gobierno colonial, igualmente concuerdan en que los disturbios políticos en Puerto Rico son poco frecuentes y que éstos afectan mínimamente el trajín económico y el comercio del país, que, al fin y al cabo, era para los cónsules extranjeros, su principal razón de ser.

Claro está, los cónsules critican desde una tarima privilegiada. Los Estados Unidos, por ejemplo, no habían inaugurado su gran expansionismo extra-continental. Es decir, todavía no tenían la viga en el ojo propio; de ahí sus discretas incomodidades o los silencios oportunos ante los extremos del colonialismo español (su socio mercantil hasta fines de siglo). A partir del 98, la república nortea se empeñó en construir un imperio sin colonias (pero con territorios “no incorporados”), con carta blanca para congelar las soberanías tropicales mediante desembarcos militares o represalias comerciales.

Los testimonios consulares del colonialismo tardío estadounidense contrastan con los de los británicos y franceses que arrastraban una rica experiencia en el dominio de tierras ajenas. Así, el sistema imperial inglés experimentó, antes del siglo 19, con asambleas representativas en sus primeras colonias caribeñas (e.g. Barbados y Jamaica), y en el siglo 19 en las islas adquiridas de Francia (Grenada, Dominica, y St. Vincent). Esas asambleas respondían a los intereses de las capas propietarias y de la monarquía británica. Sin embargo, en otras colonias, las llamadas *Crown Colonies* (e.g. St. Lucía y Trinidad), destacó el papel preponderante del gobernador colonial. Pero en ambos sistemas el descontento de los colonos desembocó, en ocasiones, en el rompimiento agrario y definitivo (como en las 13 colonias británicas de Norteamérica) o en la inestabilidad endémica de Jamaica y otras posesiones en las Antillas Menores. Fueran colonias “reales” (donde el gobernador gobernaba y mandaba) o colonias “legislativas”, no dejaron de ser subalternas de Gran Bretaña.

En el imperio francés también existieron “colonias reales”, con cuerpos consultivos y hasta con representación directa en la Asamblea Nacional de París (1789-1815). Pero la restauración monárquica dio marcha atrás al liberalismo napoleónico y le negó a las colonias del Caribe el poder legislativo y la representación en el parlamento metropolitano. A partir de 1848, las prerrogativas electorales de los colonos franceses se dilataron o se achicaron al vaivén de los azares políticos de la madre patria y no fue hasta después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial que las Antillas francesas se tornaron en departamentos integrales de la Francia liberada, culminando el proceso asimilista iniciado en 1870.

En fin, los funcionarios de las tres grandes potencias exhibieron y destacaron un colonialismo ilustrado que contrastaba con el dominio colonial español anquilosado y pomposo. Por eso sus miradas críticas dicen tanto del desbarajuste español como de sí mismos, portadores del evangelio imperial moderno.

CARTAS CONSULARES NORTEAMERICANAS

[69] From Alexander Jourdan, Consul at St. John's, to Honorable William H. Seward, Secretary of State, January 5th, 1869⁹⁰

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit herewith two copies of the electoral Decree published on the 3rd instant in the official Gazette of Porto Rico. This document, which was anxiously looked for, has been received by some with approbation and discontent by others, according to the diversity of opinions existing in this Island about the domestic institution.

The Minister of the Colonies acknowledges at first the necessity of introducing into the provinces of Cuba and Porto Rico political and administrative reforms, for which the judgment of the colonists, duly expressed by their delegates in the constituent assembly, is expected by the Supreme Government; after that, he explains how a special electoral decree was necessary for a country, where the population, unequally disseminated, is large in some places and scarce in others; where, on account of political and social reasons, the universal suffrage is not applicable; finally where unprepared and indiscriminate changes, instead of gradual measures, would throw all into confusion, since even in more enlightened countries, the transition from a limited condition of civil right to an entire liberty is not exempt of danger and convulsions.

This preamble shows clearly the intentions of the Provisional Government and is intended to justify the following restrictions applied to that electoral Decree.

According to the last census, the number of eleven Deputies for the Island of Cuba and seven for Porto Rico has been agreed upon.

The Island of Porto Rico is divided in three circumscriptions: 1st, the city of St. John's, Naguabo and Guayama; 2nd Aguadilla and Arecibo; 3rd Ponce and Mayagüez.

The elector and eligible must be [a] Spanish subject, in full exercise of his civil rights and pay an income tax of one hundred dollars.

The right of voting is granted to the members belonging to the economic society of the friends of the country and to the scientific and literary corporations, to the Doctors and Licenciates in universities, to the clergymen, to the public officers of the administration and the judiciary; to the Navy and Army Officers of all ranks, on active service or retired lists, to the painters and sculptors rewarded in the national or international exhibitions; finally to the professors and teachers employed in public schools.

An additional section prescribes that, attending the exceptionable state of affairs actually existing in the Island of Cuba and the necessity to allow due time to make the electoral lists, this Provisional Government will dispose, by another decree, when the elections for Deputies to the Constituent Assembly will take place in these provinces.

Such is the substance of the electoral law and at one view, it is plain that the right of voting is quite limited and will favor greatly the Conservative Party; the requisite of an income tax of one hundred dollars and the full exercise of civil rights excludes from the polls the small proprietors and shop-keepers and, at large, the colored population, when at the same time the right of suffrage is extended to all the military and civil officers who are quite numerous, the most part of them from the metropolis and having no personal interest or property in this Island will of course support the Government's candidates.

⁹⁰ Despacho No. 113.

If, by this first reform we are to judge of the others so long promised and expected, the opinion which I took the liberty to express on this subject, in my dispatch No. 101, will be fully justified.

I am, Sir with the highest respect,
Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] A. Jourdan
United States Consul

[70] From Alexander Jourdan, Consul at St. John's to Honorable William H. Seward, Secretary of State, February 13, 1869⁹¹

Sir:

Begging respectfully reference to my dispatch No. 113, I have the honor to transmit herewith a new disposition of the Minister of the Colonies in Spain, amending the Electoral Law.

The number of seven Deputies previously fixed for this Island has been extended to eleven, making about one for each 50,000 inhabitants, slaves not included. The free population amounts to 612,442, white and colored people summed together, as the latter has the right of suffrage.

The income tax required to be inscribed in the electoral list has been reduced from one hundred to twenty five dollars.

Those two amendments are of great importance. The defects of the primitive decree were so obvious that the Spanish Government came at last to perceive that the number of electors would be very limited if the dispositions of the law were strictly complied with.

No change has been made in the number of circumscriptions: the city of St. John's, Naguabo and Guayama will elect four Deputies; Aguadilla and Arecibo, three, and Ponce and Mayagüez, four.

No orders have been given to proceed to the elections on account of the state of things in Cuba, and I think they will be indefinitely postponed.

Precautions are taken here against the introduction of suspicious passengers into this Island. The requisite of a passport is indispensable and masters of vessels are informed that, as soon as they come to anchor, they must exhibit the roll and list of all passengers on board and deliver their passport to the Government's agent, who will call on board for that purpose with the health officer.

Passengers are also instructed to report themselves, as soon as landed, to the Captain General's office and declare to what purpose they come to this Island. The want of a passport can be supplied by a guaranty subscribed by two persons of responsibility residing in this country.

I beg to enclose herewith a copy of the circular relative to passengers, communicated by the Superior Civil Government to the foreign consuls in this city, with request to give notice of it to the masters of vessels of their respective nations.

Those dispositions prove that the Government is not satisfied with the state of this Island; in fact, the last amnesty did not produce the effect which was expected or alter at all the public opinion. The Captain General seems aware of it and has made known indirectly that he is ready to crush down, with the utmost rigor and without mercy, any new attempt to an insurrection, being disposed to convert the whole country to ruins rather than to allow another flag to float upon it.

In spite of that severity, subversive publications are introduced daily, exciting the people to follow the example of the Cubans and to avail of the present state of affairs in Spain, to proclaim the independence and the annexation to the United States. I am told that the most part

⁹¹ Despacho No. 135.

of those publications are dated from New York, but I rather believe they are printed in Saint Thomas or Santo Domingo; many have been seized lately.

In the meantime, troops are sent to Cuba from Spain to put down the insurrection, but the season is advancing and the climate may prove to them more destructive than the balls of the insurgents. Spain might have retained without sacrifice of men and money her colonies by giving, in time, a government of the country by the country. I fear, even should the Spanish Government be disposed to do it, that now it is too late. The hatred of the natives against the Spaniards is so inveterate that I believe that no concession whatever will now satisfy those Islands which have resolved on a definitive separation from their metropolis; confidence is lost and force will only decide the question.

I am, Sir, with the highest respect,
 You obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] A. Jourdan
 United States Consul

[71] From Alexander Jourdan, Consul at St. John's, to Honorable Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, April 16, 1869⁹²

Sir:

I have the honor to inform you that on the 15th instant the Spanish man-of-war steamer "San Francisco de Borja", having on board 290 revolutionists transported from Havana to Fernando Po has put into this harbor on account of some damage in her machinery.

The prisoners are guarded on board by eighty volunteers and 25 marines. The ship will proceed on her voyage as soon as repaired, but no day can yet be fixed. In the meantime, all the guards round the landing place and the Arsenal were doubled and the prisoners are carefully watched outside and inside of the steamer. Her arrival has produced a great excitement in town.

This port continues to be visited by steamers loaded with troops for Cuba. A battalion of Catalonian Volunteers from Barcelona passed last week going to Havana and this day the Spanish mail packet has arrived with another regiment on board. I understand that the Captain General of this Island expects this month sixteen hundred men to reinforce the Army here and he is taking extraordinary precautions to be ready in case of events. By his order, the man-of-war steamer, in special service at this port, has been performing a cruise of fifteen days along the northern coast of Porto Rico, watching, it is supposed, the passage of the Peruvian monitors on their way to Saint Thomas. Large supplies of arms and munitions have been received from Spain to fortify this Island, and the walls surrounding this city are provided with guns and show a warlike appearance; the soldiers on duty have night and day their guns loaded and go and discharge them every morning shooting at a white mark, in the way of exercise, under the parapets of the palace; and the Captain General goes frequently to visit the barracks.

However, nobody knows the motive of so much display, which only creates anxiety; everywhere in the Island tranquillity is observed and certainly there is no fear at present of an insurrectionary movement. In the country, planters are busy with the harvest as usual and the produce is sold at a fair price; the rural labors for the next crop, are carefully attended and, very likely, it will be a large one, on account of the large increase of planting on the sugar estates in expectation of a high price, owing to the deficit which will be felt in the Island of Cuba.

Some destructive fires have been reported at Ponce and Vieques but they proved to be casual. In fact, a general tranquillity prevails in this Island and will certainly prevail for some time, because there are no elements neither sufficient strength and means to sustain a serious rebellion. The country being generally open and of a free access everywhere, would offer but

⁹² Despacho No. 149.

little resistance to the troops and be soon subdued. The insurrection here is not to be feared except supported by a foreign protection.

The Captain General, in his conversations with me, appeared very anxious to know the policy which will be followed by our new administration with regard to the affairs of Cuba; and inquired particularly about the views of General Grant on the matter. I answered him that I had no notion whatever concerning the intentions of our Government, my instructions being limited to act with circumspection and prudence; that the neutrality observed heretofore may be maintained as long as the citizens of the United States and their interests in these Islands will be duly respected and protected, in case of need, by the local authorities.

I generally avoid to converse upon matters connected with the present condition of affairs in Cuba, though at the same time, I take a special care in keeping up the good feelings which exist in this country toward the United States.

I am, Sir, with the greatest respect,
Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] A. Jourdan
United States Consul

[72] From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to Honorable Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, December 28, 1869⁹³

Sir:

I would respectfully inform the Department that some months ago this Government, being sorely pressed for revenue, the Captain General called a meeting of the merchants of this capital and begged them to advance \$600.00 dollars upon their Custom House duties. He obtained a considerable amount of subscribers and then suddenly announced that he did not require the money. This gave rise to various conjectures, but the real reason of this conduct no doubt was that he could not obtain the amount which he required. The exigencies of the Government, however, became so pressing that it was difficult for an observer to conceive how it could have continued its functions had it not obtained money for all the government officers, civil, military and naval were five months in arrears of pay, and those who were wholly dependent upon it were plunged into the more lamentable difficulties. The soldiers were only paid, for obvious reasons unnecessary to mention and as the funds at the disposal of the Government are always applied to these purposes, it may be readily imagined that every public work and all public institution are in abeyance. The Captain General, therefore, recently announced that he would visit the chief ports and towns of the Island and personally explain the position of the Government and his proposals for its relief. The dread which General Sanz inspires among every class is something unaccountable, for he has done no sanguinary act to maintain the tranquility of the Island, but has confined himself to mysterious threats, to arbitrary banishment and when he is thwarted, to gross insults. Nevertheless, persons in the first positions dare not contradict him and only criticize his acts in whispers.

Before leaving for his cruise round the Island, he called another meeting here in the capital where the number of Spaniards or "Peninsulares" is great and amongst whom he is naturally popular. He stated that the Government was in great difficulties and that those difficulties reacted to the detriment of commerce; he therefore begged the commercial body to advance him \$600.00 dollars for which "Bonos de Tesoro" would be immediately issued, receivable at the Custom House for duties during a period to extend over but not to exceed six months; that the proposed, after receiving the money to reduce the expenditures of the Island in such a manner, that a saving to the amount of the loan would be effected within the six months so that the Government would then start fairly. "I am a soldier" said the Captain General "and know

⁹³ Despacho No. 28.

little about figures, but if you will give me the money I shall be very thankful to you; if not, I am indifferent I have other means of obtaining it and shall employ them, and I shall know and find out who are and who are not patriots." His Excellency thus obtained \$147,650 dollars in this Capital. He left the next day in the corvette. "Blasco de Garay" upon his cruise.

The feelings of the merchants both at Ponce and Mayagüez were opposed to the loan; nevertheless, he obtained the following contributions:

St. John's the capital	\$147,650
Mayagüez	60,000
Ponce	34,000
Guayama and Arroyo	18,000
Aguadilla	27,000
Naguabo	3,000
Humacao	30,000
Fajardo	8,500
Arecibo	19,820
Total	\$347,970

or little more than one half of his requirements and it is particularly remarkable that the important and wealthy city of Ponce gave \$34,000 dollars only; but the principal merchants at Ponce are either foreigners or naturalized Insulares who have no desire to oblige the Captain General. At Aguadilla part of the money was obtained by a hint that their political prisoners would be liberated if the merchants behaved handsomely and at Humacao the greater part of the merchants are "Peninsulares".

But quite independent of politics the security is bad and no one would have voluntarily lent their money upon it. First, the Captain General in his manifesto promises that the "Bonos" shall be redeemed in six months without interest, whilst in the Intendants' announcement that he will sanction their issue and receive them back for custom House duties, there is a mysterious and very unsatisfactory allusion to the possibility their not being redeemed for two years. Besides, what security is there that the successor of General Sanz will recognize these arrangements at all, or what security that the promised reduction of expenditure will take place? All precedent is against the hope of either. The loan is immediately to be applied to the payment of arrears of salary, and then? It is not a question of six months hence, but now, can the Government go on without the whole of the Custom House and other revenues? It has been unable to do so with it; the probability, therefore, is that General Sanz [s] successor will be forced by his necessities to repudiate his engagements and that some other arrangement will be made which cannot fail to be detrimental to the holders of the "Bonos".

These exceptional acts, these forced loans, repudiations and other extraordinary operations of Spanish finance are entirely owing to the extravagance of the Government, at home or in the Colonies, in peace or in war everything must be carried out on the grandest scale, and until Spain herself and her possessions are regarded by their rulers as something else than huge Government offices created by nature as nests for government employees the same system must infallibly continue.

The Captain Generals salary is	\$20,000
“ Office of Administration	25,000
“ Intendente	10,000
“ Contador	3,000
“ Treasurer	3,000
“ Regent	6,000
“ Judges four (Four thousand each)	16,000
“ Bishop	12,100
“ Other clerical employees	22,600
“ Brigadier	6,000
“ Brigadier employees	6,760
“ Second Captain General	10,000

The estimate of expenses for the service of the government for the year 1869-70 are the same nearly as for 1868-69 Viz.

The General obligations	\$223,235
“ Judiciary	250,000
“ Department of War	1,500,000
“ Department of the Treasury	1,600,000
“ Department of the Navy	200,000
“ Department of the Interior	200,000
“ Department of the Public Works	100,000
Total	\$4,073,235

The estimate of the revenue for 1869 and 1870 is a follows:

Income tax and imports	\$1,130,000
Duties on imports and exports	1,800.00
Internal imports	300,000
Lottery	1,200,000
State properties	13,398
Extraordinary Receipts	25,000
Total	\$4,468,398

The political state of this Island is not difficult to judge considering its past and its present. The Spanish colonial system is too well known at the Department, for me to explain; it seems to me that the blindness of the Mother Country leads her fatally to loose the little which she has in America. The same causes which had occasioned the present revolution in Cuba would have already risen this Island in rebellion, if the resources of it were in proportion to the reluctance with which is born an arbitrary system that not only oppresses but also impoverishes it. The moral rebellion is therefore made and to such extent that in every class of the people the sentiment of naturality is extinguished and has been converted into a hatred to Spanish dominion. It is manifest in everything and seen in the sympathy which clearly exists here for the Cuban question, and the great interest taken for its triumph. No "Creole" is allowed to occupy any government office that gives over twenty four dollars salary per month, the good faith of the government with regard to promised reforms is mistrusted and doubts are expressed that they will ever be carried out, and it is also feared that any changes granted now by will or on account of present circumstances will be withdrawn tomorrow under any pretext or on account of any change in politics of the Mother Country. Of every thousand dollars the government received for taxes, only eighty nine cents are devoted to education and four hundred and fifty four dollars are spent in the War and Marine Department. I am not able to give the correct census of the inhabitants at the present moment as the Government is now having it taken.

Very respectfully

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[73] **From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to J.C. Bancroft Davis, Assistant Secretary of State, July 26, 1871**⁹⁴

Sir:

I herewith respectfully transmit a printed "Order and Command" with translation of same. This "Order and Command" was proclaimed through all the public thorough-fares of this City this morning by command of the Captain General Don Gabriel Baldrich. The order and command will inform you that the City has been put in "Estado de Sitio" or under martial law.

For the last two weeks and during the holidays there has been manifest a very bad feeling between the Government soldiers and the colored population of this City. In two or three instances, stone and other missiles have been thrown from the roofs of the houses on the soldiers,

⁹⁴ Despacho No. 7.

and in the streets the colored population has been beaten by the soldiers. This state of things has no doubt been fostered and incited by the volunteers and the political parties existing here.

The issue of the "Bando" or "Order and Command" putting the city in "Estado de Sitio", is the first instance of the kind that has occurred within the knowledge of the oldest living inhabitant, and therefore has caused the most intense incitement. Thousands of all colors and sex are leaving the city for the country.

It is very generally thought that the "Order and Command" has been given very prematurely, that there was no real necessity for it, that the Captain General has been forced to promulgate it by the volunteers and troops. It certainly will cause great injury to the commercial interests of this Island. As all the other parts of the Island are perfectly quiet, I do not think there will be any necessity of the city remaining under martial law for any length of time.

In the different rows or riots that have taken place, there has been but one person killed (a man of color), some three soldiers beaten and about fifteen men and boys of color wounded and taken to the hospital. The soldiers have been all ordered to their respective quarters and the city, with so many persons leaving, is perfectly quiet.

I shall keep the Department informed of all and every occurrence that will be of interest.

Very respectfully,

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

Enclosures

[74] **Translation of "Order and Command"**⁹⁵

"Capitanía General" of the Island of Porto Rico Don Gabriel Baldrich, Captain General of this Island.

In the use of the extraordinary faculties with which I am empowered. I order and command.

Article 1st - This City is declared in a state of siege.

Article 2nd - It is prohibited all groups that exceed three persons. Those that transgress this order will be judged by martial law.

Article 3rd - It is also prohibited all voice, cry or action that can disturb public tranquillity. Those that transgress this order will be judged by martial law.

Article 4th - It is prohibited the use of all side arms and fire arms, long or short, with the exception of the Army and volunteers of the Island, agents of public order and other persons that by their employment are permitted the use of them. Those that are in possession of said arms will deliver them in the term of two hours at the artillery Armory of this city. After the elapse of that time, domiciliary visits will be passed and those will be judged by martial law and condemned to be shot that are found transgressors.

Article 5th - It is prohibited all writings and publications that will tend to subvert order. The press [will] abstain from circulating their numbers until they have been corrected and have [my] permission.

Article 6th - Agents of public order and other employees will attend to the execution of the [anterior] articles.

Article 7th - There will be named a permanent [Military] Commission charged to judge all transgressors of the articles of this proclamation.

⁹⁵ Adjunto 1, Despacho 73.

Article 8th - The judicial and administrative authorities will continue to perform their functions and duties in all affairs that do not interfere with the public order and are not included in this proclamation.

Porto Rico, 26th July de [*sic.*] 1871
[rúbrica] Gabriel Baldrich

[75] **From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to Charles Hale, Assistant Secretary of State, February 10th, 1873**⁹⁶

Sir:

Since transmitting my Annual Report, I regret that it should have become my duty to advise you that the political state of affairs in this heretofore tranquil Island has become very much agitated, and at the present moment all kind of reports are in circulation, as it is known that General Juan Martínez y Plowes, the newly appointed Captain General for this Province is on board the Spanish mail steamer due here on the 14th; and it being currently reported that he brings the "Project of Law" for the Abolition of Slavery in Porto Rico" and other long promised reforms passed in the Cortes at Madrid as laws [it] is the cause of the present effervescent state of things. The marine cable not being in working order, we are without any late news either from Havana or the Mother Country. There is no doubt but the Volunteers and Conservatives would, if they had the power, interrupt the new Captain General's landing here, should be the barrier of the Projected Laws of Reforms. As they cannot carry that out, they are determined to oppose and keep the said reforms from being promulgated or taking effect; and such acts would cause much more trouble and loss of property than were the promised reforms to be carried out at once. And the very persons that intend opposing their being published in the Official Gazette will be the greatest sufferers, as most of the slaves already know how far the emancipation project has been considered. And they having friends that will inform them of all that takes place, should they still be forced to work as slaves (the law having been passed for their emancipation), I fear a large number of estates will be reduced to ashes. As the "Liga" (so called), consisting of the conservative party, all Volunteers are opposed to all reforms and insist on the continuance of the old colonial system, they will strive to put at defiance the home government [*sic*] causing her laws to be practically made void. Should such prove to be the case, there is no calculating how the reforms will be carried out. Much, naturally, will depend on the New Captain General and the orders he brings with him. The great hope and reliance of the "Liga" is the downfall of the present King, who [m] they call a "Macarron", "Carpet Bagger" and by placing the Prince Alfonso [*sic*] on the throne they will do away with all promised and proposed reforms. For this end, there has been sent millions of dollars to Spain from Cuba and this Island. Still the "Liga" is composed of men who are most loud in their professions and devotion to the Mother Country. Notwithstanding, if they have the power, they will resist by force of arms any reforms that collide with the old colonial system. Although there is so much excitement and menaces on the part of the "Liga", the general opinion among most of the reasonable and reflecting persons (including some wealthy slave-holders) is that under any circumstances or whatever may take place in the Mother Country, socially or politically, the long promised reforms must be granted to this province; and for to secure its tranquility, the sooner they are granted and take effect, the more the Island will prosper and be benefited. [*sic*]

⁹⁶ Despacho No. 120.

Our commercial interest and the interest of our citizens are very great in this province. I shall keep the Department advised by every opportunity with regard to all that may trans-pire.

I am very respectfully,

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[76] **From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to Assistant Secretary of State, February 18th, 1873**⁹⁷

Sir:

In my dispatch of the 15th instant (No. 121) I informed the Department of the agitated and disturbed state of party feeling in this Province and that I feared the least trifling occurrence between the volunteers (conservatives) and the liberals (natives) would lead to serious disturbance of the public peace. I am sorry to state that my fears have proved a reality, there having been a lamentable affray on the evening of the 15th instant at the village of Camuy, brought about, as far as I can learn, by the Civil Guard and volunteers, they together having attacked the house of a peaceful octogenarian in which were his two sons, a few hired laborers and slaves. The Civil Guard and armed volunteers acted on their own authority making their assault at midnight, killing three of the household and wounding several others. The commander of the military of Arecibo, head of the department to which Camuy belongs, sent a dispatch to the Captain General requiring troops, and greatly misrepresenting the facts. The Captain General having only landed the day previous and being entirely advised by the conservatives, telegraphed via Havana to Madrid, stating that the whole Island was in a state of insurrection and requiring troops, when in fact and reality the disturbance was insignificant of itself but of great importance for its causes. There seems to be but very little doubt on the part of all respectable and disinterested persons that the whole disturbance was a plot with a view of impressing upon the mind of the new Captain General that the whole Province was in a state of insurrection, thereby rendering impracticable the abolition of slavery as well as the establishment of any of the other liberal reforms that have been so long projected and promised by the Mother Government. There are also a number of circumstances that have called the public attention, one in particular: No sooner had the new Captain General arrived in the bay and while yet on board, the president of the "Liga" and chief of the antireform party in this Island, together with two of the most prominent representatives of the "Casino Español" of Havana, passed nearly two hours with his Excellency in private, said representatives having come here for that very intent from Havana. The disturbance in Camuy is not looked upon as having any political object, except by those that want to make political capital out of the affair. The public peace has not been disturbed in any other part of the Island and all the municipalities [*sic.*] are daily sending in positive manifestations of their departments being perfectly quiet. The organs of the so called "Partido Español" daily abuse and insult the reformists and their press is allowed to promulgate all that suits their political policy.

Strange to say, the enemies of the abolition of slavery in this Island are not, with few exceptions, slave holders. In general they belong to the commercial class, mostly shopkeepers (volunteers) from the Peninsula, that make their living out of the natives, selling goods and provisions by retail. They are impressed with the idea that the emancipation of the slaves here would bring other reforms and insist that all persons that are in favor of reform are separatists and that they are the only true and loyal subjects of Spain.

From their writings, their private conversations and doings, it is very clearly inferred that they are intimately allied with the volunteers in Cuba and only care to keep the Island under

⁹⁷ Despacho No. 122.

the Spanish rule, without any reforms, for the benefit of their own private interests. This class of men is to be found in every town and village of the Island and has more control over the Guardia Civil than the Captain General himself. This Civil Guard ride [s] about the Island armed with a carbine, [a] large sized revolver and a long sword. Their legal duty is to persecute runaway slaves, make everyone they meet show their cedula pass and to protect the road from highway robbers; but as such criminals have never existed in the Island, this force is used by the Conservative Party to bring about such conflicts as that of Camuy whenever they deem it necessary to their interests, and to persecute and annoy their political enemies.

The great majority of the Reform party is composed of natives including all the women, also a large number of native Spaniards, but this party has no armed supporters, neither has the Reform Party the right of assemblage which the others openly enjoy. The present new Captain General, Don Juan Martínez Plowes, knows nothing of the Island and there is a mystery to be explained with regard to his having been named a governor of this Province. It is rumored that it was brought about by anti reformist influence.

From all that is said and done here it can be clearly seen that the policy of the Mother Government does not allow this Province to be governed by the same democratic principles as are enjoyed by the provinces in Spain, and that in spite of the disgust with which the native inhabitants of this Island see the colonial system and the nonfulfillment [*sic*] of the so often promised reforms, they yet wait patiently hoping that justice will soon come to this Island. In the meantime, the Government of Spain may find itself without any power in the Island as it appears to be the case in Cuba, with the armed volunteers, the Conservatives and with the identical views of the anti reformists in Cuba. I would not be surprised at any moment should there come an order that does not meet their interests were they to put a defiance to the Mother Government. In such a case there certainly will be great disorders in the Island. Trusting that such may not prove to be the case,

I am very respectfully,

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[77] **From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to J. C. Bancroft Davis, Assistant Secretary of State, December 12th, 1873**⁹⁸

Sir:

I have to advise the Department that since the reported capture of the American Steamer "Virginus" was received in this, together with the conflicting accounts, by cable and newspapers, of the shooting of the passengers and crew, and the probability of a war between the United States and Spain growing out of this complicated affair, a great deal of excitement has been manifested in this city, as well as in most of the ports of the Island. Preparations have been made for defense (in my opinion more on account of the fear of internal troubles than threatened external ones). Old brass cannons have been moved (that had been laying around unnoticed for the last forty years), and are now mounted on the walls, and batteries commanding the entrance of the harbor as I was personally informed to keep out filibustering expeditions. All the gunsmiths in this city have been employed repairing old muskets, 1,910 of which have been shipped to be given out in Mayagüez and Ponce, these arms were sent away by the order of the Captain General very much against the wishes of the Volunteers, and could they have counted on the regular troops, then they would have openly resisted their being sent away, their great opposition and objection being to having the Creoles or Militia armed. They appear to fear that

⁹⁸ Despacho No. 150.

more than they do the coming Yankees (as they style us) and the "Partido de los Españoles Sin Condiciones" (like those of Cuba) full of bravados, all resolved to die in the "last ditch" while at the same time the native Creoles are praying to be delivered from their present rulers, and the boys are singing through the streets "Ya vienen los Monitores". All the preparations that have been made here for defense and the excitement that has been got up I look upon as a grand farce.

There are 1,500 regular troops in this city and 600 volunteers, in the whole province 4,000 regular troops and 3,200 volunteers. I am informed that one third of the first mentioned troops have already served their time out, and as they cannot receive their discharge until their relief arrives from Spain, they are naturally very discontented. The volunteers and the regular troops are not on the best of terms as our present Captain General is a staunch republican and not liked by the "Españoles Sin Condiciones".

The most serious state of affairs here in my judgement, at the present moments, is the want of provisions, there being a great scarcity of American produce, especially of flour, I am informed that there is only a stock for four days on hand, the last three hundred barrels that arrived were sold for twenty two dollars (silver) per barrel. There is also a monetary crisis in all the Island, great want of confidence and credit, as all American produce has heretofore been sold on from, four to six months credit, consignees decline discounting, and at the present time only one mercantile house will receive consignments of provisions, and that one ("Latimer and Company") in their monthly market report published this day state: "that in consequence of the effects of the money panic abroad in connection with the scarcity of coin in this island for commercial purposes, they advise their friends who have heretofore consigned merchandise which can only be sold on credit (four and six months) that for the present and until further advice, they will decline discounting and making available proceeds of cargoes". Of the crop just finished there remains at Arecibo from 1,200 to 1,400 hogsheads of sugar to be shipped. The coming crop will be earlier than usual, laborers are plenty and should there be no political disturbance in the Island, the prospects are very bright for a large crop of the staple productions in the whole province.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[78] From Edward Conroy, Consul at St. John's to Alvey A. Adee, second Assistant Secretary of State, November 12th, 1887⁹⁹

Sir:

I have respectfully to advise you that on the 8th instant the Governor General of this Province, Don Romualdo Palacio, received a telegram from His Excellency the Minister of Ultramar at Madrid, recalling him to that Capital. On the 11th instant His Excellency embarked in board [of] the Spanish *Correo*, bound direct for Cadiz. His Excellency, Señor Don General Juan Contreras, Governor Military, has been named Governor interior of this Island.

This so sudden recall of General Palacio has no doubt been caused through the numerous accusations and complaints that have been made manifest to the Ministry at Madrid regarding his most cruel and inquisitorial persecution of the political Party formally called "Liberals", but now styled autonomistas. There are many instances adduced where not only native citizens have been reduced to prison without any other cause than that they were not "unconditional *Españols [sic]*", but also a number of foreigners have been imprisoned and in some cases have suffered the grossest insults and personal abuse.

⁹⁹ Despacho No. 539.

The case of Mr. Ricardo Nadal, a naturalized citizen of the United States residing at the city of Mayagüez, will no doubt have been reported to the State Department by Mr. Meyners, Acting United States Commercial Agent at that city, said District not being under the jurisdiction of this Office. I have no official cognizance of the facts connected with this most trustful case, but have most reliable information with regard to same, by which it appears that Mr. Ricardo Nadal was arrested together with many others by the "Civil Guard" on suspicion of being a party in the so-called anti-Spanish Society (it is said such a party exists, their sin being that they have pledged themselves not to have any trade with the Spanish unconditional political party). During Mr. Nadal's detention in the barracks of the Civil Guard he received most cruel and infamous treatment. Being a defenseless prisoner, he was tied up to a post for several hours in such a cruel way that the cords cut into his flesh and the circulation of the blood was stopped so that his hands became and remain paralyzed. Only after he had declared his willingness to make a statement to the liking of his tormentors was he released, but threatened that revenge would be taken on his family should he make any complaint with regard to the treatment that he had received.

It is to be hoped that the recall of General Palacio and his absence will put a stop to all the brutal excesses that have been committed during his incumbency of the office of Governor General of this Province.

I am, most respectfully,

[rúbrica] Edward Conroy
United States Consul

[79] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to W. W. Rockhill, Assistant Secretary of State, March 11th, 1896**¹⁰⁰

Sir:

I have the honor to report that in view of the events happening in the United States and Spain, the Spanish element here — an element composed of office-holders and small shop-keepers whom General Campos has aptly styled the dregs of the grocery trade — thought, I presume, that their patriotism would not be considered up to the standard and might suffer if they remained quiet, endeavored to get up a demonstration and made ugly threats against this Consulate and Americans in general.

The demonstrations have not materialized and probably will not, as the native population is not in sympathy with the movement. While the class mentioned above, unsupported, lack the necessary courage. I have the list of the would be leaders in the movement and it comprises office-holders, most of them of doubtful reputation.

The Governor General was informed of the contemplated movement.

But what is of far more importance to me than the doubtful demonstrations above mentioned, is an occurrence which happened about 6 p.m. on the 4th último as follows. The consulate is situated above and close to the wall of the fortifications which surround the town. Beneath the wall is located the penitentiary, upon the roof of which are posted guards of the Spanish army. It has been the custom of the Negro women of the town to come and lean over this wall and communicate with their friends and relatives among the prisoners below. On the night in question I was standing in the door leading to the balcony over-looking the wall and prison, when there was a sharp report of a rifle in the hands of one of the guards and the ball was lodged in the walls of the Consulate about three feet from where I was standing.

I found the bullet, and the next day laid the matter before the Governor General and showed him my evidence. He smilingly assured me that it was all an accident, that the shot was

¹⁰⁰ Despacho No. 85.

not intended for me, and trusted that I would not so consider it. I endeavored to impress upon His Excellency, that I did not like to be a subject of such accidents, and courteously asked him to send someone to examine the premises and see the danger that I believed I had been in, which he declined to do, maintaining that nothing of the kind would occur in the future.

As far as the discharge of the gun is concerned, it was no accident. There was a woman, it is true, looking over the wall at the time, but these women have been doing this very thing for a long time, and they have not been fired upon for so doing, in my recollection, and have only been rarely warned away. In fact, I complained sometime ago to the Mayor about this very nuisance among others, and while the other nuisances were remedied to some extent, this one was allowed to continue.

Whether, therefore, the shot was intended for me or not, I am unable to say as I have no proof. It is well known to the prison authorities that the Consulate is located where it is, and such firing as this is a reckless disregard of life and comity. It is also a little strange, if it is to be considered an accident, that about fifteen minutes before the shot was fired, I saw upon the roof of the prison a man in civilian dress whom I do not know, but whose description agrees very closely with the second keeper of the institution and whose name appears second on the list mentioned above, as being especially violent and aggressive against the United States and Americans. This man could not have failed to see me. That he had anything to do with the matter is, I am sorry to say, only one of inference. The circumstances surrounding the matter are somewhat peculiar, and it is a little strange and unfortunate that this shot is fired just upon the receipt of news of rioting in Spain. If I had been injured, the excuse would have been "accident", but whether accident or otherwise, that chapter is closed, and no more excuses of that nature will be accepted by me at least.

I enclose herewith some clippings taken from a local newspaper in reference to the matter. One of the clippings mentions that I have asked for a war vessel. I have made no such request and do not contemplate doing so. I do not consider that there is any demand for such a vessel or apt to be. If such an occasion should arise, the Department would probably know it long before I did and could act accordingly.

Enclosed is a handbill which circulated in Mayagüez, calling for a demonstration, also the Mayor's request that it be delayed which was inspired by the Governor General. There is not much to be commended in the Alcalde's address in the way in which he speaks of "altamente patriótico". I have not had time to translate these enclosures.

Up to this time I have refrained from saying but little about Spanish character and the political conditions of this Island, but I am bound to say that the Spaniard as a rule, is haughtily, proud, cruel, insolent, deceitful and densely ignorant, and the deletion of these attributes as applied to his government of this Island, would fill a volume, not at all creditable to human rights and liberty, but I not attempt the patience of the Department with details, suffice it to say, that here, he dares to do things that would not be attempted in Cuba, in fact it is a saying of a Spanish statesman that "everything can be done in Puerto Rico with impunity" and so I believe.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

Enclosures:

1. Clippings from a local paper
2. Hand-bill which circulated in Mayagüez
3. Clipping from newspaper in reference to same

Desde ayer circula con insistencia por esta Capital un rumor del cual no quisiéramos hacernos eco sin saber lo que hay de cierto respecto del particular. Dícese que estando el Cónsul americano sentado en el balcón de la casa que ocupa Cristo Núm. 2, una bala, disparada desde el barrio de Marina, fue a clavarse en la pared a poca distancia de su cabeza. Dícese que el dicho caballero se presentó ayer mismo a su Excelencia el Gobernador General mostrándole el proyectil que estuvo a

punto de herirle. Hemos tratado de ver hoy al referido señor Cónsul, pero no hemos podido encontrarle en su casa. El hecho se atribuye generalmente a una casualidad o a un descuido. El Cónsul americano es persona muy estimada aquí y dudamos haya personas que le quieran mal. Averiguamos lo cierto de este rumor para comunicarlo a nuestros lectores.¹⁰¹

2. Según informes adquiridos, podemos ampliar una noticia que publicamos anoche respecto del disparo cuyo proyectil dio en una pared del Consulado americano. El tiro parece que partió de la azotea del Presidio al ver el centinela que se agrupaban algunos curiosos en la muralla que da a ese lado, cosa que está terminantemente prohibida. Creemos que para evitar desgracias, conveniente sería poner un letrero prohibiendo acercarse a ese paño de muralla, pues muchas personas ignoran que exista la orden de no acercarse por allí, o disponer que un vigilante preste aquel servicio. Así se evitarían sucesos como el que venimos deplorando.

3. Circula por esta Capital que no creemos pueda tener fundamento alguno. Dícese que el Cónsul americano ha pedido por telégrafo un vapor de guerra a su nación para que venga de estación a Puerto Rico.

4. Según leemos en “El Crematístico” de Mayagüez, he aquí por qué se suspendió la manifestación proyectada en Mayagüez:¹⁰²

—“Alcaldía Municipal de Mayagüez.— Teniendo entendido que esta tarde a las cinco debe salir una manifestación pública protestando contra la declaración de beligerancia a los insurrectos de Cuba por los Estados Unidos de América; y considerando esta Alcaldía que el acto es inoportuno aunque altamente patriótico, ruego a mis conciudadanos se abstengan por hoy de llevar a cabo la anunciada manifestación.

—Así lo espera de vosotros— El alcalde, Salvador Suau— Mayagüez, 6 de marzo de 1896”.

United States Consulate

March 8, 1896

St. John's, Porto Rico

[79a] **Habitantes de Mayagüez**¹⁰³

Un pueblo que hasta ahora tuvimos por amigo, ha declarado beligerantes a los bandidos que, so pretexto de recabar libertades, se ha alzado contra la Madre Patria llevando la tea del incendio y la destrucción a los campos de Cuba.

ESPAÑA no puede mirar con indiferencia que se patrocine a los rebeldes alzados en armas. Reunámonos pues en son de protesta para patentizar con nuestros actos que si hay un pueblo que sanciona hechos tan inicuos, aun existe en nosotros virilidad bastante para demostrar que somos españoles sobre todo y que no admitimos imposiciones ni injerencias de mercaderes extranjeros.

HABITANTES DE MAYAGÜEZ, se os invita para reunirnos en manifestación pacífica esta tarde a las cinco en la plazuela del Puente de Balboa.

¡¡VIVA ESPAÑA CON HONRA!!

Mayagüez, Marzo 6 de 1896.

LA COMISION.

Imprenta de Vidal

¹⁰¹ Adjunto 1, Despacho No. 85. En el original aparecen los recortes de prensa y su traducción al inglés. Aquí la traducción al inglés ha sido omitida.

¹⁰² Adjunto 2, Despacho No. 85.

¹⁰³ Adjunto 3, Despacho No. 85.

[80] From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to W. W. Rockhill, Assistant Secretary of State, April 10th, 1896¹⁰⁴

Sir:

I have the honor to state, in view of the general elections which are about to take place here and certain statements which I have seen in papers from the United States, that it may be of interest to the Department to know the kind of representation which this Island has in the Cortes at Madrid.

The population of the Island was returned in 1890, as being 839,600 of this number 42,500 were from Spain, the remainder native born. It is claimed that the white population is equal to the black and mixed races.

The Island is entitled to 16 representatives, an allotment of one representative to each 50,000 of the population. The three chief towns with their districts send three representatives each, viz, St. John's, Ponce and Mayagüez, and from the other towns and districts of the Island are made up the remainder.

The requirements for an elector are that he shall read and write and pay a toll tax of \$10.00 per annum.

The two parties of the Island are the "Autonomista" and the "Incondicional". The "Autonomista", as its name signifies, is for self government in some form or other, or at least a more liberal administration of affairs than now prevails. The "Incondicional" is just what its name implies, unconditionally in spirit and action with the home government in whatever policy pursued, whether it be a liberal or conservative Ministry.

During my stay here, the "Autonomista" party has been in retirement, or in other words, have refrained from going to the polls, nominating candidates or concerning themselves in political affairs; first, on account of the excessive poll-tax that is levied, which is double that of Cuba and far greater than that of Spain, and the party arguing that there should not be a discrimination of one class of Spaniards over another, or that citizens of Porto Rico should be considered three times worse than those of Spain and Cuba; second, that there is no guarantee of fairness in the elections or that the vote of the party double or treble that of the "Incondicional" party will be counted. This humiliating action has not yet appealed to the sensibilities of the opposite party, and the party have [*sic*] gained nothing by it. The "Incondicional" candidates have all been regularly returned. At the last election, in which both parties took part, the "Autonomistas" obtained two members to the Cortes out of the sixteen elected.

In the past few days, the representatives of the "Autonomista" party held a meeting or convention here to consider what action the party would take in the coming elections. The leaders called upon the Governor General and asked, if their party went to the polls, if he would give them guarantees of fairness, etc. The Governor refused to give any promises saying that he had no right to give any guarantee, and he is credited with telling the leaders that their party was illegal. The delegation reported the interview to their colleagues, and the party voted unanimously to refrain from taking any part in the coming elections, and further discussed a proposition to disband the party. The last proposition was placed in abeyance for the time being, and the party will hold a meeting on the 19th of this month to take action upon this question.

Of the candidates nominated by the "Incondicional" party, one half are always proposed by the home government in Madrid and are called by the people here "los cuneros" or "the foundlings". The names agreed upon in Madrid are sent to the Governor General here, and by him are given to the leaders of the "Incondicional" party as candidates which must be returned, they never fail an election. The remaining half of the candidates are named by the "Incondicional" party here.

¹⁰⁴ Despacho No. 95.

The candidate for an election need not be a resident of the locality he would represent or even of the Island. As a matter of fact, nearly all the representatives elected reside in Spain.

The method of holding the elections is by polling places in the different election precincts of the district. The elections are seldom fair; if there is any opposition, all kinds of subterfuges are resorted to by the "Inconditional" party to return their candidates. The tricks of stopping the clock or moving it forward, stuffing the ballot boxes, seizing the polling machinery before the polls are open, creating disturbances in the election places, intimidating voters, and arresting them and holding them on trumped up charges until the election is over are not new in Porto Rico and have all been resorted to in an election.

One case I will mention. Some years ago an election was being held in this City, late in the afternoon news came from Madrid to return a man who up to that time had not been envoted [*sic.*] for at all, the clock was stopped, the ballot box taken away, and the man returned by a fair majority.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

[81] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to W. W. Rockhill, Assistant Secretary of State, May 11th, 1896**¹⁰⁵

Sir:

I beg to state that it may be of interest to the Department, in view of the contemplated reforms for this Island that are so much talked about and which are supposed to be put into operation in the near future, to know how similar efforts in this direction have fared in the past in Porto Rico.

Some years ago a constitution was given [tachado] to Porto Rico, it was in operation, I believe for some six months and then repealed. At the beginning of my term here it was talked of placing in operation certain reforms, of which the present idea is to some extent an offspring. At that time the reforms contemplated placing the direction of administrative affairs in the hands of a commission of three, including the Governor General, the President of the local assembly and the colonel of volunteers, instead of allowing the absolute power to rest in the hand of the Governor General as now. And I may say that in all important matters the Governor General is an autocrat second only in power to the Czar of Russia. The local assembly does his bidding and so does everyone else. This commission, if it had become a fact, would only have been a makeshift. The whole direction of matters would have still remained in the hands of the Governor General and the people would have had no voice in the administration. In fact, the other two members of this board would have been nothing more than creatures of the Governor General.

What may be the character of the reforms now contemplated is unknown, as the Spanish policy of keeping everything secret until the last moment is being pursued. They delight to talk "reform" however, and juggle with the word, but they have no clear idea or conception of what reform actually means, and in my opinion, the reforms, whatever they are, will not be worth the paper on which they are written in so far as giving any real reform to this Island is concerned. In fact Spain does not dare to give any reforms with any substance to them, even provided she knows how. There may be reforms in name but not in spirit or I have terribly misjudged the Spanish character and the policy of the Inconditional party of this Island.

It is the policy of the Inconditional party to rule the Island absolutely, supported by whatsoever party may be in power in Spain. A party that dares not allow its numerical strength to be

¹⁰⁵ El original no indica el número de despacho.

known, can hardly be expected to tolerate much reform, even if Spain is disposed to grant it. The last census gave the number of Spaniards in the Island born in Spain as only 50,000. This represents very nearly the numerical strength of this party. It is a peculiar and interesting fact that the second generation born out of Spain is usually a rebellious one and not in sympathy with the mother country. This census was published in the local papers. Whereupon the Inconditional party attacked the newspaper and the Government for permitting such news to be published. The article was fiery and not a little abusive, declaring that such information should not be made public, that it was not true, and such knowledge was dangerous to the welfare of the country and unpatriotic, etc.

If the contemplated reforms ever reach Porto Rico, I will endeavor to inform the Department of their character and what possible results may be expected from them.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

[82] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to W. W. Rockhill, Assistant Secretary of State, June 29th, 1896**¹⁰⁶

Sir:

I have the honor to state that it may be of interest to the Department to know the condition and state of the newspaper press of this Island and its relation to the Spanish Government.

The Porto Rico newspaper is purely a provincial sheet filled as a general thing with localisms. It is a small affair but what it lacks in size is made up in numbers, as there are many of them. How they all manage to exist is something of a mystery. Apparently it is not much of an effort to issue a paper here, it is done in a primitive way and most of them are printed on hand presses. They are not allowed to publish anything that is liable to give umbrage to the Government; and if they do, it is at their peril.

The papers devoted to the "Conservative" or "Inconditional" party are few in number and are of limited circulation. These papers are seldom or never interfered with by the censorship of the Government. On the other hand, all the liberal papers and even those papers which occupy a middle ground, generally through fear and for that reason the more to be suspected, are never free from this "Official intervention".

When I say all papers of a liberal tendency have suffered at the hands of official censorship, I speak advisedly, for since my residence here, well before the revolution in Cuba broke out, there has been a constant procession of editors imprisoned, court martialed and fined, with the entire edition of their papers either sequestered or mutilated. It has not been an uncommon thing to see an entire blank column in a paper.

Since the beginning of the revolution in Cuba, this censorship has become more rigid, with the consequent increasing penalties inflicted upon editors and papers. The causes that have incited these penalties would seem to a stranger trivial and of little weight. Many of the visitations are for articles quite innocent in themselves that have been copied from New York papers or papers in Spain, but which it would seem the Authorities deem too outspoken for the inhabitants to read, and the attempt is made to prevent publication and conceal the news; it is a perverted and futile policy, and only tends to excite and keep the public on the *qui vive*, for foreign papers will creep into the Island and the news contained in them travels from mouth to mouth with a surprising rapidity.

¹⁰⁶ Despacho No. 108.

I regret that I have not preserved a list of all the papers fined and the editors who have been punished and the causes for the same. It would make a long list and be beyond the limits of this dispatch.

I will, however, mention a few instances.

In 1892 there was started in Ponce a small paper called "El Combate". Its editor Díaz in the first number called upon the people for union in defense of their rights of citizenship. The paper was at once seized, the editor court-martialed and sentenced to 14 years of solitary imprisonment, which he is now undergoing in Spain.

In 1894 the "Democracia" of Ponce published an article against certain monopolies that had been granted, one to a certain maker of matches, the other to the Standard Oil Co. for refining crude petroleum. The paper was denounced and fined. The editor, Rivera, arrested and placed under a \$10,000 bond or go to jail.

The "Correspondencia" of St. John's for giving notice of the above fine was also fined \$162 and paid with costs \$450. All the papers which attacked these monopolies were fined or sequestered.

In 1895 the "Democracia" copied an article from the New York "Herald" that some persons had been shot and imprisoned in Cuba. The edition was sequestered. The editor, Abril, placed in prison where he remained a long time. He was finally allowed by the newly arrived Governor General, General Gamir, a temporary release from confinement, and was brought to the capital to be tried by court-martial, while awaiting trial he managed to escape on board the French Steamer in disguise and is now in Paris.

"El Diario" of Mayagüez published the news that the President of Santo Domingo had ordered some of his generals to be shot, and was fined.

"El Buscapié" of St. John's for reproducing from a loyal Spanish paper a so called "catechism de Mambi" was denounced, sequestered, and the editor placed in jail, he is now out on bail and his case is pending before the Military Court.

During the time of General Dabán and before the Cuban revolution the liberal press was continually being fined. One paper in Mayagüez was fined for daring to doubt the infallibility of the Pope.

I append herewith, as an exhibit, a few of the notices which I have cut from a local paper, of the fines imposed upon newspapers in the Island during the last three or four months.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

Enclosures:

1. clippings from local papers

[82a] **Translation**¹⁰⁷

On "El Noticiero" of Ponce there has been imposed another fine of 62 dollars and a half. Two fines in two days.

"For two partridges, two" as the great Spanish dramatist says.

In view of the increasing storm, our appreciable colleague has decided to stick to the umbrella of official information, which is the only one that has lightning rods.

I think he has proceeded with discretion.

¹⁰⁷ Adjunto 1, Despacho No. 108. Sólo se han incluido las traducciones al inglés de los recortes de periódicos.

We copy from "El Noticiero" of Ponce: At nine o'clock yesterday morning, notice was given to the Editor of "La Libertad" of the decree of the process in the supposed misdemeanor of publishing the literary article "The Melancholy Man". There was demanded a caution of 4,000 pesetas in coin, and that it be deposited in the Customs House the following hour. We wish our esteemed contemporary absolution on the day of the Public Trial and that the little bill may return to its fold.

Our esteemed colleague "El Noticiero" of Ponce has been condemned by the Government to a fine of 62 pesetas 50 centimes, according to Local Authorities for publishing exaggerated news of the events in Cuba, which might result in danger to the public order or damaging to the interest or credit of the State. We truly regret the circumstance.

"La Libertad" of Ponce is being made an object of constant fines and sequestration, as we read in the "Democracia" for the campaign it makes against the "alcalde" of that city. With all heart we lament the persecution of which our companion is the victim.

"La Libertad" of Ponce, of the 18th of the present month, has been denounced and sequestered for an article which it published alluding to the "Alcalde" of Peñuelas. We regret the happening.

There has been newly sequestered our colleague of Ponce "La Libertad" for two articles that it published, one entitled "Varieties" and the other "The Melancholy Man". We are very sorry for the happening.

There has been denounced and sequestered our esteemed colleague "La Pequeña Antilla" of Ponce, for having reproduced two articles one "La Voz de Guipúzcoa" and the other "Las Dominicales" of Madrid. Said articles are considered by the "Sr. Fiscal" as contrary to the actual form of the government.

The youths of Cabo Rojo, submitted to the action of the Military Court for having placed in the button holes of their coats the ribbons emblematic of the flags in the dances of Christmas time, have been set free. There was returned by the order of the Tribunal, the \$1,000 security as bail during the proceedings.

[83] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to W. W. Rockhill, Assistant Secretary of State, February 2nd, 1897.**¹⁰⁸

Sir:

I have the honor to state that the long talked off reforms for this Island reached here by the last mail from Spain on the 20th of January last. It may be said incidentally that the steamer bearing the reforms, also brought the smallpox and the measles and this circumstance has furnished occasion for no little comment and amusement on the part of the native population.

The reforms have been published in the "Gaceta", the official paper of the Island Government, and enclosed will be found a copy of the same. The reforms cover so much space that it has been impossible for me to furnish a translation, consequently none is enclosed.

The reforms are not pleasing to the "Autonomista" party or agreeable to the people at large. The Inconditional party claims also to be displeased with them and asserts that it is stripped of some voice in the direction of local affairs, but this displeasure is more apparent than real, for as far as can be judged, this party will have as much or more voice than ever and be as strong as in the past.

To the "Autonomista" party the reforms are especially unwelcome. This party claims that no new rights or privileges are conceded, while the direction of the internal affairs of the Island is centered to a greater extent than formerly in the hands of the home government. This party has therefore declared the intention to pursue its old policy and tactics of refraining from voting

¹⁰⁸ El original no indica el número de despacho..

and going to the polling places or of having anything to do with the reforms, and have issued a manifesto to the public, a copy of which is enclosed.

One thing is quite certain. The reforms in their application will increase the governing expenses of the Island by some \$800,000, as it is estimated. This the Island is poorly able to bear. Also the annual budget —the bases of taxation— is made up by a commission and no voice given to the local assembly in the matter. Consequently, the first of rights is as far away from the people as ever.

It may be rather early as yet to say what will be the result or the workings of the new reforms. A great deal will depend, perhaps, in what spirit they are applied and interpreted. The first elections under the reforms will take place this month for the Municipal councils and in March for the Deputies to the Provincial Island Assembly.

From a casual observation and study of the reforms, it must be said that the impression is left, that where any real right or privilege is given tending to local self-government, it is almost immediately taken away, curtailed, or is made inoperative in the same or succeeding sections, by the numerous checks and reservations resting in the hands of the Governor General and the Minister of Ultramar, and which can be used to prevent any original legislation. Consequently, the reforms would appear to give the Governor General greater or as much absolute power as he now exercises, more or less dependent, of course, upon the Minister of Ultramar; and on those two personages, in my opinion, will revolve the future direction of the affairs of the Island under the new reforms as in the past.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

Enclosures:*

1. Copy of "Gaceta de Puerto Rico"
2. Copy of Manifest of the party Autonomista.

[84] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to W. W. Rockhill, Assistant Secretary of State, April 22nd, 1897**¹⁰⁹

Sir:

I have the honor to report that on Sunday the 11th of April there were held throughout this Island the elections of deputies to the Cortes in Madrid under the new reforms recently inaugurated.

The Island is entitled to twelve deputies. Of this number nine were returned as being elected by the Inconditional party and three by the Fusionist-Sagasta party. The latter party is made up of that portion of the "Autonomistas" which has allied itself to the Spanish party of Señor Sagasta. The radical "Autonomistas" took but little active part in the elections.

The elections passed off quietly. In this City the ballots were deliberately destroyed before the results were announced. From other portions of the Island come reports of intimidation, of forcibly closing the polling places, and of fraudulent counts. Attempts were made in a few places to protest against these acts through the "Official Notary" but with indifferent success, as these officials were very chary in allowing themselves to become mixed up in matters that would tend to injure their business and position.

To a disinterested observer the elections show two results.

* Los adjuntos no se incluyen. Para más detalles, refiérase al documento original.

¹⁰⁹ Despacho No. 136.

First, that Spain, with two revolutions on her hands, sorely pressed, and with a bankrupt treasury, has not yet learned the spirit of liberality. That her paper promises are not reforms in reality and are little better than worthless. Perhaps it ought not to be expected that a nation more than an individual can give what they have not got and know nothing about, and this appears to be the case with Spain. It seems to be a never ending amusement of the Cortes to talk reform, it pleases the people, and withal is spectacular and satisfying to the vanity, but nothing comes of it. It is a good place to begin reforms, as well as charity, at home.

Second, that the people of this Island, while badly governed, have not the spirit, in my opinion, to govern themselves. That "that people will have just as good a government as they themselves elect to have and no better", may not be wholly true of the inhabitants of Porto Rico, but that they are lacking in spirit, intelligence and enterprise is not to be doubted, perhaps nothing better could be expected after four hundred years of Spanish rule, and I have yet to learn of a manly, earnest and dignified protest made individually or collectively, as a result of the last elections. Of rumblings and mutterings there are enough and it may be mentioned in the Cortes, but there the ebullition will end.

There is another matter which I may be pardoned for mentioning in this dispatch, as seemingly having no connection with the elections, and that is, the so called revolution which took place at Yauco, in the South-West portion of this Island a few weeks ago.

This revolution I have not reported because it has been impossible to obtain, up to this time, any reliable information concerning it. If it was a revolution, it was a very brief one and sixty determined men -the number said to have been implicated- armed with clubs would have made a better display of themselves. In twelve hours or less, it was all finished and some eighty men placed in jail at Ponce where it is presumed they still are. Now it is my opinion, to speak frankly, that the whole matter was concocted by government officials for sinister purposes, one of which might have been, perhaps, to influence the approaching elections.

I may say here that no revolution can succeed in Porto Rico, and none will ever be attempted here from within the Island, unless Spain becomes more impotent than she is now. The natives have no discipline, no arms, no spirit, no resources [*sic*] and no leaders. If ever a revolution comes it will be when there is chaos and revolution in Spain, or by armed invasion from the outside. It is, therefore, quite idle to talk or read of revolutions in this Island.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

CARTAS CONSULARES FRANCESAS

[85] **Convocatoria de colegios electorales en la isla de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 25 de mayo de 1869**¹¹⁰

Señor Ministro,

Una circular del Capitán General de la isla de Puerto Rico, con fecha del 1^o de este mes, convoca los colegios electorales para proceder, los días 30 y 31 de mayo, 1^o y 2 de junio, a elegir a los diputados que la Isla debe enviar a las cortes constituyentes de la metrópoli, conforme al decreto del gobierno provisional del 14 de diciembre de 1868.

Antes de abordar la cuestión puramente electoral, de definir el espíritu, la base, así como la impresión que ha causado la publicación del decreto en la población inteligente e ilustrada de la Colonia, me parecen necesarias ciertas consideraciones.

Su Excelencia,

El Señor Marqués de Lavalette,
Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores en París

Los programas pomposos, consecuencia inevitable del trastorno producido por la revolución que acaba de ocurrir en España, no se han aplicado en la Isla. Las Colonias se administran todo el tiempo de la misma manera como se hacía antes. El gobierno provisional se ha limitado a otorgarles el derecho de elegir a los diputados a las Cortes, pero, por lo demás, se ha contentado con volver a hacer promesas que han sido cien veces repetidas y cien veces eludidas.

La última es muy reciente: “las reformas”, dice el artículo 107 del proyecto de constitución, “se realizarán, tan pronto como los diputados de las Colonias hayan tomado asiento en las cortes constituyentes”. Entretanto, los ánimos se caldean y las aspiraciones del partido radical, que hasta ese día se habían limitado sólo a las reformas, ahora pretenden casi hasta enarbolar la bandera de la independencia.

Puerto Rico no será escenario de sucesos importantes. El asunto se debe resolver en Cuba, y ésta no hará otra cosa que seguir el movimiento. Sin embargo, un observador atento puede descubrir, en el mismo medio de la calma que disfruta la colonia, algunas causas cuya acción tal vez pronto ponga término a dicha tranquilidad.

Las revoluciones españolas siempre han estado marcadas con un sello muy particular: el de destruirlo todo. La última ha ido aún más lejos que las anteriores y ha derrocado lo que siempre se había respetado, una dinastía secular. Los habitantes de las Colonias, que veían a la cabeza del movimiento actual precisamente a los mismos hombres que, cuando la investigación abierta en Madrid en 1865 y cerrada en 1867, se pronunciaban públicamente a favor de las reformas, tan justa y vanamente reclamadas desde hace treinta años, por las Antillas españolas, tenían todo el derecho de creer que su situación política, económica y administrativa por fin se reglamentaría de forma definitiva.

Por eso la primera impresión fue tanto mejor en Puerto Rico, toda vez que su posición, desde cualquier punto de vista, distaba mucho de ser floreciente. Si nos imaginamos a esa colonia privada, desde hace treinta años, de todas las libertades, de todos los derechos que había disfrutado en otras épocas; sin enviar diputados a las cortes para defender sus intereses más apremiantes y para hacer valer sus reclamaciones más legítimas; sin nombrar a alguno de los funcionarios que disponen de sus recursos; cruelmente afectada, en 1867, por las

¹¹⁰ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, No. 8.

calamidades que se abalanzaron sobre ella (huracanes y temblores de tierra); los recursos del Tesoro agotados, desde hace tiempo, por la guerra de Santo Domingo; el aumento diario de su presupuesto, mientras que, por el contrario, sus ingresos disminuyen. En fin, si nos imaginamos a esa población atravesando por una crisis comercial y monetaria, desde hace casi 9 años, convencida, por la fuerza o la razón, de que la causa de su ruina ha sido la mala administración de las finanzas locales, sin poder modificarla; achacándole, por consiguiente, la responsabilidad de sus males a una administración todopoderosa y a los que han movido los hilos a su voluntad. Si añadimos una tentativa de insurrección que acaba de ocurrir, movimiento parcial, es cierto, sin jefe, sin programa, sin bandera, en el que sólo tomó parte lo peor de la población, censurada abiertamente por toda la gente seria, reprimida con facilidad, pero que no causó la más mínima perturbación en el orden natural y proverbial de la Colonia; tendremos una idea exacta de la situación de la isla de Puerto Rico, cuando llegó la noticia de la revolución.

Sometida a un poder, comparado por el gobierno mismo con el del comandante militar de una villa sitiada, la Isla esperó sin demostraciones, sin murmuraciones, sin el más leve disturbio, por la decisión de la metrópoli.

Los acontecimientos se precipitaron en España; todas las provincias fueron convidadas a tomar parte activa en el movimiento liberal que se inició en Cádiz, el 18 de septiembre de 1868; sólo las provincias de Ultramar, Cuba y Puerto Rico, no se consideraron aún lo suficientemente maduras como para obtener las libertades concedidas al resto de la nación.

Una vez pasado el primer gesto de sorpresa, las poblaciones de Puerto Rico comenzaron a desesperarse, puesto que la llegada del nuevo Capitán General, nombrado por el gobierno provisional, y en cuya administración se fundaban todas sus esperanzas, no cambió en lo absoluto el antiguo orden.

Como de costumbre, su primera proclama prometía mucho; sin embargo, prohibía toda discusión en torno al asunto vital para el país: la esclavitud. El decreto del 14 de diciembre de 1868 emitido por el gobierno de la metrópoli se publicó. Éste concedía la elección de diputados, pero la misma no debía efectuarse hasta que todo estuviera en orden en Cuba, haciendo sufrir a Puerto Rico, sin razón, las consecuencias de lo que allá sucedía. Tenía que hacerlo forzosamente, y esto tuvo como resultado una situación equivocada y penosa. La administración lo nota y no se hace ilusiones; sabe bien que no cuenta con la simpatía de la mayoría del país, porque, a pesar de todas sus restricciones, no ha podido impedir, so pena de desacreditarse totalmente, que se establezcan algunas costumbres de discusión y de examen y que se cree un verdadero espíritu público. Por eso, desde el 27 de enero de 1869, obviando la cláusula contenida en el decreto del 14 de diciembre de 1868 y aprovechando los términos vagos de su redacción, publicó un reglamento para proceder a la formación de listas electorales y el 1^o de mayo, convocó a los electores.

¿Debemos considerar este último acto del Capitán General como un deseo espontáneo de inaugurar finalmente una nueva era para Puerto Rico? Si nos dejamos llevar por las apariencias, podríamos creerle, pero si vamos al fondo de las cosas, cuando levantamos una esquina del tapete que cubre todo ese aparato con reputación de liberal, descubrimos fácilmente que lo único que ha podido provocar esa medida es el temor a complicaciones serias, como paliativo a la creciente agitación que preocupa a la Isla, desde que perdió sus primeras esperanzas.

La administración, por otro lado, tiene muchos otros asuntos serios que temer. A pesar de los boletines de victoria que se ha encargado de hacer publicar en los diarios, en los que se presenta la insurrección de Cuba como si le hubiera llegado su fin, ésta sabe perfectamente que las cosas no son así. Sabe que de allá precisamente deben partir la señal y las fuerzas que vendrán a atacarla. Todos los días espera un desembarco, porque no se engaña a sí misma y conoce el verdadero valor de los mentís dados a la salida de los puertos de México, de navíos cargados de hombres, armas y municiones de guerra. También conoce las fuerzas de las que puede disponer y sabe que sin ayuda de la población, no puede resistir un ataque combinado.

Esta peligrosa situación ha inducido a la administración a convocar los colegios electorales. De esta manera piensa atraer a los hombres del partido conservador y menoscabar

la propaganda del partido liberal actuando sobre las masas y haciéndose presente, para intentar dividir a los dos elementos que componen el país: peninsulares e insulares.

La isla de Puerto Rico ha sido dividida en 3 circunscripciones.

1 ^{ra} Circunscripción:	La Capital – 4 diputados
2 ^o	Mayagüez – 4 “
3 ^o	Aguadilla – 3 “

El censo es la condición del derecho al sufragio.

Todo contribuyente que pague una cuota de 50 escudos (125) es elector por derecho. Igualmente son electores, aunque no paguen contribuciones, quienes tengan el carácter de capacidades: notarios, abogados, procuradores judiciales, médicos, empleados del gobierno y los oficiales del ejército.

Hay un punto esencial que debo señalar: el decreto del gobierno provisional del 14 de diciembre de 1868 privaba del derecho de elector, aunque pagara la cuota fijada, a todo adjudicatario de derechos municipales que estuviera atrasado en su pago y éste sería perseguido por vía ejecutiva. El Gobernador ha creído su deber interpretar que esa cláusula restrictiva aplica a todo contribuyente que se encuentre atrasado en su pago. De ahí que, naturalmente, un número importante de personas acomodadas queden privadas del derecho al sufragio, ya que la última derrama de contribuciones provocó un número infinito de reclamaciones aún pendientes y, por esa razón, los pagos no se han efectuado con regularidad. Los interesados se rehusan a pagar sus cuotas hasta que se resuelva el problema.

Hay que recalcar que la publicación del decreto de convocatoria de los colegios electorales no produjo el entusiasmo que se esperaba de una población que había estado privada, desde hacía treinta años, del derecho de elegir y enviar diputados a la metrópoli.

Varias causas explican la indiferencia de los electores: en primer lugar, y sobre todo, la cláusula restrictiva que indiqué más arriba, seguida de la publicación un poco tardía del decreto, puesto que las poblaciones ven que las cortes se reúnen desde hace mucho tiempo, que ya se votó por la nueva constitución, que la forma de gobierno está a punto de decidirse, y todo ello sin la presencia, sin el voto de los diputados de las provincias de Ultramar. Reconocen su impotencia para entablar una lucha seria contra un poder discrecional que ha sabido dispersar filas con inteligencia, que prepara sus elecciones, si no oficialmente, al menos oficiosamente, y que cuenta con todos los oficiales del ejército, elemento del todo extraño al país y profundamente afecto a la administración.

Por otro lado, y contrario a lo que suele ocurrir, la prensa no responde a las grandes divisiones de la opinión pública en la Colonia. La prensa es nula. No cuenta para nada en el país; de otro modo, para que no pudiera ni instruir a los electores ni dirigir las elecciones, sería sometida al régimen de la censura, sería obstaculizada de inmediato.

Hasta el presente no se conocían partidos en Puerto Rico: la política estaba prohibida. En medio del silencio, las aspiraciones de los nativos se abrían paso sólo en ocasiones. Desde que la revolución ha obligado a la administración a mostrarse menos severa, las líneas de demarcación se han vuelto y se vuelven cada día más evidentes. Tres partidos bien distintos se destacan.

El partido conservador, compuesto por personas un tanto indecisas, quizás, pero moderadas y honradas, las cuales se inclinan del lado liberal, cuando el poder les parece demasiado fuerte, y del lado conservador cuando les parece que el orden se ve amenazado.

El partido liberal, que comprende a la juventud inteligente y acomodada, todos ellos hijos del país que exigen reformas, quieren tomar parte en la administración y se contentan, por el momento, con la asimilación a la metrópoli por derecho y por razón.

El partido liberal radical, por último, no carece de jefes: gente acomodada, inteligente, pero ambiciosa, que se apoya, como en todas partes, en el populacho. Este partido ya no se contenta con la asimilación; exige abiertamente la autonomía, aunque sus aspiraciones reales

van hasta la independencia. La administración debe temer más a este último partido, ya que poco faltaría para que el partido liberal también viniera a engrosar sus filas.

¿Cuál será el resultado de las elecciones? Es fácil preverlo por anticipado. Los candidatos patrocinados por la administración serán elegidos. ¿Debemos concluir de ese resultado que la Colonia se sentirá satisfecha, una vez sus diputados se encuentren en las Cortes, y aguardará con paciencia la llegada de las reformas que el artículo 107 de la constitución la hace esperar? Como dije antes, esta cuestión no debe decidirse en Puerto Rico. Sin embargo, todo demuestra que si España quiere conservar los últimos vestigios de su poder en América, le urge tomar una determinación seria para abolir la esclavitud y conceder a Cuba y Puerto Rico las mismas libertades y los mismos derechos que disfrutaban las otras provincias del territorio español.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[86] **Situación política en la isla de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 3 de octubre de 1869**¹¹¹

Señor Ministro,

En mi despacho del pasado 29 de mayo, en ocasión de la elección de los diputados que la isla de Puerto Rico debía enviar a las Cortes Constituyentes, tuve el honor de someter a la bondadosa atención de Vuestra Excelencia, ciertas consideraciones con respecto a la situación política de la Colonia.

Un estudio más serio y más profundo de los hechos, Señor Ministro, hoy me permite comprender mejor las primeras impresiones recibidas, desarrollarlas con más seguridad; en fin, darles un carácter más significativo.

La política de provocación que España siempre ha seguido en lo que concierne a sus posesiones de Ultramar, la cual sólo otorga concesiones cuando la presión es imperiosa, ya le han hecho perder las conquistas de Cortés y de Pizarro, y esa también es la causa de la insurrección de Cuba, destinada, si no tiene cuidado, a hacer desaparecer los últimos restos de esa supremacía poderosa que antaño ejerció sobre la mayor parte del nuevo mundo.

Por otro lado, dos hechos recientes: la forma como dirigió la guerra con las repúblicas del Pacífico y, sobre todo, el fracaso de Santo Domingo, demostraron que era posible hacerle resistencia con éxito. Entonces comenzó esta labor de propaganda separatista, cuyos efectos en este momento ya se hacen sentir rápidamente en Cuba.

Una tentativa simultánea tuvo lugar también en Puerto Rico. El movimiento no tuvo éxito. Se puede decir que la revolución tanteó el terreno. ¿Debemos creer que ha renunciado a sus proyectos, o que se mantiene calmada y silenciosa para poder extender mejor sus ramificaciones y actuar con más vigor y con más oportunidades de tener éxito cuando llegue el momento?

Este es el nudo del asunto. Sin embargo, los proyectos de los republicanos de Puerto Rico no resisten una observación concienzuda.

Un hecho importante que debo mencionar es que están lejos de forjarse ilusiones sobre lo que deben esperar de sus propias fuerzas.

La historia de ese partido no es brillante. Las intrigas comenzaron por el ejército. En diciembre de 1864, sobornaron a algunos descontentos del regimiento de artillería y provocaron un levantamiento parcial, que fue reprimido prontamente. En junio de 1867, hubo otra tentativa, un poco más seria, ya que esta vez incluía al propio regimiento de artillería y, además, al regimiento de infantería de Cádiz, pero en unos cuantos días todo volvió al orden.

¹¹¹ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, No. 24.

Ahora falta por probar un último elemento militar: los regimientos de milicianos compuestos exclusivamente por criollos y cuyos oficiales, a excepción de los jefes superiores, también son hijos del país. El año pasado, cuando la insurrección de Lares, su actitud demostró que el gobierno podía contar con ellos.

Durante la elección de los diputados, el partido republicano hizo un último esfuerzo en el terreno legal. Fue completamente derrotado; ninguno de sus candidatos resultó vencedor en la contienda electoral.

En vista de semejantes resultados se hacía necesaria una nueva táctica.

Vuestra Excelencia sin duda habrá notado que en mis diferentes despachos, me he encargado de mencionar que Puerto Rico no sería el escenario de sucesos importantes, que su porvenir debía decidirse en Cuba. Tan es así que los jefes de los separatistas de Puerto Rico, luego de haberlo intentado todo y haber sido derrotados en todas partes, se resignaron a lo único que convenía a su causa y se dispersaron, abandonando la lucha al descubierto para iniciar la era de la conspiración.

Por lo demás, su permanencia en la Isla se volvía casi imposible; puesto que, espías constantemente en sus movimientos por la administración, se exponían, como ya les había sucedido varias veces, a ser arrestados por la mínima sospecha. Y, ¿acaso estos hombres que tienen el valor de asumir una responsabilidad tan grande están verdaderamente a la altura de la misión a la que se han consagrado? ¿Son capaces de anticipar con exactitud todas las consecuencias que podría acarrear para el suelo que los vio nacer, una guerra de separación? ¿Han sopesado en una balanza justa los pros y los contras? ¿Acaso no aportan en todos sus movimientos demasiadas ideas personales, demasiados prejuicios que les impidan ver con claridad?

Es difícil, Señor Ministro, juzgar a los hombres si no por sus actos. Ninguno de ellos ha hecho nada lo suficientemente importante como para que sus compatriotas vuelvan los ojos hacia ellos, como hacía un salvador, en un momento crítico. Sólo uno desempeñó una misión seria; era miembro de la comisión que Puerto Rico envió a Madrid, en 1865, para aclarar al gobierno de la Península las reformas que reclamaba la administración de la Colonia. Las ideas que expresó en el seno de la reunión oficial, con respecto a la abolición de la esclavitud, fueron desaprobadas en la Isla por los mismos que lo habían nombrado.

No obstante, es justo sentar aquí que varios de ellos exponen su persona y su fortuna. Por lo que se refiere a su influencia en la Isla, aunque restringida hoy día, podría volverse muy seria y temible, si las esperanzas del partido liberal sensato de la Colonia fueran equivocadas, si el gobierno de Madrid hiciera imposible la misión de los diputados, al no concederles las reformas justas y prontas que reclaman.

¿Con qué fin se han marchado ahora casi todos de Puerto Rico? ¿Por qué razón han considerado necesaria su ausencia por el bien de su causa?

Reducidos a la inmovilidad mientras permanezcan en la Isla, al alejarse han adquirido una mayor libertad de acción. Habiendo perdido la esperanza de lograr algo por ellos mismos, quieren estar listos para trasladarse al lugar donde esté la fuerza, y justo cuando sea necesario. Dispersados inteligentemente, juntos aunque alejados, su misión actual es excitar, en los comités de los Estados Unidos de América o de Madrid, todas las pasiones que puedan serles útiles; poner al descubierto impunemente, por medio de la prensa, todas las faltas de una administración que, por desgracia, tiene demasiadas cosas censurables; estar al pendiente de los progresos de la partida que se juega en Cuba, para movilizarse entonces sin vacilación y resueltamente; venir incluso con hombres y armas si la insurrección triunfa; esperar un poco más, si es derrotada.

Todo se concentra allá ahora; los asuntos de Cuba regularán su conducta activa o pasiva, según las circunstancias.

Sin embargo, no se debe pensar, Señor Ministro, que al ocuparse tanto en las ventajas que pueden llegar desde afuera, hayan abandonado completamente, con su partida, lo que tanto interés tenían en conservar en el interior. Muy por el contrario, aún queda una mano firme: el de mayor autoridad se ha encargado de mantener el fuego latente en espera de la señal. La

posición crítica por la que atraviesa la Isla facilita ese trabajo silencioso que no se deja ver con claridad, que se escucha tanto más toda vez que es más secreto, que apenas se revela, pero que un observador atento descubre por instinto.

Si ahora tuviera que graduar, Señor Ministro, la intensidad de esa agitación de ánimos dentro de cada uno de los partidos de la Isla y nombrar los pueblos donde la efervescencia es más fuerte, bastaría un vistazo a los resultados de la contienda electoral que tuve el honor de enviar a Vuestra Excelencia en mi despacho del pasado 7 de junio, para designar los Departamentos de Arecibo, (N) Mayagüez, (O) Ponce, (S) como los lugares donde más se ha trabajado, y las villas de Mayagüez, San Germán y Ponce primeramente - Aguadilla y Arecibo en segundo lugar - como centros de propaganda.

Me parecía imposible, Señor Ministro, que una situación tan tensa como la que acabo de describir pudiera continuar sin ocasionar, por complicaciones imprevistas y con motivo, tal vez, de hechos insignificantes, como ocurrió el año pasado, algún conflicto que encendiera la primera chispa que haría estallar el asunto. Por su parte, la administración abusa de paliativos que nunca son suficientes, ya que si bien remedian momentáneamente el mal, no suprimen las causas. Además, esta situación no es un simple accidente; es la consecuencia de una serie de medidas desatinadas y de faltas que se encadenan entre sí, y que se derivan todas del principio falso y erróneo que señalé al comienzo y que, desde la conquista, siempre le ha servido de ejemplo a España para el gobierno de sus posesiones en América. Esas faltas son las que hay que reparar; lo que se debe cambiar es la política de provocación. Las tristes escenas que ocurren en Cuba han planteado seriamente la cuestión. El asunto es resolverla y pronto. Que el gobierno no se limite, como ha hecho hasta ahora, a cambiar personas: que cambie también las instituciones. Restableciendo la confianza entre la población, dirigiéndose sin titubeos por el camino de las reformas, tomando en seria consideración las justas reclamaciones que, desde hace tanto tiempo, le han estado haciendo infructuosamente los habitantes de la Colonia; en fin, satisfaciéndolas conseguirá conjurar, quizás, la tempestad que se avecina en Puerto Rico, pero que aún no ha estallado.

Los dos vapores sospechosos, con pabellón revolucionario, de cuya aparición en las aguas de Ponce había advertido a Vuestra Excelencia en mi despacho del pasado 23 del mes, desaparecieron sin justificar los temores que habían inspirado.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[87] **Arrestos en la isla de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 1^{ro} de noviembre de 1869**¹¹²

Señor Ministro,

En mis despachos anteriores y particularmente en el del pasado 3 de octubre, sometí a la bondadosa atención de Vuestra Excelencia la situación penosa, indecisa y complicada en la que se encuentra la isla de Puerto Rico.

En las circunstancias actuales, todo tiene importancia; por eso, considero útil señalar a Vuestra Excelencia un hecho grave que muestra cuánto debemos desconfiar de la aparente calma que disfruta la Colonia.

Se han hecho arrestos en la región de la Isla que tiene fama de ser el centro de las ideas separatistas: Mayagüez, San Germán, Aguadilla, Arecibo. Aunque la cifra no es grande, alrededor de una veintena, la calidad de las personas llama la atención. Figuran allí propietarios importantes y gente que, por su posición, son de temer debido a la influencia que podrían ejercer en un momento dado.

¹¹² Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 33.

¿Se pueden conocer, de una manera exacta y precisa, los motivos que indujeron a la administración a tomar una medida como ésta? Sí, porque dadas las causas, es fácil deducir las consecuencias.

Existe un partido, un grupo político que no oculta sus aspiraciones: sueña con la independencia. Al no poder actuar abiertamente, trabaja en secreto. Sabiendo que no puede hacer nada por sí solo, ya que aún no tiene la fuerza suficiente, toma el camino indirecto: ayuda con su dinero a la insurrección en la isla de Cuba; porque ese es el lugar donde se debe decidir el triunfo de sus ideas. Además, no es sorprendente saber que el motivo que el rumor general ofrecía para explicar los arrestos, es un sobrescrito que se habría abierto clandestinamente, en algunas villas, para allegar los fondos que se debían enviar al comité central revolucionario establecido en Nueva York. La administración se apoderó de documentos que comprometían a ciertas personas y decidió su arresto.

Esto fue lo que sucedió. Me ocuparé de seguir la instrucción de ese proceso, si se lleva a cabo, porque no sería nada extraño que, como ya ha ocurrido muchas veces, los prisioneros fuesen sumariados, durante un tiempo más o menos largo, sin que se pudieran seguir las fases de este procedimiento.

La administración no se hace ilusiones, Señor Ministro. Sabe a qué atenerse en cuanto a la predisposición de los ánimos. Empero, parece proceder como si no quisiera contraer ningún compromiso definitivo, o como si le complaciera más prolongar las dificultades que resolverlas.

Sin embargo, ya es hora de pensar en poner un alto a semejante situación. Sin importar la forma como se resuelva la dificultad, es dudoso que dicha solución infunda en las personas una confusión tan profunda como la que sustenta la situación de incertidumbre.

La toma de una decisión, por más enérgica que sea, es una solución; mientras que el "status quo" presenta la mayoría de los inconvenientes de una solución definitiva sin brindarle ninguna de las ventajas.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[88] Capitán General sobre la abolición de los derechos diferenciales a los buques de pabellón francés, Puerto Rico, 20 de diciembre de 1869¹¹³

Señor Ministro,

En mi despacho del día 9 de este mes, tuve el honor de informar a Vuestra Excelencia las gestiones que había hecho ante el Capitán General Gobernador de la Isla, en lo relativo a la abolición de los derechos diferenciales de importación que gravan el pabellón francés. Sometía al mismo tiempo a la bondadosa atención de Vuestra Excelencia, un análisis rápido de las ventajas que la marina francesa obtendría de esa importante reforma.

A su regreso, luego de varios días de viaje por las principales villas de la Isla, con motivo del empréstito, el Capitán General sufrió una indisposición que podría haber tenido consecuencias muy graves. Los rumores más diversos se difundieron por la Capital, pero pronto llegaron noticias tranquilizadoras.

Creí mi deber hacerle una visita y verificar por mí mismo cuán ciertos eran los diferentes rumores que habían tenido alarmada a la Capital durante un tiempo. Me dirigí a la casa de recreo donde reside el Capitán General en Río Piedras.

Lo encontré totalmente restablecido, prácticamente solo y despojado, por así decirlo, de su carácter oficial. Entonces, Señor Ministro, me apresuré a aprovechar la ocasión para repetir mis instancias con respecto a los derechos diferenciales de pabellón, y tengo razones para

¹¹³ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 44.

creer que se había apreciado lo justo de mis reclamaciones anteriores, porque el Capitán General me pareció en la mejor disposición y decidido a tomar un camino totalmente liberal.

Esa entrevista, que duró casi dos horas, puede tener una enorme importancia, Señor Ministro. De poder realizarse, las proposiciones que me hizo el Capitán General traerían un progreso importante frente al cual, muy seguramente, el régimen de recargo no tardaría en venirse abajo.

Señalé en un despacho anterior, entre otras ventajas que proporcionaría a la marina francesa la abolición de los derechos diferenciales de pabellón, la que obtendría inmediatamente la compañía transatlántica. Hoy día, las personas serias no pueden pasar por alto la importancia y la utilidad de esas grandes líneas y, si por influencia de viejas preocupaciones, las autoridades de la isla de Puerto Rico, hasta ahora se han rehusado enérgicamente a cualquier concesión que hubiera podido convertir al puerto de la Capital en la estación central entre el Pacífico y el Atlántico, creo que en la actualidad, Señor Ministro, las cosas no son así, ya que el Capitán General me planteó categóricamente la cuestión y añadió que si la compañía transatlántica trasladaba la estación de San Thomas a Puerto Rico, podría competir de inmediato con el pabellón español en condiciones de total igualdad, y que todos los terrenos que necesite para establecerse le serán concedidos de forma gratuita. Para terminar, me instó a escribir a Vuestra Excelencia en este sentido y añadió que él, por su parte, le aclararía a su gobierno esta cuestión y allanaría por anticipado todas las dificultades que pudieran suscitarse, a fin de que este proyecto pudiera realizarse con prontitud.

Naturalmente, es menester examinar las causas que pudieron hacer decidir a las autoridades españolas a apartarse de la vieja rutina, y la apreciación de las ventajas comerciales y políticas que dicha medida, al convertirse en un hecho consumado, traería para el pabellón francés.

El dominio español en las Antillas se ve amenazado seriamente. El círculo que las ideas liberales trazan alrededor de esas viejas instituciones se cierra más cada día, y el movimiento de la isla de Cuba ha dejado demostrado claramente todo lo que temíamos, y de lo que debíamos desconfiar más que nada.

Es difícil creer que ninguna de las autoridades que han gobernado las Antillas sucesivamente se haya podido equivocar en cuanto al verdadero espíritu que anima a ese numeroso grupo que llamamos "los hijos del país", la mayoría de ellos educados en Colegios de los Estados Unidos de América. Esa educación que ha recibido la nueva generación ha formado, como es natural, un núcleo de resistencia contra el actual orden, pero no se le ha tomado muy en cuenta. Se ha cometido el descuido de no seguir paso a paso sus progresos, para poder neutralizarlo, en un momento dado, mediante disposiciones espontáneas. Hoy, las ilusiones se han desvanecido, la profundidad de la herida se ha sondado, se intentan reparar, en lo posible, las faltas cometidas. Además vemos un cambio completo en la forma de apreciar las cosas: las autoridades españolas, que antes se quedaban siempre a la zaga, van al contrario y por sí mismas, un paso al frente; en vez de esperar por las solicitudes, proponen. Es evidente que las circunstancias mismas fuerzan esta revolución completa de ideas, pero el hecho no es menos patente.

También el gobierno de Puerto Rico necesita tener precaución contra el exterior especialmente. Las posibilidades de que los americanos se establezcan en San Thomas y en la base de Samaná, lo obligan a atraer al puerto de la Capital, mediante concesiones muy ventajosas, a la marina de las potencias europeas; ya que de esa manera piensa reducir el comercio de San Thomas, para su beneficio, y neutralizar la influencia americana, permitiendo que se funden establecimientos extranjeros en su territorio, donde el pabellón le prestará una ayuda, si no material, por lo menos moral, de suma importancia.

Estas son las causas, Señor Ministro, que obligan a los gobernadores de las colonias españolas a mostrarse dispuestos a seguir el movimiento liberal.

Si examino ahora las ventajas que el pabellón francés podría obtener, una vez logrado el proyecto, señalaré primero, que en vista del probable establecimiento de los americanos en la bahía de Samaná, tarde o temprano, y en San Thomas después, un establecimiento francés en el puerto de la Capital, aunque puramente comercial, tendría una importancia política

muy grande, ya que después de la bahía de Samaná, este puerto, por su posición intermedia y por su extensión, es el punto más importante de las Antillas. Desde el punto de vista comercial, las ventajas serían inmensas, puesto que de conceder España a la compañía transatlántica la asimilación al pabellón español, no podría detenerse a mitad de camino, y necesariamente debería otorgar la reciprocidad plena y entera, suprimir las restricciones y adoptar las disposiciones liberales de las cuales Francia ha sido ejemplo.

Me encargaré de hablar con el Capitán General, Señor Ministro, cada vez que se presente la oportunidad, dada la buena disposición que me mostró, y me sentiría feliz si, gracias a mis reiteradas instancias, lograra abrir los puertos de la Colonia para nuestro pabellón, en condiciones de completa igualdad.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[89] Reformas proyectadas, Inamovilidad de la Magistratura, Puerto Rico, 10 de enero de 1870¹¹⁴

Señor Ministro,

Las Antillas españolas, Cuba y Puerto Rico, preocupan desde hace más de un año a las personas. La insurrección de Cuba, cuyo alcance no conviene exagerar ni menoscabar, coloca a estas dos colonias en una posición excepcional *vis-à-vis* la metrópoli.

Los hombres que la revolución de septiembre ha colocado en el poder conocen las aspiraciones, las verdaderas necesidades de estas colonias; también parecen estar dispuestos a dar inicio a la era de la regeneración. Sin embargo, vacilan, titubean, parecen tener miedo de asestar demasiado rápidamente el último golpe a ese viejo edificio de la arbitrariedad; no creen que las poblaciones estén suficientemente preparadas para soportar la libertad; incluso se diría que les complace prolongar, durante algún tiempo, una crisis que reconocen como legítima y en la que no pueden pensar sin sentir pavor.

En Madrid se formó, desde hace algún tiempo, cierto grupo político que tiene su diario, “La Patria”, y que por convicción o por interés, cree que conviene esperar por la pacificación de la isla de Cuba antes de decidir nada en cuanto al destino de Puerto Rico. Piensan que hacerla beneficiar inmediatamente de las ventajas de la nueva constitución es crear un precedente funesto que el gobierno no podrá desconocer cuando tenga que ocuparse de la organización de la isla de Cuba. Según esos hombres, “un cambio de régimen político en las Antillas no es un trastorno pasajero ni siempre remediable; es la pérdida real de la nacionalidad, la quema de las propiedades, el asesinato”.

Esto puede ser cierto para Cuba, y el gobierno, en el momento y el lugar oportunos, habrá de apreciar las cosas por su justo valor, pero no existe en Puerto Rico ninguna persona seria que tema a la nueva situación que va a acontecer en la colonia; por el contrario, la desean, ya que la incertidumbre es intolerable. Consideramos con justa razón, que tarde o temprano habrá que resolver todas las cuestiones, incluso la de la esclavitud. Más vale, pues, prepararse de antemano, examinar la situación con sangre fría y no agravar con la resistencia y el prejuicio las dificultades de esa importante revolución social.

No obstante, es lamentable, Señor Ministro, que entre los diputados que Puerto Rico envió a las Cortes, haya quien considere necesaria la continuación indefinida del “*statu quo*”. Porque, sin exagerar, aún pasará mucho tiempo antes de que Cuba se encuentre en las condiciones de tranquilidad necesarias para proceder a la convocatoria de los colegios electorales y a la elección de diputados.

¹¹⁴ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 46.

Esta anomalía entre las verdaderas aspiraciones de la mayoría del país y la opinión formulada en la cámara por dos de sus representantes, se explica fácilmente cuando pensamos que la Isla sólo respira desde hace un año. Durante las elecciones, los partidos no tuvieron tiempo de organizarse y de establecer un programa definitivo y serio. Todavía no se había podido formar la verdadera opinión pública, ya que apenas ahora se han comenzado a establecer algunos hábitos de discusión y examen. La prensa, sometida aún en este momento al poder discrecional, no tenía ninguna influencia sobre la opinión pública, y no podía contribuir a un entendimiento previo entre electores y diputados. Además, se puede decir que cada uno de ellos representa sus opiniones personales.

Existe poca o ninguna homogeneidad en sus gestiones, y parece muy difícil lograr un acuerdo en lo que respecta a la solución del asunto más importante: la abolición de la esclavitud.

No hay que temer a los demás proyectos del gobierno, Señor Ministro; éste procede con sabiduría y moderación, la población ya participa en la gestión de los asuntos generales de la nación. Ahora se quiere dejar en sus manos la gestión de los asuntos locales. Eso es algo muy natural; ciertamente no hay motivo de qué preocuparse. También promete ocuparse de la abolición de la esclavitud, pero conciliando, en lo posible, todos los intereses. Aún queda por reformar la parte administrativa y económica. La cuestión financiera exige una investigación seria. Es menester confiar en que el gobierno se esfuerce en no destruir sin reedificar.

Si debemos juzgar las decisiones ulteriores, Señor Ministro, por la anunciada por el último correo, las personas deben sentirse tranquilas; puesto que no podemos sino aplaudir la determinación y la firmeza con que se dirigen hoy los asuntos de las colonias españolas. El decreto que vuelve inamovible a la magistratura en las provincias de ultramar y que, al mismo tiempo, depura sus cuadros, al abrir sus puertas al verdadero mérito y cerrarlas, en parte, al favoritismo, es una obra importante cuyo valor no dejaremos de apreciar.

Me esforzaré, Señor Ministro, en hacer resaltar el verdadero alcance de las reformas a medida que se introduzcan, seguiré su aplicación con todo detalle, para poder considerar el plan general en toda su extensión, y darme cuenta de la influencia que este nuevo orden de las cosas podrá ejercer sobre la situación interior de la isla de Puerto Rico.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[90] **En Ponce-Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, 4 de marzo de 1870**¹¹⁵

Señor Ministro,

Los Colegios electorales de Ponce y Mayagüez se reunieron el pasado 25 de febrero, a fin de proceder a la elección de un diputado en sustitución del Sr. Pascasio Escoriaza.

La contienda fue muy vivaz entre la administración y el partido liberal; y un radical resultó triunfante en la urna electoral con una mayoría de 93 votos.

El Sr. Escoriaza había sido nombrado en dos circunscripciones diferentes: Ponce-Mayagüez y Arecibo. Él optó por la última. Hombre serio, de conocimientos sólidos, que reside casi constantemente en Madrid; sin pertenecer al partido liberal, milita en las filas de los partidarios de las reformas. Por eso, para que la nueva elección pudiera tener los resultados que el partido liberal moderado y el partido radical, unidos estrechamente por esta vez, deseaban alcanzar, escogió la circunscripción de Arecibo y dejó la de Ponce-Mayagüez, donde sabía que los elementos estaban bastante unidos y bastante de acuerdo como para que su partido pudiese conseguir lo que se proponía.

Por lo demás, Señor Ministro, la administración no estuvo contenta con la elección de su candidato, el Sr. Navarro Rodríguez, completamente desconocido en la circunscripción

¹¹⁵ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 55.

donde se le presentó; porque las únicas razones que se podían señalar a su favor eran algunos años de residencia en la capital de la Isla, como empleado de finanzas, y algunos artículos publicados en los diarios de Madrid sobre el porvenir de las Colonias españolas en América. No era posible, pues, que en los pueblos de Ponce y Mayagüez, importantes en todos los aspectos y donde la mayoría de los electores es completamente independiente, se recibiera la consigna sin una oposición encarnizada, sobre todo en el estado en que se encontraban los ánimos luego del fracaso sufrido por el partido liberal, cuando tuvo que enfrentar a candidatos conocidos y apreciados en Puerto Rico.

Por otra parte, en vez de provocar la fusión del partido citado imponiendo a un extranjero, la administración debió haber evitado precisamente proporcionarle tan bella oportunidad de contar sus fuerzas, lo que aprovechó con inteligencia; la alianza resultó perfecta.

El candidato aceptado por la gente sería de la circunscripción Ponce-Mayagüez fue el Sr. Ramón Nadal y Cuevas, abogado distinguido de Mayagüez, quien reunía todas las condiciones para representar dignamente a su país. Por desgracia, la administración creyó su deber oponerle a un candidato oficial frente al cual éste se retiró.

En una circular a los electores, expone los motivos que lo hicieron declinar el honor de la diputación, pero al mismo tiempo, recomienda a todos sus amigos al Sr. Román Baldorioty de Castro, también abogado, pero perteneciente al partido radical y quien fue electo representante a las Cortes por una mayoría de 93 votos, de un total de 935 votantes.

Cifras tan modestas como las que acabo de indicar son prueba, Señor Ministro, de la importancia que tiene la elección que acaba de celebrarse, y de cuán penosa es la situación en que se encuentra la administración *vis-à-vis* el gobierno de la metrópoli.

El sufragio en Puerto Rico está esencialmente limitado: no se es elector si no se es propietario o si no se tiene una posición en la sociedad. Podemos decir, pues, sin temor a equivocarnos, que el Sr. Baldorioty de Castro representa el verdadero sentir de esa circunscripción; es decir, una tendencia marcada hacia las reformas. Este resultado prueba claramente que cuando le faltan los elementos oficiales, la administración no tiene el poder de imponer su deseo o su voluntad.

En las circunstancias actuales este hecho es grave, ya que conviene que la administración no se exponga con frecuencia a fracasos semejantes que le hagan perder el prestigio que tanto necesita. Esta vez vimos ejercer todas las influencias, la presión se hizo sentir de todas las formas posibles en los dos partidos opuestos. Sin embargo, los hijos del país demostraron que uniéndose podían más que el Partido Conservador Español; se lanzaron a los brazos del partido radical, pero no permitieron que se nombrara a un extranjero. Ahora saben que si quieren, pueden, sobre todo si se unen. Es una falta muy grave que el gobierno no debería cometer.

Por lo demás, Señor Ministro, ninguna otra persona podía ser mejor representante de la colonia que el Sr. Baldorioty de Castro. De raza india, alega ser descendiente de los antiguos jefes. Es un abogado distinguido que, en 1867, tuvo la misión de representar la Colonia de Puerto Rico en la exposición de París. Perteneció al partido radical y ha estado exiliado varias veces. Actualmente reside en Madrid, ya que la situación en la Isla se había vuelto muy difícil luego de las elecciones generales de junio pasado.

El grupo de diputados a las Cortes por Puerto Rico contará con un acérrimo reformador. Los escritos y los discursos que ha pronunciado, en ciertas ocasiones, ante la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, demuestran que, siempre que tenga la oportunidad, sabrá exponer sus ideas con claridad, y que es bastante buen orador, si no tanto para atraer a las masas, al menos para hacerse escuchar sin cansar.

El Ministro de Ultramar tomó algunas disposiciones respecto a la constitución de cuerpos administrativos inamovibles para el servicio de aduanas, de finanzas y de correos, pero como estos decretos aún no se han publicado en la Isla, aguardo para evaluarlos y para dar cuenta de los mismos a Vuestra Excelencia. La aplicación de éstas pondrá de manifiesto su utilidad y sus ventajas.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,

Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia, el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor

[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[91] Proclama del Capitán General, Puerto Rico, 20 de abril de 1870¹¹⁶

Señor Ministro,

La Gaceta Oficial de Puerto Rico publica, en su número de hoy, una proclama del Capitán General Gobernador Superior Civil, cuya traducción* tengo el honor de enviar a continuación a Vuestra Excelencia.

“Gobierno Superior Civil.

A Su Excelencia el Señor Conde Daru, Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores en París
Habitantes de esta Provincia.

Los tenaces enemigos de vuestro reposo esparcieron con la más aviesa intuición la grave noticia de que iba a alterarse el orden público en uno de los días consagrados por nuestra sacrosanta religión a conmemorar el sublime misterio de la redención del género humano.

La Semana Santa ha pasado: a las oraciones y tristezas de la Iglesia y de los fieles han sucedido las puras e inocentes alegrías que la Pascua inspira siempre a los pueblos cristianos y ni la más leve sombra de disgusto ni el más insignificante suceso, han venido a turbar la paz, verdaderamente octaviana, de que se goza en esta Isla.

Semejantes rumores tienen el triste privilegio en todos los países del mundo de preocupar los espíritus, de alarmar a las gentes sencillas y de arruinar paulatinamente la fortuna de los pueblos.

Puertorriqueños, no deis crédito a las falsas nuevas que se hacen circular sólo con el objeto de que se interrumpan las operaciones mercantiles, de que se apodere el temor de las gentes del campo y de que se aproxime la bancarota.

Fórjense en extrañas tierras o en el corazón mismo de nuestra patria común, tened entendido que mientras el gobierno vigile incesantemente por nuestras fortunas y por nuestras familias, de seguro, que no se convertirán en hechos las alarmas que los noticieros asalariados producen con el fin inicuo de perderos.

Tomadas están cuantas medidas debe tomar un gobierno fuerte y previsor, y os aseguro solemnemente que, si vuestros eternos enemigos, que lo son a un tiempo hasta del nombre español, intentaren llevar al terreno de la práctica los delirantes sueños de cerebros exaltados, el castigo sería tan terrible como la magnitud del crimen, porque ya están agotados los ricos tesoros de la clemencia española.

Habitantes de esta Provincia, estad tranquilos y confiad en el patriotismo de vuestro Gobernador.

Firmado = José Laureano Sanz
Puerto Rico 17 de abril de 1870”.

Cuando se han seguido paso a paso los cambios de ánimos, Señor Ministro, cuando se han observado atentamente los hechos y los movimientos de la administración, tiene uno derecho a preguntarse con qué fin publicó el Capitán General esta proclama que no tenía razón de ser, ya que no se había hecho público ningún rumor alarmante, y las fiestas de la semana santa habían transcurrido, por lo demás, en la más perfecta calma⁽¹⁾. Ésta merece estudiarse en todos sus aspectos, y sólo yendo a los más mínimos detalles, podemos llegar a darnos cuenta de una gestión que no vacilo en calificar de torpe y, sobre todo, de inoportuna.

Los hombres que aquí llamamos conservadores, ya que es el nombre que se han dado ellos mismos, sostienen que no existen partidos en Puerto Rico. Para ellos no hay más que

¹¹⁶ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 62.

* N. del T. — Hemos copiado el texto original tal y como aparece publicado en la *Gaceta Oficial de Puerto Rico*, aunque con la ortografía actual.

⁽¹⁾ Nota del documento: Esta cuestión, simple en apariencia, es sin embargo muy compleja.

insulares y peninsulares. Su espíritu o su interés no admite a ese sensato partido liberal, pero amigo del orden, que cree, con razón, que ha llegado la hora de eliminar las trabas; y mientras más pronto mejor.

Por desgracia, Señor Ministro, en la capital, sobre todo, el supuesto elemento conservador es el que domina. Ese grupo, compuesto en gran parte por personas recomendables, por lo demás, pero desprovistas completamente de todo sentido de la política, tiene a la administración en vilo, porque en un momento dado, puede contribuir por sí solo al erario público, tiene en el Capitán General un instrumento dócil y pretende dirigir la situación política como lo hace con los asuntos comerciales.

Naturalmente, cabe examinar, Señor Ministro, si es por ineptitud o por interés personal o general que el Gobernador Superior Civil se presta a sus tejemanejes, los cuales, de continuar, no dejarán de atentar en gran medida contra la prosperidad de esta colonia.

En mis contactos con el Capitán General, contactos que han sido, por desgracia, más frecuentes de lo que habría deseado, pude juzgar que este funcionario no estaba a la altura de la misión que se le había confiado. Brusco y poco sociable, vive casi continuamente en una casa de recreo situada a unos 12 kilómetros de la capital. En sus conversaciones no se puede seguir la idea, se nota que nada de lo que dice o hace es el resultado de un plan definido, seriamente estudiado, o que forme parte de una concepción general para alcanzar un fin determinado. Todo en él es la impresión del momento. Resulta difícil, pues, obtener soluciones positivas, ya que falta la coordinación. En estos casos, suele suceder que los hombres con dicho temple, creyendo que mandan en todo, se dejan llevar fácilmente por la cohorte de aduladores que no les falta a su alrededor, y eso es lo que vemos aquí.

Aunque no lo parezca, Señor Ministro, los intereses personales del Capitán General y del grupo que forma el elemento conservador son idénticos. En efecto, en vista del progreso de las ideas liberales, y en vista, más que nada, del advenimiento al Ministerio de Ultramar de un hombre cuyas ideas liberales son demasiado conocidas como para que quede la más mínima ilusión en cuanto a sus intenciones futuras, es necesario que las palabras revolución e insurrección se pronuncien algunas veces, para que las teorías conservadoras, que tienden a la continuación indefinida del orden actual, tengan su razón de ser.

La proclamación en Puerto Rico de la nueva constitución conduciría forzosamente a la separación de la administración militar de la administración civil y, por consiguiente, haría inútil la presencia en la Isla de un personaje militar de muy alto rango. En pocas palabras, como es natural, el fin del régimen actual traerá consigo la supresión de la Capitanía General; los hábitos de discusión; la libertad de reunión; la reforma de los Municipios; la descentralización; la creación de instituciones de crédito; la abolición de la esclavitud en un tiempo más o menos lejano. Precisamente todo lo que no desea el supuesto partido conservador.

No resulta extraño, pues, que el Capitán General y el grupo conservador se hayan unido por identidad de intereses.

Por otra parte, Señor Ministro, la situación actual es difícil, y cualquier observador se da cuenta de que puede durar mucho tiempo.

Se hizo un empréstito, pero como siempre, se pensó en el presente obviando el futuro. Luego de algunos meses de holgura, las finanzas de la Isla han vuelto a caer en la misma penuria. Es necesario tomar una nueva decisión para salir del laberinto en el que están metidos. La proclama es el prólogo. Primero hay que agitar las poblaciones, prepararlas, hacerles ver que siempre hay que temer a la demagogia, pero que la autoridad vigila y, para que la prueba sea contundente, el Capitán General ha emprendido nuevamente un viaje por la Isla. Su recorrido comenzó por los Departamentos de Arecibo y Mayagüez, donde domina el elemento liberal. Se había vuelto necesario avivar el entusiasmo de ciertas personas a quienes los resultados de las últimas elecciones habían desanimado un poco. En el camino, se puede sondear un poco el terreno en cuanto a las posibilidades de éxito de una nueva combinación financiera. No queremos exponernos, esta vez, a que la demanda no sea cubierta, como sucedió para el último empréstito, a pesar de todas las promesas que se hicieron.

Esta situación es lamentable por varias razones, Señor Ministro. Primero, porque no se deben excitar las pasiones. A fuerza de crear quimeras, acabaremos por tropezar con la realidad y, cuando el daño esté hecho, quizás ya no haya más remedio; y además, porque la tranquilidad no puede alterarse en la Isla de ninguna manera. Los separatistas son pocos y están demasiado convencidos de su impotencia material. Tal y como tuve la oportunidad de señalarle a Vuestra Excelencia, en repetidas ocasiones, Puerto Rico seguirá fatalmente la suerte de Cuba. En fin, porque mediante las reformas prometidas, el estado actual de represión cesará a pesar de todo, se hará la luz y, una vez establecida la discusión de los problemas de cuya solución depende el porvenir de la colonia, se llegará necesariamente a un acuerdo tanto más saludable toda vez que sería público y los intereses de cada uno se tomarían en seria consideración. Entonces todo volvería al orden y este país aún podría prometerse una prosperidad que nunca ha conocido, y que la fertilidad de su suelo y su posición geográfica excepcional le aseguran, puesto que las leyes que la regirán responderán a las necesidades generales del comercio y sus condiciones políticas, al progreso de la civilización actual.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[92] Situación política —convocatoria de los colegios electorales— Municipios Diputación Provincial, Puerto Rico, 23 de marzo de 1871¹¹⁷

Señor Ministro,

Sufriendo desde hace varios meses y profundamente abatido por las desgracias que han caído sobre Francia, no me ha sido posible continuar la serie de estudios sobre la isla de Puerto Rico, que tuve el honor de someter, sucesivamente, a la bondadosa atención de Vuestra Excelencia. Sin embargo, en vista de la nueva situación de las colonias españolas desde la revolución de septiembre de 1868, y en atención, sobre todo, a los hechos políticos que se manifestaron y a la importancia de los que se preparan, debo dar a conocer, sin más demoras, el movimiento que tiene lugar en la opinión pública, señalar las tendencias, las aspiraciones de la mayoría, las de la minoría, tener en cuenta a cada uno y considerar las consecuencias que demostrarán lo que le reserva el porvenir en un tiempo más o menos lejano a un país cuyos elementos de prosperidad y de riqueza serían inmensos, si las fuerzas productivas se llegaran a desarrollar progresivamente y con inteligencia.

La administración de las colonias españolas, con la organización que existe aún hoy, a pesar de todas las modificaciones que la revolución de septiembre ha traído al antiguo sistema colonial, es una misión muy difícil de cumplir para los Generales a cargo de la misma. Armados con poderes ilimitados, son capaces de todo. Es esencial, pues, que a las cualidades que hacen a un buen General se añadan la inteligencia, la sagacidad y el espíritu de orden que constituyen a un buen administrador. Contemporizar, no herir ninguna susceptibilidad, ser flexible y firme al mismo tiempo. Esas son las condiciones que los Capitanes Generales Gobernadores deberían reunir para ser dueños de la opinión pública y hacer mover, según las circunstancias y según las necesidades del momento, los complicados hilos del aparato gubernamental.

Por desgracia, es muy raro encontrar todas esas cualidades reunidas en un mismo individuo. Por esta razón, la mayor parte del tiempo sucede que cada uno de los Generales aporta a sus actos, sobre todo en sus ordenanzas civiles, el sentimiento personal que lo anima; es decir, el reflejo de sus opiniones políticas, y se preocupa muy poco por examinar si las condiciones y la

¹¹⁷ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 103.

naturaleza del país se adaptan con precisión a la interpretación que da a las órdenes que recibe directamente del gobierno de la metrópoli.

Tan es así, Señor Ministro, que basta con echar un vistazo retrospectivo y establecer un paralelo entre la administración anterior del General Sanz, de quien tuve la oportunidad de hablar a Vuestra Excelencia en muchas ocasiones, y la administración actual del General Baldrich, para quedar convencido, sin duda alguna, de que si algún día estas dos últimas provincias (Cuba y Puerto Rico) que aún le quedan a España de todas sus antiguas posesiones en América, se separan de la metrópoli, se deberá culpar, no a las ideas más o menos liberales que se han desarrollado progresivamente entre los nativos, precisamente porque se les tenía, y se les sigue teniendo, bajo el yugo, sino más bien a los gobiernos que se han sucedido en España desde la conquista y, sobre todo, a los Capitanes Generales que se han hecho cargo sucesivamente de su administración.

Las tendencias políticas y las instrucciones que trajo de Madrid el General Sanz, primer Gobernador enviado desde el nuevo orden que rige el destino de España luego de la revolución, se dieron a entender desde los primeros actos de su gobierno. Afiliado en España al partido conocido con el nombre de "Unión Liberal", no podía olvidar su origen, ni los puntos de vista de su partido en cuanto al modo de gobernar las colonias; prometió mucho, sólo consintió en aquello que no pudo suprimir y apoyó, con toda su autoridad, al partido conservador de la Isla, compuesto casi exclusivamente por individuos que, aunque españoles, vienen a las Antillas con el único propósito de explotarlas. Firmes partidarios del *statu quo*, piensan en las reformas como si fueran una hidra que aparece y luego se retira el día en que, después de haber amasado capitales más o menos considerables, pueden marcharse tranquilamente a España.

Era necesario, pues, demostrarle a Madrid, a toda costa, que Puerto Rico no podía ni debía disfrutar aún de los beneficios de la revolución. Por eso no se oía hablar más que de conspiraciones, proscripciones, seguidas de arrestos más o menos legales. La policía estaba siempre en movimiento. Las tropas formadas en columnas volantes no cesaban de hacer rondas militares en la Isla. Se aprovechó también el estado deplorable en que verdaderamente se encontraba la isla de Cuba para alarmar de forma continua a los habitantes de Puerto Rico, resaltando las crueldades cometidas por los insurgentes. Por su parte, la Marina estaba siempre en alerta: "Temores continuos a los desembarcos proyectados por los corsarios enviados desde los Estados Unidos por la comisión de defensa que mantenía en Nueva York la insurrección cubana".

No obstante, en el fondo era fácil reconocer que todos sus temores eran imaginarios y que lo único que se perseguía era hacer ver que si no se concedían libertades era porque el estado del país no lo permitía. La excepción fueron ciertos actos forzosos, como la amnistía general y la publicación de la ley que otorgaba a Puerto Rico el derecho de enviar diputados a las Cortes. Por lo demás, podemos calificar la administración del General Sanz con una palabra: absolutismo.

Desde la llegada del Gobernador actual, el General Baldrich, cuyas ideas políticas son liberales, todo ha cambiado de aspecto: no más conspiraciones, no más temores a desembarcos; todo está tranquilo y, entretanto, el orden nunca se ha visto alterado. Los nativos están contentos con él. El partido conservador, por el contrario, hace todo lo que puede por reemplazarlo y, si no fuera por la amistad personal que lo une al General Prim, es muy probable que ya hubiera sido relevado de su mandato. Incluso se hablaba en estos últimos días de reemplazarlo por el General Sanz, a quien los conservadores quisieran ver regresar a Puerto Rico a toda costa. Hasta ahora, nada nos hace suponer que su deseo se verá cumplido. Sin embargo, como no tienen por costumbre desanimarse y, puesto que los hombres que componen ese partido, representantes de las principales fortunas de la Isla, tienen si no todo, al menos cierto poder, han logrado retirar al secretario del gobierno, que es el alma de la Administración Civil y reemplazarlo por una de sus criaturas: un abogado de la villa de Ponce, apellidado Díaz Romero, persona inteligente, intrigante, se dice, y que querían que sirviera de freno a lo que llaman el liberalismo desenfrenado del General Baldrich, a quien acusan injustamente de hacerles el juego a los hombres que quieren, no la asimilación, sino la independencia de la Isla y su separación completa de la metrópoli.

Era de esperar que el General comprendiera a dónde querían llegar. Por ello, haciendo uso de los poderes ilimitados que le otorga la legislación especial de las Antillas, se negó a admitir al Sr. Díaz Romero; ni siquiera quiso permitir que se lo presentaran. Esta decisión, cuya importancia es imposible ocultar, ya que conlleva la desobediencia a una orden del gobierno central, pone de relieve el alcance de los poderes de los gobernadores y cuánta razón tienen los habitantes de Puerto Rico al querer reformar, en lo que les concierne, un orden que es excesivo y que obligó a decir a un diputado de Puerto Rico en plena Cámara “que la tranquilidad de sus comitentes dependía del buen o el mal humor de quien estaba encargado de administrarlos”.

Para resumir las diferencias que existen entre los dos modos de gobernar de los Generales Sanz y Baldrich, basta decir que el primero, imbuido de ideas retrógradas, publicaba inmediatamente todo lo que venía de Madrid tendiente a suprimir y retenía, el mayor tiempo posible, todo lo que podía dar un poco más de libertad de acción. Mientras que el segundo, por el contrario, da toda la libertad que puede y sólo restringe cuando no le queda más remedio y, a pesar de todo, el orden no se ha alterado ni un solo instante desde que está a cargo del gobierno de la Isla.

Si es menester apreciar cuál de estos dos sistemas es el mejor, creo que no podemos vacilar, ni por un instante, en inclinarnos por el que otorga una mayor cantidad de libertades sin generar el desorden.

Hay un asunto capital, Señor Ministro, que ocasiona casi todos los disgustos que existen, desde hace tiempo, entre los administradores y los administrados: me refiero al asunto de la esclavitud. Es el escollo que obstaculiza las mejores intenciones, porque nadie osa abordar una cosa que puede ocasionar la ruina del país, según unos, y su prosperidad, según otros. Todos tienen razón, si partimos desde su punto de vista. En efecto, los partidarios de la esclavitud sólo ven la ruina de sus intereses particulares, mientras que los abolicionistas sólo piensan en la cuestión de la moralidad, sin preocuparse por lo que pueda suceder. Considerando las cosas fríamente, creo que sin una preparación preliminar, con respecto a la poca instrucción generalizada entre los esclavos, la abolición inmediata y absoluta podría acarrear trastornos muy perjudiciales, pero esto no quita que el statu quo ya no sea posible, y si los abolicionistas chillan no es tanto porque no se resuelve el asunto, sino porque no se hace nada por elaborar la solución.

La revolución ha mejorado la suerte de los esclavos de manera muy imperfecta. A partir del 18 de septiembre de 1868, los recién nacidos son libres y mediante un decreto se ha liberado, también, a todos los esclavos que hayan cumplido sesenta años.

El estudio de las medidas que se deben tomar le fue confiado a una comisión especial compuesta por los principales hacendados, pero como aquí siempre sucede, la comisión se reunió, es cierto, mas se limitó simplemente a nombrar una subcomisión que se separó sin haber decidido nada y que es probable que no decida nada.

En mi despacho del 25 de mayo de 1869, tuve el honor de informar al Departamento sobre las elecciones que se llevaron a cabo en aquella época para los diputados que la colonia debía enviar a las Cortes Constituyentes. Su función ha sido casi insignificante, si consideramos las aspiraciones de los nativos. Sin embargo, lograron devolverle a Puerto Rico la vida municipal y el nombramiento de una diputación provincial que reemplaza al antiguo Consejo de Administración, pero con atribuciones mucho mayores. Su valor estriba, más que nada, en que sus miembros son elegidos, no por el gobierno, como antes, sino mediante el sufragio.

Todo español en pleno disfrute de sus derechos cívicos, mayor de 25 años, que sepa leer y escribir y que pague 16 escudos (40 F) de contribución directa al estado es elector.

La instalación de la diputación provincial es un hecho consumado. Se nombraron veinticuatro diputados y otros tantos suplentes en toda la Isla. La mayoría pertenece al partido liberal reformista y es el que favorecen casi exclusivamente los hijos del país. Un decreto del Gobernador, del 26 de este mes, fija para el 1^o de abril próximo la reunión de esta corporación para comenzar sus trabajos. El Capitán General es presidente nato de la diputación, pero sus

miembros nombran al vicepresidente y componen su gabinete. Sus atribuciones consisten en controlar todos los actos de la administración civil. Tienen derecho a expresar sus deseos al gobierno central con respecto a todos los asuntos internos.

El municipio va a sufrir en poco tiempo una reforma radical. Sus miembros también serán nombrados mediante el sufragio y el gobierno ya no tendrá el derecho, como ha tenido hasta ahora, de intervenir en la elección del alcalde; a los consejeros municipales se les reserva el derecho de escogerlo entre ellos.

La disolución de la Asamblea Constituyente española debía originar naturalmente nuevas elecciones de diputados: lo que va a ocurrir dentro de poco. Un decreto, incluido en la Gaceta Oficial del 16 de este mes, ordena la elaboración inmediata de listas electorales para la elección de 15 diputados y de 4 senadores. La isla estará representada, pues, en ambas cámaras. Cabe señalar, sin embargo, que al continuar con el mismo sistema de restricción, el gobierno de la metrópoli parece temer la presencia de los representantes de sus colonias. Aunque el decreto ordena la elaboración de listas electorales, tiene el cuidado de añadir que las elecciones se celebrarán "cuando el gobierno de S. M. lo determine". Lo que obliga a decir al órgano del partido liberal reformista que "ya que se les confiere el nombre de provincia española, por lo menos se les deberían conceder todas las atribuciones". Las elecciones ya se celebraron en España. La convocatoria de las cámaras se fijó para el próximo 3 de abril, y como aún no se sabe cuándo se celebrarán las elecciones en Puerto Rico, les será difícil a sus representantes poder comenzar sus trabajos. Tampoco se explican por qué siempre se les deja a la zaga.

¡La lógica es bastante obvia!, pero se logrará poco o nada. El gobierno de Madrid no hará ni más ni menos de lo que tenga la intención de hacer. Mas entretanto, todos se preparan para la contienda. Ya se han efectuado reuniones preparatorias para elaborar las listas. Todos los partidos se están moviendo, principalmente los conservadores, quienes perdieron por completo la partida en la elección de la diputación provincial. Desean recuperar el terreno perdido.

¿Podemos saber desde ahora qué elemento dominará, esta vez, las elecciones de los diputados y los senadores? ¿Conseguirá el triunfo el partido liberal o resultará vencido? Es una cuestión cuya solución puede tener una influencia muy importante en el futuro de la colonia. Por eso, creo mi deber examinarla teniendo en cuenta las oportunidades de unos y otros.

Completamente ajena a la vida política, hasta estos últimos tiempos la isla de Puerto Rico no había conocido, y menos la nueva generación, las pasiones que suelen engendrar las luchas partidistas. Como tuve oportunidad de señalar en mis diferentes despachos, la prensa no existía; los diarios que se publicaban antes de septiembre de 1868 no podían decir nada y mucho menos debatir. A la población se le daba por enterada y si bien se hacía cierta propaganda, sólo podía ser muy restringida y circunscrita a un número muy limitado de individuos, que por su inteligencia o educación comprendían la triste posición que a la que se les relegaba. Por eso, como he explicado muchas veces, en Puerto Rico no había una opinión pública seria. Aquí todos podían manifestar sus aspiraciones, pero el gobierno no las tenía en cuenta. Desde la revolución de septiembre todo ha cambiado mucho. Se otorgó el derecho de discutir, se eliminaron las trabas que mantenían a la prensa a raya. El derecho de reunión, durante el período electoral, es un hecho consumado. Una primera experiencia demostró a todo el partido que se podía sacar algo de este nuevo orden. Por lo demás, los elementos se van agregando poco a poco, se crean nuevos diarios, la discusión entre éstos es seria, mordaz y hasta apasionada. Se lee mucho más que antes y, como necesariamente debía ocurrir, se va formando la opinión pública, y no pasará mucho tiempo sin que el gobierno deba tomar en seria consideración sus aspiraciones.

Por otra parte, el elemento conservador ya no tiene, como cuando las primeras elecciones de diputados, el apoyo de un Capitán General. El Gobernador actual se ha propuesto dar la mayor libertad a la expresión electoral. Por eso, me inclinaría a dudar del triunfo de ese partido. Además, los precedentes pueden corroborar lo que anticipo. En primer lugar están las

elecciones de los diputados a la constituyente, donde a pesar de la presión gubernamental del General Sanz, el partido liberal obtuvo la ventaja. Después, las que tuvieron lugar los pasados 5, 6, 7, 8 y 12 de febrero para nombrar a los miembros que debían componer la diputación provincial. Esa vez la derrota del partido conservador fue total.

Por el contrario, la posición del partido liberal mejora cada día. Éste mueve por sí solo a las masas y hoy ha logrado disciplinarlas para poder tener peso en lo que cree que puedan combatirlo con cierta ventaja.

La nueva distribución de los colegios electorales que acaba de publicarse, y que divide la Isla en 15 distritos que contienen, cada uno, un promedio de 40,000 almas, favorece al partido liberal, ya que ésta abarca los campos que rodean los pueblos en un radio dado, y aquí los campos obedecen casi exclusivamente a ese partido. Podría muy bien ocurrir que su voto inclinara la balanza a su favor.

Así pues, todas las probabilidades son de que de las urnas electorales salgan los diputados liberales. En cuanto a la elección de los senadores, ese será quizás el consuelo reservado al partido conservador.

¿Qué debemos esperar del triunfo de uno u otro partido? Si triunfa el partido conservador, "*statu quo* perpetuo"; es decir, siempre las cosas a medias. Jamás una resolución buena y franca, porque de ninguna manera sacrificarán sus intereses por el futuro de un país que no consideran su patria, sino, como ya dije antes, un terreno para explotar. Si por el contrario, el partido liberal es el que gana, el gobierno de la metrópoli deberá abandonar, de una vez por todas, la rutina que ha seguido hasta el presente. Deberá separar forzosamente el comando militar de la administración civil; en fin, deberá asimilar totalmente la provincia de Puerto Rico a las otras provincias de la península, con todas sus atribuciones y con todos sus derechos, so pena de desarrollar a una escala mayor ese espíritu de independencia que, aunque restringido en este momento, no obstante comienza a abrirse paso, y a obligar a Cuba y a Puerto Rico a seguir el ejemplo de las demás posesiones que España tenía en América.

Es esencial, Señor Ministro, que los hombres que tienen en sus manos las riendas del gobierno central se enteren bien de los deseos de las poblaciones para que les conceda sus derechos en la justa medida de la legalidad. Libertad no siempre quiere decir licencia, y creo que no [hay] un solo hombre inteligente en Puerto Rico, perteneciente al partido liberal —y ese partido encierra a muchos—, que no sepa ni admita que las aspiraciones de todas las sociedades deben estar limitadas por los derechos y deberes naturales que imponen a cada individuo su calidad de ente moral y de ente sociable.

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[rúbrica] Emile Coste

[93] Elección de diputados y senadores; Consideraciones del estado político de Puerto Rico; Carácter del Gobernador de esta Provincia, Puerto Rico, 6 de julio de 1871¹¹⁸

Señor Ministro,

El pasado 23 de mayo, el Señor Coste tuvo el honor de dirigir a Vuestra Excelencia un trabajo relativo a la elección de los diputados provinciales de Puerto Rico y a la situación política de esta colonia. Dicho informe, que acabo de hojear con el interés que merece, manifestaba unas apreciaciones cuya exactitud me place constatar, y las cuales quedan totalmente confirmadas por los acontecimientos que voy a mencionar.

El 20 del mes pasado los colegios electorales de esta Isla fueron llamados a constituir, en cada Ayuntamiento, una oficina destinada a recibir el voto de los electores y proceder con

¹¹⁸ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 4.

el escrutinio. Esta operación, que se completó el mismo día, fue el prelude a las elecciones que se celebraron los días 21, 22 y 23 de junio.

En la villa de San Juan, una insólita agitación, la cual indicaba la preocupación de las personas, era el indicio cierto de la lucha entre los dos partidos que se disputaban el predominio: Conservadores y Liberales-Reformistas se apiñaban en las inmediaciones del municipio.

Con anterioridad a la época de elecciones, el Gobernador de Puerto Rico había intentado la fusión de ambos partidos; había creado un tercero llamado Liberal-Conservador y apodado por los adversarios de otras dos facciones como Partido Indefinido; pero las tentativas del General Baldrich habían fracasado y el único resultado que tuvieron fue retirarle la confianza de los liberales, sin que pudiera ganar la de los conservadores. De hecho, la nueva política del Gobernador no era una de esas destinadas a tener éxito.

Guiado por el interés en su popularidad, quería contentar al mismo tiempo dos opiniones diametralmente opuestas; ahora bien, la práctica de tal sistema difícilmente ofrece buenos resultados. El General, quien se quedó solo en su terreno, no tardó en darse cuenta de que iba por el camino equivocado. Desde el primer día de las elecciones, sus Candidatos fueron dejados a un lado, y la lucha se acentuó entre los conservadores y los liberales-reformistas.

Los primeros obtuvieron el sufragio de la tropa. Se presume que los compraron y, a costa de ello, han seguido dominando la posición de San Juan. Por el contrario, en los otros catorce colegios electorales estuvieron en desventaja, y los liberales ganaron por una gran mayoría.

No hay duda de que en la Capital, el resultado habría sido el mismo sin el refuerzo de la guarnición, ya que el General Sanz, ex gobernador de la colonia, diputado conservador, ganó con la ayuda de cerca de 300 militares, 1004 sufragios; mientras que el Señor Luis Marín Pastor, candidato de la oposición, después electo senador, obtuvo 904. Así es que de los quince diputados nombrados por aclamación el 24 de junio, 14 pertenecen a la reforma liberal, uno solo es conservador, y éste, el elegido por los soldados españoles, es el General Sanz, a quien el partido retrógrada quiere ver volver al gobierno de Puerto Rico.

El General Baldrich, abandonado en su nueva política, se apresuró a regresar a su antiguo partido. Los votos de que disponía apoyaron a los candidatos liberales; por eso los conservadores lo acusan de haber preparado mejor su derrota tratando de acercarse a ellos.

Éstos últimos tienen por jefe en la colonia al Segundo Cabo, Brigadier Francisco Izquierdo.

No es preciso decir que entre estas dos autoridades no reina la armonía.

El Gobernador, más reservado que su adversario, no da a conocer sus impresiones, pero el Brigadier Izquierdo no pierde la oportunidad de manifestar su opinión y de acusar a los liberales, a quienes les atribuye tal vez con razón, el deseo secreto de separarse de la metrópoli. "Ahora bien", dice él, "en mi calidad de español no puedo pertenecer a un partido que desea mutilar a España y sólo puedo ser conservador".

¿No sería más sensato por parte de ambos jefes, y más útil para España, que tanto el uno como el otro, repudiando cualquier instrucción del partido, limitara su función a la de conciliador y administrador prudente?

Para narrar con fidelidad los acontecimientos que tengo el honor de participarle, debo decir, Señor Ministro, que a pesar de la agitación que debía reinar, como es natural, en las elecciones, los habitantes de Puerto Rico usaron con moderación las libertades que les fueron concedidas. Ningún desorden alteró el país durante el período electoral. En San Juan, donde los ánimos se hallaban más sobreexcitados que en otra parte, la lucha sólo se manifestó mediante discusiones sobre el valor de los candidatos. Asimismo el Gobernador de la Colonia no ha hecho más que rendir homenaje a la verdad, al aclamar este resultado, con términos exagerados, es cierto, en una proclama que dirigió a los habitantes de la Isla, y cuya traducción tengo el honor de transmitir a Vuestra Excelencia. (Anejo Número 1)

Al mismo tiempo que se llevaba a cabo la votación para la Diputación a las Cortes, los electores depositaban en una segunda urna los nombres de los Compromisarios o mandatarios encargados de elegir a cuatro senadores. Reunidos en la Capital, estos Compromisarios, en total 78, procedieron el 4 de julio al cumplimiento de su mandato.

Allí los Reformistas volvieron a tener una victoria completa.

Por un momento los conservadores habían concebido esperanzas para algunos de sus miembros más influyentes, pero las reuniones preparatorias de los Compromisarios no tardaron en desvanecer toda esperanza y, antes de la prueba definitiva, sus candidatos se sabían eliminados.

De los cuatro senadores electos, dos son peninsulares y dos pertenecen a la colonia. Los primeros son publicistas cuyos escritos han favorecido el movimiento progresista en Puerto Rico y a quienes este país ha querido manifestar su reconocimiento nombrándolos a ocupar un escaño en la Cámara alta. Los segundos son dos propietarios ricos e influyentes.

Los nombres de estos senadores y de los diputados se encuentran en el Anejo número 2 que adjunto a mi despacho.

El resultado definitivo de las elecciones acaba de proclamar aquí a la inmensa mayoría del partido de la reforma liberal.

Si el objetivo de ese partido no es más que introducir en esta nueva provincia las reformas necesarias para el desarrollo de su prosperidad, no pueden más que felicitarse por semejante resultado. Empero, en este partido, quizás haya algunos radicales cuyas ideas aún ocultas tengan otro fin y aspiren a la independencia del país. Ese es, al menos, el temor que manifiestan los conservadores.

Examinar el asunto desde este punto de vista, llevaría a las personas serias a consideraciones muy diferentes de las que tienen por objetivo aclamar los resultados obtenidos.

¿Qué le ocurrirá, en efecto, sin el apoyo de una metrópoli, a un país de 600,000 almas, falto de vida propia, que para existir necesita pedirlo todo al extranjero? El ejemplo de Santo Domingo está ahí para responder la pregunta. ¿Acaso esa isla más fértil, con una localización más conveniente, mayor tamaño y mucha mayor riqueza que Puerto Rico, no está en vías de regresar al estado salvaje?

¿Y acaso esas jóvenes repúblicas, hijas de España, agitadas sin cesar por una raza cuyo espíritu ardiente no aspira más que a gobernar y sólo desea buscar en los elementos de la política el bienestar de la vida material, han logrado salir de la anarquía que las devora, aunque poseen más recursos para desarrollarse que los que ofrecería Puerto Rico?

La independencia de esta Isla es una mera utopía. Para que el país pueda continuar viviendo de forma regular, tendrá que buscar otro dueño y lanzarse a los brazos de los Estados Unidos de América.

Esa solución quizás sea el sueño de algunos hombres, pero otros sólo ven en la independencia de Puerto Rico el medio de adueñarse del poder. Esos políticos son los que generalmente, al no poseer nada, aspiran a la fortuna mediante la revolución. Comunas de América, que sin pertenecer aún a la Internacional, profesan ya las doctrinas subversivas.

En resumen, Señor Ministro, si el primer paso de Puerto Rico en la senda liberal que acaba de abrirle España, es encaminarse hacia su independencia y su separación de la madre patria, ¿me pregunto si hay razón para aplaudir tal comienzo?

Si por el contrario, esta provincia utiliza sabiamente las nuevas facultades que se le han concedido, y sólo con miras al desarrollo de sus riquezas naturales, la misma está destinada a una gran prosperidad. En Puerto Rico no hacen falta las agitaciones de la vida política, sino la solución, en un sentido liberal, de las cuestiones de las que depende su futuro.

Una emancipación reglamentada, la introducción de brazos libres, la fundación de establecimientos de crédito público, el perfeccionamiento de la maquinaria de sus fábricas, esa es la meta a la que debe aspirar el país.

Realizando progresos que puedan ofrecer por sí mismos garantías a los capitales extranjeros, es como se debe manifestar, sobre todo, el ejercicio de su libertad.

Para terminar este estudio que mi corta permanencia en Puerto Rico no me ha permitido tratar más que superficialmente, y que sólo presento con timidez a la bondadosa atención de Vuestra Excelencia, no me puedo abstener de esbozar rápidamente, al menos como creo apreciarlo, el carácter del Jefe que gobierna este país.

El General Baldrich es un hombre modesto, frío, moderado en su lenguaje, mesurado en su conducta. ¿Tiene él la apariencia seductora de algunos de sus predecesores que sabían imponer el respeto al mismo tiempo que incitaban a la revuelta? No.

El Gobernador es simple en su alto puesto, vive retirado, fuera de toda camarilla, y por esta razón no cuenta con partidarios fervientes. Su espíritu es juicioso sin denotar grandes capacidades; parece animado por el deseo de gobernar bien, y el país se encuentra tranquilo bajo su mando.

Sin haber tenido el tiempo aún de estudiar su administración, le reprocharé, sin embargo, una tendencia, demasiado marcada tal vez, a consentir al populacho. Tal tendencia no presenta ningún peligro en este momento, pero puede crear exigencias y producir resultados lamentables en el futuro.

En suma, el Gobernador Baldrich no se parece a esos Capitanes Generales cuyo absolutismo era la única norma de conducta, y creo que en esta época de transformación política y social, el país debe agradecer su moderación y la prudencia con la que ejerce el difícil mandato que se le ha confiado.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[94] Declaración del estado de sitio en San Juan de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 27 de julio de 1871¹¹⁹

Señor Ministro,

La villa de San Juan fue declarada en estado de sitio el 26 de este mes, a raíz de los sucesos que tendré el honor de dar a conocer a Vuestra Excelencia. Las elecciones que se celebraron aquí a fines de junio y principios de julio no alteraron en nada el orden público al momento de votar, pero su resultado inmediato ha sido el de demostrar al Partido Liberal la fuerza de que Su Excelencia, el Señor Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores disponía, y crear un resentimiento profundo en el partido conservador. Habiéndose dado estos elementos de discordia en medio de una transformación política y social, es fácil comprender sus tristes consecuencias.

Lejos de hacer caso a los prudentes consejos del General Baldrich en su proclama, la cual ya tuve el honor de transmitir a Vuestra Excelencia en mi despacho del 6 de este mes, de olvidar cualquier resentimiento para unirse bajo una misma bandera, la del orden, los partidos contrarios comenzaron a asumir una actitud hostil. Los liberales, al sentirse fuertes, se mostraron agresivos, y los conservadores, poco pacientes. Aprovechando el tumulto que ocasiona en las calles de la Capital la celebración de las fiestas del mes de julio, los partidos políticos no tardaron en volver a entrar en liza, intercambiaron pullas primero, luego injurias y pronto se enfrascaron en actos de violencia.

Aquí, al igual que en otras partes, los que agitan a las masas no son los que se personan en el campo de batalla, y los elementos opuestos están representados por los negros, en el caso de los reformistas, y por la tropa, en el caso de los conservadores.

El sábado 22 de este mes, los negros lanzaron piedras contra los militares e hirieron a uno gravemente; también un grupo hizo un disparo, pero no hubo víctimas. La autoridad inmediatamente realizó algunos arrestos que no tuvieron ningún efecto, porque el mismo desorden continuó el día siguiente y dos días después. El martes 25 los soldados fueron atacados más de cerca; varios de ellos fueron alcanzados y dos heridos de gravedad. Contenidos por sus oficiales hasta ahora, se hizo difícil retenerlos durante más tiempo;

¹¹⁹ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 5.

desenvainaron las espadas y comenzaron a perseguir a los agresores, haciendo destrozos un tanto al azar; esa noche hubo once heridos y se dice que un muerto.

Las cosas llegaron a tal exceso que se tornaron sumamente graves. Por un lado, se gritaba viva la independencia; por otro, viva España, muerte al General Baldrich. Era hora de tomar una decisión mesurada: desde la misma noche del 25 se decidió el estado de sitio y al otro día por la mañana, un destacamento de la fuerza armada proclamó la ley marcial, con el aparato militar destinado a darle toda la resonancia posible.

La declaración del estado de sitio estuvo precedida por un decreto del Capitán General con fecha del 24 de este mes, en el que, para frenar el lenguaje de los diarios, se restablecía la censura que se había abolido desde el 31 de agosto de 1870. El Corregidor de la villa también había publicado el mismo día un bando de policía para prohibir las reuniones públicas.

Tuve la oportunidad de ver al General Baldrich después que tomó la medida de rigor. El Gobernador no me ocultó sus simpatías por el partido liberal. Es inaudito, me dijo, que por algunas piedras lanzadas a diestra y siniestra, una villa sea declarada en estado de sitio, pero tuve que rendirme ante las insistencias de los jefes del servicio militar. El Partido Conservador, que desea un régimen absoluto en la Isla, no ha dejado de hacerme la guerra desde que llegué al país. Se encuentra descontento con las reformas que tuve que introducir y no quiere entender que sólo soy el instrumento del gobierno de España y no el autor de esas reformas. En eso ciertamente el General tiene razón, pero ante los hechos que se han producido, cuando por un lado está en juego el asunto de la independencia de la Isla y, por otro, el no menos irritante de la diferencia de casta, no creo que sea conveniente lamentar una medida rigurosa, es cierto, pero que pueda detener el mal desde sus inicios.

En un telegrama traído a San Thomas por un vapor de La Habana y transmitido aquí el día de ayer, se anunció que el General Baldrich era relevado de sus funciones de gobernador y reemplazado a partir del 18 de julio por el General Carbo. Esta noticia se difundió con rapidez sin saber si era menester darle crédito.

Tengo el honor de transmitir a Vuestra Excelencia la proclama del Gobernador de Puerto Rico para declarar el estado de sitio y la traducción de dicho documento.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[95] Situación política de Puerto Rico; Convocatoria de los colegios electorales para el nombramiento de los diputados a las Cortes y de los senadores; Llegada a Puerto Rico del Encargado de Negocios de España en Caracas, Puerto Rico, 16 de marzo de 1872¹²⁰

Señor Ministro,

Desde el despacho del pasado 16 de septiembre, N° 10, que tuve el honor de enviar a Vuestra Excelencia para darle a conocer la situación política de Puerto Rico a la llegada del Gobernador actual, el General Don Ramón Gómez Pulido, en la Isla ha reinado la más completa tranquilidad. El General Baldrich, disgustado por perder su gobierno, se marchó acusando de su desgracia a los conservadores y anunciando que su sucesor daría el último toque al edificio en el que él había puesto la primera piedra y coronaría aquí la obra de las reformas liberales.

No obstante, esta predicción no se haría realidad. Lo cierto es que el General Gómez primeramente mantuvo a todos en la incertidumbre; durante un período bastante largo evitó manifestarse sobre las cuestiones políticas y se limitó a observarlo todo, a estudiar el país y a sus habitantes.

¹²⁰ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 31; mismo despacho a la dirección política bajo el No. 8.

Las meditaciones del nuevo Gobernador tuvieron un resultado totalmente opuesto al que había anunciado su predecesor. El General Gómez encontró que los partidarios de la reforma requerían libertades para usarlas contra la metrópoli; por lo tanto, se empeñó en restringir el ejercicio de las que ya se habían concedido. Una nueva ley municipal, puesta en práctica recientemente por el General Baldrich, había colocado la administración de los ayuntamientos en manos de magistrados no asalariados y escogidos en la localidad misma. Ese sistema liberal no había tenido éxito en todas partes.

De vez en cuando los nuevos alcaldes carecían de autoridad, o rodeados de parientes o amigos, no habían impartido la justicia con igualdad. Algunos habitantes se quejaron; el Gobernador Gómez, aprovechando la oportunidad, comenzó a cambiar poco a poco a todos los magistrados populares y los reemplazó por alcaldes retribuidos, los cuales dependían más directamente de su autoridad.

En un país como éste, compuesto por tantos elementos diversos, donde cada uno goza, además, de una libertad individual amplia, mientras más se restringe el círculo de las franquicias políticas, mayor tranquilidad se tiene. La calma más completa, luego de las medidas tomadas por el Capitán General, fueron recibidas, pues, con la mayor tranquilidad.

La situación política de Puerto Rico se hallaba en este estado de adormecimiento cuando la disolución de las Cortes en Madrid vino a despertar el país, llamando a nuevas elecciones.

La disolución de las Cámaras en España había estado precedida por una moción de los diputados de Puerto Rico, en cuyo órgano se había convertido uno de ellos, el Sr. Julián Blanco. El Sr. Blanco, al reclamar con justicia la emancipación de los esclavos, había solicitado al mismo tiempo el desarme de los voluntarios, gratificándolos con un epíteto ofensivo, y también la aplicación inmediata de la ley municipal, la separación de los poderes civiles y militares, y una participación más directa de los diputados provinciales en la administración de los asuntos de la Isla.

La moción del diputado Blanco no habría dejado nada que desear si se hubiese tratado de una provincia comprendida en el propio territorio de España, pero hecha en nombre de Puerto Rico, que se encuentra a más de mil leguas de la metrópoli, vecina de Cuba, y en el estado actual en que se encuentran los ánimos de este país, equivalía a esta proposición: desarmad a quienes os sostienen, dejadnos administrar como entendamos y no os inmiscuyáis más en nuestros asuntos.

El gobierno español no recibió bien tal proposición. El Almirante Topete, Ministro de Ultramar, replicó que un gobierno que se respetara no tenía que responder a semejantes proposiciones.

El diputado Blanco, conocido por sus antecedentes separatistas, comprometido en otros tiempos en la insurrección de Lares e indultado en aquella época por el General Sanz, su colega en la diputación de Puerto Rico, había expuesto una opinión que los partidarios de la reforma hasta entonces se habían esforzado por ocultar. Se había comprobado, pues, que tanto en Puerto Rico como en Cuba los hijos de España no tenían ninguna inclinación a permanecer bajo la égida maternal.

La moción de Blanco tuvo mucha repercusión en Puerto Rico. Este diputado, muy venerado por sus partidarios, se convirtió naturalmente en objeto del odio de los españoles puros, y cada día el diario del Partido Conservador incluyó una protesta de los voluntarios de diversos puntos de la Isla, para desafiar al diputado separatista. Mas Blanco, que no quiere responder a nada, se retiró a Venezuela, según dicen, para interponer el océano entre él y sus adversarios.

El 4 de marzo, una circular del General Gómez en la gaceta oficial exhortó a lo[s] colegios electorales a reunirse los días 2, 3, 4 y 5 de abril próximos para nombrar a los diputados a las Cortes y a los mandatarios (Compromisarios) encargados de la elección de los senadores.

Desde ese momento, los partidos comenzaron a moverse: los conservadores, por un lado, ayudados por el gobierno local, y los reformistas, por otro, apoyándose en que son una mayoría en la Isla, llevaron a cabo una propaganda activa.

El candidato de los conservadores para la Capital es el General Sanz, los liberales le enfrentan al General Córdova, que ha sido varias veces Ministro de guerra en España, y a

quien se dice debe el Gobernador actual su nombramiento en este lugar. Es una jugada hábil, ya que los esfuerzos de la autoridad se encuentran paralizados en San Juan. El objetivo de los reformistas es derrotar a cualquier precio al General Sanz, que es el alma del Partido Conservador, el creador de esa fuerza de voluntarios que tiene a raya a los reformistas; a su vez, los voluntarios proponen en un centro radical la candidatura del propio General Córdova. En fin, cada uno defiende su terreno con tenacidad, sin ceder de un lado ni de otro.

Hasta este momento la lucha electoral es pacífica y nada hace suponer aún que deba asumir otro carácter. Lo que se puede prever es que el partido reformista volverá a ganar.

La ley sobre las elecciones no se ha modificado en España y ya que el número de electores sigue siendo el mismo, la ventaja le corresponderá a los reformistas, que son la mayoría; es decir, a quienes están unidos a España, no por lazos de afecto, sino por coacción.

Luego de haber informado los hechos que se relacionan con las próximas elecciones de Puerto Rico, sólo me resta informar a Vuestra Excelencia sobre la llegada a San Juan del Encargado de Negocios de España en Caracas. Se dice que el gobierno venezolano le habría hecho entregar sus pasaportes y que vino a Puerto Rico junto con su canciller, el 14 de este mes, a bordo del vapor de guerra "Hernán Cortés", que estaba estacionado en La Guaira.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[96] **Nombramiento de los diputados de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 11 de abril de 1872**¹²¹

Señor Ministro,

La isla de Puerto Rico acaba de elegir a sus diputados y, en contra de lo previsto, el partido ganador resultó ser el de los conservadores. Es cierto que este resultado se debe a la participación activa del gobierno en las elecciones. La Capital (San Juan) nombró por una gran mayoría al General Sanz, a quien los conservadores del país consideran como su apoyo más seguro en España; sin embargo, en San Juan hay tres batallones de tropas regulares y un batallón de voluntarios, y todas esas tropas, guiadas por sus oficiales, acudieron a votar por el candidato del gobierno.

En el 3^{er} Distrito, el de Arecibo, el Marqués de la Esperanza, jefe del Partido Conservador en el país, obtuvo también una fuerte mayoría; verdad es que tres buques de guerra españoles anclaron delante de Arecibo el día de las elecciones y dieron al candidato conservador el apoyo de su tripulación.

En otros colegios electorales, el Capitán General envió comisarios encargados de llevar a cabo la elección. Estos agentes cumplieron su tarea a conciencia y lograron su objetivo en parte por persuasión y en parte por intimidación. Hubo arrestos en las localidades donde los reformistas quisieron oponer tropas de resistencia.

De los 15 Diputados electos, nueve pertenecen al partido conservador, otros dos son igualmente conservadores, pero fueron nombrados conforme a un acuerdo entre los partidos; sólo cuatro son reformistas.

El ex diputado Julián Blanco, de quien he tenido el honor de hablar a Vuestra Excelencia en mi despacho del pasado 16 de marzo, no fue reelegido; su candidatura, aunque respaldada enérgicamente en el 13^{avo} Distrito (Caguas), fracasó. Tuvo como competidor al Sr. Pedro Díaz Romero, hombre hábil e influyente que consiguió el triunfo por una fácil mayoría. Este Distrito había sido objeto de una atención particular por parte del gobierno y el Gobernador General lo había visitado en persona.

¹²¹ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 34.

La mayor parte de los diputados nombrados no son de este país ni viven aquí. Los que residen en Puerto Rico, como el Marqués de la Esperanza, los Sres. Díaz Romero, Bustamante y Oteiza son hombres que ocupan una posición y a quienes, por lo general, se les estima.

En resumidas cuentas, las personas que razonan con imparcialidad concuerdan en que esta representación es mejor que la anterior.

A parte de la presión ejercida por el gobierno, hay que decir que lo que contribuyó aún más al éxito del Partido Conservador fue la proposición del ex diputado Blanco en España, antes de la disolución de las Cortes, y una especie de manifestación separatista que tuvo lugar en Mayagüez justamente con motivo de estas últimas elecciones. Las personas que desean las reformas, con razón, sin tener que llegar a la independencia del país, se abstuvieron o se adhirieron al bando opuesto.

Contrario a lo sucedido en 1871 en circunstancias similares, bajo el gobierno del General Baldrich, las elecciones se llevaron a cabo sin desorden y no perturbaron la tranquilidad que goza el país.

El 14 de este mes se procederá al nombramiento de los senadores. Tendré el honor de dar a conocer los nombres a Vuestra Excelencia y de dirigirle, si es conveniente, nuevas informaciones sobre la representación actual de Puerto Rico.

Adjunto la lista de los diputados.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

Lista de los Diputados de la Provincia de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 11 de abril de 1872

1er Distrito	Capital	El General Sanz	Conservador
2do "	Vega Baja	D. Rafael Toral y Ortega*	Reformista
3ro "	Arecibo	el Marqués de la Esperanza	Conservador
4to "	Quebradillas	D. Tomás María Mosquera	"
5to "	Aguadilla	D. Fernando Vida y Palacios	"
6to "	Mayagüez	D. Antonio González Llorente	"
7mo "	San Germán	D. Carlos Sedano	"
8avo "	Sábana Grande	D. Rafael María de Labra	Reformista
9no "	Ponce	D. Manuel Becerra	"
10mo "	Guayama	D. Eugenio López Bustamante	Conservador
11avo "	Humacao	D. Joaquin María Sanromá	Reformista
12avo "	Río Piedras	D. Francisco Javier de Oteiza	Conservador
13avo "	Caguas	D. Pedro Díaz y Romero	"
14avo "	Coamo	D. Bonifacio Cortes y Llanos	"
15avo "	Utuaedo	D. José Gallostra y Frau	"

* Nota de los autores: De acuerdo con Lidio Cruz Monclova y Fernando Bayron Toro, el diputado electo por Vega Baja fue José Antonio Álvarez Peralta. Según Bayron Toro, Álvarez Peralta fue también el diputado electo por Arecibo y no el marqués, porque es así como aparece en el Archivo de las Cortes Españolas.

[97] **Nombramiento de los senadores, [?] Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 18 de abril de 1872**¹²²

Señor Ministro,

El nombramiento de los senadores en Puerto Rico tuvo lugar la tarde del 15 de este mes, sin ningún incidente relevante.

Ya tuve el honor de dar a conocer a Vuestra Excelencia en mi despacho anterior del 11 de abril, que los colegios electorales habían elegido a los compromisarios encargados de la elección de los senadores; a esos compromisarios se sumó la Diputación Provincial, y esos dos cuerpos unidos son los únicos que hicieron la elección.

El total de ochenta y ocho votantes se encontraba dividido en dos grupos poco más o menos iguales, de distinta opinión. Los conservadores contaban con más afiliados entre los compromisarios, pero la diputación provincial es toda reformista y restablecía el equilibrio de la otra parte.

En la primera vuelta de escrutinio salieron de la urna los nombres de los Señores Tirado y Gabriel Rodríguez, ambos reformistas y con una mayoría de la mitad más uno. La segunda vuelta dio el triunfo a dos candidatos conservadores, los Generales Echagüe y Messina, quienes obtuvieron 46 votos, mientras que los primeros sólo habían tenido 45.

Si los reformistas tuvieron primero la mayoría absoluta, nos preguntamos por qué no obtuvieron una victoria completa. Es que no se pusieron de acuerdo, y tres de ellos prefirieron unirse a los conservadores que votar por los candidatos adoptados por sus correligionarios.

Así pues, fueron proclamados senadores los Generales don Rafael Echagüe y don Félix Messina, conservadores, y los Señores Guillermo Tirado y Gabriel Rodríguez, reformistas.

Los primeros dos son antiguos Capitanes Generales de Puerto Rico, el Sr. Tirado es un rico propietario de plantación y comerciante del país que goza del aprecio público, y el Sr. Rodríguez es un peninsular de opiniones avanzadas, que nunca ha estado en las Antillas.

La representación actual de Puerto Rico se considera, con razón, como el triunfo del partido del orden, y en general se compone de hombres apreciados, ya que los reformistas se vieron obligados a depurar su selección y a hacer desaparecer del escenario político a las personas de honorabilidad discutible, que el año pasado formaron parte de la Diputación de esta provincia.

Cabe señalar que casi todos los diputados y senadores de Puerto Rico son europeos que viven en España y tal vez no conozcan la Isla. Es que aquí están convencidos de que la situación de los diputados a las Cortes obliga a incurrir en unos gastos que las arcas del país no están en condiciones de sufragar.

Durante la pasada legislatura, el Sr. Julián Blanco y Baldorioty de Castro, diputados, vivieron a costa del partido reformista. Luego de su reciente fracaso, sus seguidores manifestaron su intención de nombrarlos al senado. Según decían, era la compensación justa que se les debía; llegado el momento, ninguno de ellos obtuvo un voto.

Un hecho análogo se produjo durante el nombramiento de los diputados:

El gobierno de Puerto Rico tenía como secretario al Sr. Arturo Soria, joven peninsular, nombrado aquí al mismo tiempo que el Capitán General, y quien llegó un mes después que su jefe. El Sr. Soria, de una apariencia muy decente, llevaba una vida retirada, y sólo parecía asiduo al trabajo a su cargo. Tres días antes de las elecciones, vino a avisar al General Gómez que se presentaba como candidato del Partido Reformista. Grande fue la cólera del Gobernador al enterarse de que su secretario, el depositario de su confianza y de parte de sus secretos, pertenecía a sus enemigos políticos. Se apresuró a retirarle su empleo y de repudiar su candidatura en los diarios del país. Los reformistas le habían jugado una muy mala pasada al gobernador y el Sr. Soria, confiando en las promesas que le habían hecho, se retiró a San Thomas para esperar allí su nombramiento; un partido por el que lo había sacrificado todo no podía abandonarlo, decía.

¹²² Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 35.

Por su parte, el General Gómez tomó el asunto a pecho y envió un comisario al distrito donde se presentaba su antiguo secretario; allí hubo una conciliación, cuyo resultado dejó tres votos al Sr. Soria, lo que le costó el aprecio de sus viejos amigos y un empleo que el gobierno de España se apresuró a quitarle.

En este momento el cargo de Secretario de la Capitanía General se le ha confiado al Sr. Alfredo Gómez, hijo del Gobernador actual y contador general de esta provincia.

Para terminar el informe que tengo el honor de transmitir a Vuestra Excelencia sobre los acontecimientos relacionados con las pasadas elecciones de Puerto Rico, me queda hablar del General Gómez.

El Gobernador actual es poco comunicativo en lo que concierne a los asuntos de su gobierno. Es un hombre ya entrado en años y de salud delicada, lo que no le impide trabajar constantemente y actuar cuando es necesario. Sus maniobras son las responsables del resultado de las elecciones.

Se dice que es un administrador hábil y no hay duda de que tiene el don de rechazar las solicitudes de la gente sin disgustarla. Tuve ocasión de presentarle a diferentes personas que no obtuvieron absolutamente nada de lo que deseaban, pero que se marcharon satisfechas con el recibimiento del Gobernador y los sentimientos por él. El General Gómez se muestra firme en sus alocuciones y eso es suficiente para mantener al país en calma. Los síntomas de efervescencia popular que se observaban durante la incumbencia del General Baldrich han desaparecido; en este momento todo está en orden. El General vive retirado y por ese motivo no se le ve con frecuencia; sin embargo, mantengo una buena relación con él y hasta este momento, siempre me ha parecido cortés y benévolo.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[98] **Llegada del nuevo Capitán General Don Simón de la Torre, Puerto Rico, 4 de agosto de 1872**¹²³

Señor Ministro,

El 30 del mes pasado el vapor-correo Cádiz ancló en este puerto trayendo abordo al nuevo Gobernador de Puerto Rico, Don Simón de la Torre, Mariscal de Campo, ascendido al grado de General de División a su partida hacia las Antillas.

Ese mismo día a las 9 de la mañana, el General de la Torre bajó a tierra para tomar posesión de su gobierno y, luego de la ceremonia de instalación, el General Gómez Pulido se retiró, como lo había hecho su predecesor, a la casa de campo de Río Piedras. La toma de posesión se hizo con arreglo a los usos oficiales acostumbrados y sin ningún entusiasmo por parte de la población.

Al día siguiente, el 31 de julio, el Cuerpo Consular fue recibido por el nuevo Gobernador, quien al igual que su predecesor, se puso a su disposición.

Un poco antes de la visita de los cónsules, el General de la Torre había convocado a todos los oficiales de la guarnición de Puerto Rico para hablarles de un asunto político. Como ya he tenido el honor de escribir a Vuestra Excelencia, los diversos batallones que se hallan en esta provincia pertenecen al partido conservador. Ahora bien, el General de la Torre tiene como misión secundar en Puerto Rico el movimiento radical y hacer que se envíen a las Cortes a los candidatos de ese partido. Al reunir a los oficiales, su objetivo era hacer saber la voluntad del ministerio Zorrilla y pedirles su voto para el General Córdova, actual Ministro de Guerra.

¹²³ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 40 bis.

Tal proposición no fue bien recibida, se enfurecieron de parte y parte y los gritos se escucharon desde los salones vecinos. En fin, el ejército de Puerto Rico declaró categóricamente que el candidato del gobierno no era el suyo y añadió que no había solicitado el derecho de votar pero que, puesto que se le había otorgado, lo usaría como le pareciera. El General de la Torre habló del descontento que sentiría el gobierno de España y de las medidas coercitivas que podría traer como consecuencia; los oficiales se retiraron manteniéndose en su negativa.

Este primer paso no es acertado y quizás carezca de habilidad. Si el nuevo Gobernador se hubiese informado, habría evitado una gestión que no puede sino debilitar su autoridad.

El General de la Torre es un hombre de 72 años, aún firme para su edad y de aspecto simpático; fue carlista y se diría que ha pasado un poco por todas las opiniones. El Secretario de Gobierno, don José Ayuso, llegó con él y tomó posesión de su cargo inmediatamente; este último es joven y pertenece al partido radical.

El mismo vapor-correo que trajo a la Isla al General de la Torre y a sus allegados trajo también a los dos ex diputados, el Marqués de la Esperanza y el Sr. Díaz Romero, cuya partida había anunciado a Vuestra Excelencia hace poco tiempo. Sin haber tenido la satisfacción de ocupar sus asientos en las Cortes, regresan a toda prisa a someterse de nuevo al sufragio de los electores. ¿Lograrán el triunfo? Eso es lo que no se sabría decir aún, esta vez los reformistas tendrán el apoyo del gobierno y la partida ya no es la misma. No obstante, en ambos campos se trabaja con entusiasmo.

El país continúa tranquilo y el orden no se ha visto alterado ni con el cambio de Gobernador, ni con las reuniones electorales.

El General Gómez se marcha a Europa en el vapor inglés del 12 de este mes, lo que el Partido Conservador naturalmente lamenta. Lo que hay que decir a su favor es que la colonia ha prosperado bajo su administración y que el orden que él restableció todavía perdura.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[99] Relevo del Capitán General Don Simón de la Torre, política seguida por él, Puerto Rico, 19 de noviembre de 1872¹²⁴

Señor Ministro,

El General de la Torre, relevado por su gobierno, parte para España dentro de unos días. Este Gobernador apenas habrá permanecido en Puerto Rico cuatro meses, ya que llegó el 30 de julio, como tuve el honor de participar a Vuestra Excelencia en mi despacho del pasado 4 de agosto.

La orden de partida causó una gran sorpresa al Sr. de la Torre y a sus partidarios, ya que el vapor-correo de Cádiz, que llegó a puerto el 14 de este mes, no anunciaba nada que hiciera prever semejante desenlace. Mas el 15 por la tarde, un telegrama de Madrid exhortaba al Gobernador de Puerto Rico a entregar su mando al Sr. Brigadier Enrile y a trasladarse de inmediato a España junto con el Secretario de la Gobernación, el Sr. Ayuso. El vapor que partirá el día primero para Europa es el vapor-correo francés, abordo del cual partirán los viajeros.

Ya tuve el honor de dar a conocer a Vuestra Excelencia, el pasado 25 de agosto, que la política adoptada por el General de la Torre era totalmente contraria a la de su predecesor.

Este Gobernador se ha empeñado, durante su corta permanencia aquí, en hacer desaparecer hasta el último rastro de la administración anterior a la suya.

¹²⁴ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 47.

Afecto a los radicales, todos los cambios efectuados bajo su mando fueron realizados por ellos y para ellos.

Los municipios de la Isla fueron los primeros afectados; los corregidores, alcaldes, secretarios y concejales municipales fueron reemplazados; y no es que se haya querido aplicar la nueva ley municipal, ya que la vieja ha seguido su curso, sino que se ha querido renovar el personal y los magistrados, y éstos se han escogido en las filas extremas del partido radical.

Luego de la reforma de los municipios, el Gobernador de Puerto Rico se volvió contra el ejército, cuyos principios conservadores no había podido quebrantar. Separó a los jefes de Cuerpos de sus mandos y los reemplazó con nuevos oficiales, los Coroneles y Comandantes que tenían empleos civiles los perdieron, algunos fueron exiliados a la isla de Vieques, otros destinados a la isla de Cuba; en fin, los batallones mismos fueron divididos y desplazados.

Faltaba la prensa conservadora, a la que se aplicó la censura y se multó, y se acabó exiliando al Sr. Larroca, propietario del diario "El Boletín".

Semejantes medidas no tenían nada de liberales, aunque fueron tomadas en nombre de la libertad. Los conservadores se sintieron oprimidos y rumoraron; el General de la Torre mandó a colocar cañones sobre los fuertes que dominan la capital y los hizo apuntar hacia la villa.

Los radicales ganaban por todas partes y, según dicen, esperaban de Madrid una orden que se había solicitado para desarmar a los voluntarios, y ya habían tomado todas las medidas para lograrlo. Por otra parte, el General de la Torre, festejado por los radicales, respondió con prontitud a sus invitaciones. En la capital asistió a un baile de negros ofrecido en ocasión del día de San Simón; en Caguas, iba a recibir una ovación y entró en la villa seguido de tres mil campesinos que aclamaban al Gobernador de Puerto Rico y al partido radical.

Con todo, la tranquilidad se mantuvo en el país, ya que los reformistas satisfechos no tenían ningún motivo para agitarse, y los conservadores, aunque molestos, no deseaban comenzar una lucha por entender que significaba rebelarse y violar el principio de adhesión que le profesan a España, representada por el Gobernador de Puerto Rico, pero la situación era tensa.

Los conservadores, excluidos de las esferas oficiales en la Isla, acumulaban sus quejas en Madrid y parece ser que las acusaciones manifestadas por ellos parecieron fundadas, puesto que el Capitán General y su secretario súbitamente recibieron una exhortación para venir a disculparse a España.

Es fácil comprender ahora cuán decepcionados se sienten los radicales, al ver partir con pesar a un gobernador tan identificado con sus puntos de vista. De hecho, la política del General de la Torre le arrebató su prestigio y sus fuerzas al Partido Conservador, dejaba sólo a los reformistas la dirección de los asuntos locales, incluso ya se estaba hablando de enfrentar a los voluntarios españoles con los voluntarios de la libertad. Esto hubiera significado armar a la población nativa contra los peninsulares y quizás poner en riesgo la dominación española, ya que no hay por qué disimularlo: el espíritu que reina en Puerto Rico es el que ha separado de España a las antiguas posesiones y el que desde hace cuatro años, incita en Cuba las continuas tentativas de independencia.

El General de la Torre abandonará Puerto Rico sin poder presidir las elecciones de los diputados provinciales que acaban de ser fijadas por él, a fin de este mes.

Este Gobernador se llevará aquí el afecto de los radicales y el odio de los conservadores. Para apreciar juiciosamente su conducta, sería necesario conocer las instrucciones que le fueron dadas.

Mandatario de un gabinete radical, era difícil que no se inclinara por ese partido; sin embargo, el brusco final de su ejercicio, permite creer que este General enviado a Puerto Rico para satisfacer a los hijos del país, rebasó el objetivo que deseaba alcanzar la metrópoli.

El relevo inopinado del Sr. de la Torre y de su secretario es causa aquí de muchos comentarios desagradables para ellos, pero no puedo hacerme eco de los rumores que circulan en la villa antes de que salga a relucir la verdad en cuanto a este asunto.

Para completar el relato de los hechos que se relacionan con la estancia del Sr. de la Torre en Puerto Rico, debo decir que sus relaciones con los agentes extranjeros fueron continuamente satisfactorias, y que en mi caso, él siempre me recibió con tanto agrado como cortesía.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[100] Llegada del nuevo Capitán General José Martínez Plowes. Sucesos de Camuy, Puerto Rico, 21 de febrero de 1873¹²⁵

Señor Ministro,

El día 14 por la mañana, el vapor-correo español ancló en este puerto, trayendo abordo al Sr. Teniente General Martínez Plowes, Capitán General de Puerto Rico. A las diez, se efectuó el desembarco del nuevo gobernador con el ceremonial empleado en tal circunstancia. Cuando el general llegó a La Fortaleza, se apresuró a notificar su toma de posesión a los agentes extranjeros. Al día siguiente, el 14 de febrero, el cuerpo consular acudió a felicitarlo; la recepción fue cortés y al igual que sus predecesores se puso a su disposición.

No entro en los detalles de esta última instalación, Señor Ministro, porque esta ceremonia, reproducida con demasiada frecuencia desde hace algún tiempo, por desgracia para el país, no ofrece nada nuevo de interés y no presenta ninguna particularidad que no haya sido repetida muchas veces a Vuestra Excelencia.

Lo que viene más al caso es darle a conocer la actitud de los partidos a la llegada de un jefe que tiene en sus manos el destino del país y cuya forma de pensar no se puede adivinar.

El vapor-correo de Cádiz dio lugar a una espera febril. Por una parte, se decía que los conservadores se oponían al desembarco del General Martínez si era portador de reformas para Puerto Rico. Por otra, si el Gobernador no traía las reformas, los radicales, cansados de esperar, debían sublevarse. Estas versiones, sin ser exactas, tenían empero un tanto de verdad, pues, por un lado, el Marqués de la Esperanza, jefe del partido conservador, se trasladó a La Habana para entenderse con sus correligionarios de esa isla; y por otro, la actitud firme de los reformistas, quienes tuvieron tiempo para organizarse y armarse bajo el gobierno del General de la Torre, demostraba que estaban listos para cualquier acontecimiento.

El Marqués de la Esperanza, quien llegó de La Habana el 13 por la tarde en el vapor-correo inglés, trajo la noticia de que el nuevo Gobernador había salido de España antes de que se hubiese votado por las reformas. Esta noticia, conocida en La Habana por las comunicaciones telegráficas, no podía saberse en San Juan, porque el cable se encuentra roto a unas 170 millas del puerto. La llegada del Marqués de la Esperanza tranquilizó, pues, a los conservadores.

A los reformistas, las cartas de sus diputados, quienes les anunciaban una victoria cercana y les presentaban al nuevo Gobernador como un hombre digno de toda confianza, les hicieron perder la paciencia.

De todos los rumores que acabo de reproducir, si debo extraer una verdad, es la siguiente: en Puerto Rico todos desean pelear, pero nadie se atreve y todos esperan que su adversario sea el que dé el primer paso. En esta circunstancia que acabo de mencionar, si los voluntarios hubieran hecho el gesto de oponerse al desembarco del General, no hay duda alguna de que los radicales la habrían emprendido contra los conservadores aparentando dar una mano a la autoridad. Estaban dispuestos y la prueba está en los sucesos de Camuy, un pequeño pueblo situado al norte de la Isla. Allí ocurrió un intercambio de disparos y hubo víctimas de ambas partes.

He aquí los hechos: La casa de un tal Cayetano Estrella, de origen venezolano y radical de ideas avanzadas, se encontraba la noche del 14 al 15 llena de municiones, armas y hombres,

¹²⁵ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 54 bis.

un total de 300 dicen los despachos oficiales. Diez guardias civiles y once voluntarios se presentaron a evacuarla y tras una lucha de varias horas, lograron apoderarse del lugar. Entre los reformistas hubo tres muertos y algunos heridos; entre los conservadores, un guardia civil herido.

Los reformistas dicen que mientras se hallaban reunidos para resistir un ataque, vinieron a asesinarlos al lugar. El gobierno declara que se trató de una reunión sediciosa y que los primeros en disparar fueron los radicales a los gritos de ¡Viva Puerto Rico libre! ¡Muera España! ¡Mueran los voluntarios!

Este suceso, aunque sumamente grave, no alteró el orden público por mucho tiempo. El General Martínez tomó medidas enérgicas y la calma se restableció rápidamente.

El asunto de Camuy se investiga; la pesquisa quizás establezca la verdad, pero lo que es seguro es que los reformistas y los conservadores se enfrentaron prácticamente en los mismos lugares donde estalló hace algunos años el levantamiento de Lares.

Los conservadores esperan que este conflicto dé fin a las reformas proyectadas para Puerto Rico. Sin examinar aquí qué oportunidad pueden tener todas las reformas prometidas, hay una que no se podría abandonar sin peligro para el país. Deseo hablar de la abolición de la esclavitud. Negarles a los esclavos la libertad que se les viene prometiendo desde hace tiempo, es exponerse a su justo resentimiento y proveer un pretexto plausible para las tentativas de los radicales separatistas.

En mi despacho del pasado 18 de enero, hablé extensamente acerca de la cuestión de la emancipación; tuve el honor de explicar que dicha emancipación no causaría aquí ningún desorden serio, dado el número limitado de esclavos. No puedo prever cuáles serán las consecuencias para la isla de Cuba, pero sé que hay asuntos que no se pueden plantear sin peligro y que conviene resolverlos cuando la opinión pública se haya manifestado. El mundo civilizado reprueba la esclavitud. Los esclavos de Cuba y de Puerto Rico saben que cuentan con la simpatía general, y si no se les hace justicia, es de temer que la tomen en sus manos y hagan frente a la opresión asesinando e incendiando.

Estas consideraciones me llevan a decir a Vuestra Excelencia que haciendo abstracción de los principios humanitarios en esta cuestión, conviene a los intereses materiales de Puerto Rico ver pronunciar la liberación de sus esclavos.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[101] **Puerto Rico, 27 de marzo de 1873**¹²⁶

Señor Ministro,

Desde la carta que tuve el honor de enviar a Vuestra Excelencia el 12 de este mes, no se ha presentado en Puerto Rico ningún suceso relevante; sin embargo, no creo inútil informar constantemente a Vuestra Excelencia, en medio de la crisis política por la que atraviesa España, acerca de la situación de esta provincia de Ultramar. Lejos de tomar parte en los problemas de la metrópoli, desde los sucesos de Camuy la isla parece querer volver a su calma habitual. En este momento reina la tranquilidad en todo Puerto Rico y no se han dado a conocer incendios en esta última quincena.

El estado actual de este país, que no se agita más que por cuestiones de interés local, demuestra cuán indiferente es a las luchas que dividen a España. De hecho, el advenimiento del régimen republicano apenas se ha manifestado aquí con la publicación del telegrama del que ya tuve el honor de hablar a Vuestra Excelencia, y por una corta alocución del General Martínez en una sesión de la diputación provincial. Por lo demás, todo continúa funcionando

¹²⁶ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 58.

como en el pasado y nada parece indicar que el trono de España haya dejado de ser ocupado, puesto que el escudo real todavía adorna la vieja bandera que ondea sobre el palacio del Gobernador y sobre todos los edificios públicos de la villa.

El General Martínez conserva su política expectante, se limita a mantener el orden y no hace sino modificaciones indispensables al servicio y sin importancia con respecto al personal administrativo que encontró.

En cuanto al aspecto político, Señor Ministro, aquí no hay nada nuevo que señalar, pero como el estado general del país no les garantiza a los comerciantes la estabilidad que reclaman, los negocios se resienten ante esta situación incierta. Los productos de la cosecha actual se venden lentamente y a precios poco elevados, los capitales se retiran de circulación y las transacciones se tornan difíciles.

En la época de los disturbios de Camuy, el Sr. Cónsul de los Estados Unidos había solicitado a su gobierno que hiciera aparecer en las aguas de esta isla el pabellón americano. El Almirante al mando de la estación de las Antillas, acaba de enviar a la Isla dos buques de hélice armados con una artillería de gran calibre. Uno de éstos, la Fragata "Richmond", que carga 14 cañones, está comandada por el Sr. Capitán de Vaisseau Pattisson; el otro, el vapor "Nipsic", armado con cuatro cañones, está comandado por el Sr. Phagiscom, capitán de la fragata.

¡Estos dos buques, anclados desde hace una semana en el puerto, no han captado la atención del público más que por la insobriedad [sic] de su tripulación!

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[102] **Abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 11 de abril de 1873**¹²⁷

Señor Ministro,

La noticia de la abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico llegó aquí el 30 del mes pasado, en el vapor-correo francés de la Compañía Transatlántica que iba de Santiago de Cuba a San Thomas haciendo escala en San Juan.

Ese mismo día, el General Martínez se apresuró a hacer pública la ley del 22 de marzo de 1873, insertando en una gaceta extraordinaria, de la cual tengo el honor de transmitir un ejemplar a Vuestra Excelencia, el telegrama que recibió de Madrid. Este despacho telegráfico tuvo que detenerse en Santiago, porque, como ya tuve el honor de participar a Vuestra Excelencia, el cable submarino se halla roto a cierta distancia de Puerto Rico.

Tengo la satisfacción de constatar que el cambio social operado aquí no ha alterado en lo absoluto el orden público ni ha interrumpido el trabajo un solo día. Los esclavos dan prueba en este momento de un espíritu de abnegación y de sumisión que justifica plenamente las informaciones que transmití antes a Vuestra Excelencia y que demuestran cuánto merecían ser destinados a la nueva condición que se les ha dado. La ley de emancipación se promulgó desde hace dos semanas y algunos propietarios han dado a conocer sus disposiciones a sus esclavos y se han apresurado a hacer contratos para el futuro con los nuevos libertos. Otros amos, por el contrario, no han querido modificar nada en espera de los reglamentos que deben preceder la ejecución de la ley, y los esclavos libres por derecho y no de facto, continúan trabajando cotidianamente como en el pasado, sin ofrecer resistencia y sin remuneración.

La mayoría de los habitantes de esta isla recibió la abolición de la esclavitud con satisfacción. San Juan se iluminó durante dos días y el municipio hizo cantar un *Te Deum* en acción de gracias, al que el Capitán General y las autoridades que componen el gobierno se

¹²⁷ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 60.

abstuvieron de asistir. La ley de emancipación ha sido bien recibida por la gente del país, pero mal vista por el gobierno local y el elemento español peninsular.

Junto al orden que ha presidido el cambio social operado en la Isla, debo señalarle, Señor Ministro, los actos de insubordinación a los que se han dedicado los soldados que pertenecen al ejército de Puerto Rico. La disciplina de los batallones que componen la guarnición de esta isla no era de por sí ejemplar, pero desde los últimos acontecimientos en España, los soldados de la colonia, imitando el ejemplo de los de la metrópoli, han intentado sublevarse. Andan gritando por todas partes: ¡Abajo el Capitán General! ¡Abajo los galones! (el galón es el signo distintivo del oficial) ¡No más servicio militar! Algunos oficiales han sido golpeados; otros, heridos. En la Capital es donde se encontraban agrupados el mayor número de soldados; el General Martínez se apresuró a hacerlos marchar al campo y aislarlos. Concentró aquí los diversos destacamentos de la Guardia Civil diseminados por la Isla. Con esta medida calmó el pavor que inspiraba a los habitantes de San Juan el descontento de los militares y desbarató el plan de estos últimos.

Desde la partida de las Compañías indisciplinadas, el orden ha vuelto a San Juan; no he oído decir que haya habido disturbios en el campo, el país conserva, pues, su tranquilidad material, pero se encuentra agitado y no está seguro de su futuro. Por otra parte, difícilmente sería de otro modo, ya que los trastornos sucesivos en la metrópoli hacen casi imposible una administración regular en la Isla. El General Martínez ya fue relevado, según dicen, y no lleva más de dos meses en el país. Una situación tan precaria no inspira confianza a nadie y todos piensan en el futuro con inquietud. El país necesita un jefe con el que pueda contar al día siguiente y al que se le den instrucciones precisas.

En este momento el gobierno de esta isla es un caos. Puerto Rico vive bajo el régimen republicano sin tener la república, sus esclavos son libres sin disfrutar de su libertad. Todo es confusión. La sensatez de los habitantes del país y la docilidad de su carácter son lo único que mantiene el estado de paz y hacen que la administración de la provincia mantenga un curso más o menos normal, aunque no tiene ningún punto de partida fijo y marcha sin saber hacia dónde va.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[103] **Puerto Rico, 12 de septiembre de 1873**¹²⁸

Señor Ministro,

El pasado 5 de agosto, recibí del Consulado General de La Habana una comunicación en la que se me informó que Vuestra Excelencia había colocado en la circunscripción de ese consulado las agencias de la isla de Puerto Rico. Me apresuré a transmitir al Sr. du Courthial los datos que me solicitó y a enviarle un informe sobre la situación política y comercial de mi residencia.

Hasta el momento cuando tuve el honor de recibir el aviso en cuestión, me vi en la necesidad de conservar la dirección de esas mismas agencias para no interrumpir el servicio. El día 20 de julio autoricé al Vicecónsul de Vieques a trasladarse a Francia, donde algunos intereses lo requerían y, a petición suya, confié la gerencia de su puesto al Sr. D.H. Néron Longpré, y rogué al Capitán General de Rivera que hiciese que las autoridades de Vieques reconocieran a este agente interino.

Desde el 22 de julio, fecha en la cual tuve el honor de enviar a Vuestra Excelencia un despacho sobre la situación de Puerto Rico, no ha habido modificaciones notables en el estado

¹²⁸ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 69.

de esta provincia. Hacia mediados de agosto, todos sus municipios fueron renovados en virtud de la nueva ley municipal. Las elecciones, en las que sólo participaron los reformistas, se llevaron a cabo sin alterar el orden público. Los nuevos concejales no tomarán posesión de su cargo hasta fin de mes.

Con motivo de esta última votación, se produjeron ciertos disentimientos entre los reformistas, y los hombres más importantes de ese partido no fueron los elegidos.

Por lo demás, las tendencias antiespañolas de Puerto Rico siguen abriéndose paso de cuando en cuando. Así, en dos lugares diferentes y en momentos de expansión política, se arrió el pabellón nacional para reemplazarlo por una bandera tricolor de fantasía. El primero de estos actos tuvo como defensor al propio Capitán General, quien en una proclama pública a tal efecto, encontró razones para atenuar el hecho y hacerlo parecer totalmente natural. Ante la segunda manifestación, la autoridad permaneció muda.

Por otra parte, en una orden del día reciente, el Sr. Capitán General, al expresar su descontento por causa de las querellas manifestadas entre los militares y la gente del país, censuró públicamente al ejército y le echó toda la culpa por estos conflictos.

El Partido Conservador está lejos, pues, de favorecer la Capitanía General. ¿Tendrá por objetivo la política del Gobernador de Puerto Rico procurar ligar a esta isla a España únicamente por lazos de afecto? Eso es posible, aunque se dice que lo que motiva su conducta es un interés personal. No obstante, creo que es un poco tarde para aplicar semejante sistema, ya que los esfuerzos de los jefes del partido reformista apenas pudieron disimular la poca simpatía que tienen los habitantes de esta provincia por España. Puerto Rico sigue con interés el movimiento separatista en Cuba y, sin lugar a dudas, busca unirse a dicha posesión, si consigue emanciparse.

El 10 de este mes los reformistas organizaron en San Juan una gran manifestación en honor al gobierno republicano, y para agradecerle el haber promulgado en Puerto Rico el título 1^o de la Constitución de 1869, el cual establece la inviolabilidad de la persona. Alrededor de tres mil individuos se reunieron para recorrer la villa alzando estandartes y aclamando la República federal. Después de ser arengada por el Sr. General Rivera y por otros jefes del partido radical, la muchedumbre se dispersó en buen orden.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[104] **Armamento de la plaza de San Juan, Puerto Rico, 12 de diciembre de 1873**¹²⁹

Señor Ministro,

Los acontecimientos relacionados con la captura del “*Virginus*” han tenido su resonancia en Puerto Rico y han sacado a la villa de San Juan del adormecimiento en el que vivía. Las ejecuciones de Santiago, juzgadas de manera diversa por los grupos políticos de esta isla, fueron aprobadas abiertamente por la gente exaltada del Partido Español, censuradas por la gente moderada de todas las opiniones y, por último, reprobadas con indignación y deseo de venganza por los apasionados reformistas.

El gobierno local no ha dado a conocer sus impresiones particulares con respecto a este asunto delicado, pero las comunicaciones telegráficas con Madrid y La Habana han tenido como resultado que se haya puesto en estado de defensa la plaza de San Juan. Las sólidas fortificaciones de la Isla, dejadas al olvido desde hace mucho tiempo, de pronto se han vuelto objeto de consideración minuciosa por parte del cuerpo de ingenieros y de la artillería. Desde hace quince días se ocupan activamente en reparar los daños causados por el abandono, se

¹²⁹ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N^o 77.

han colocado cañones en las murallas, las balas de cañón se han puesto en condiciones útiles y los fuertes se han abastecido de municiones. La villa, recorrida en todas direcciones por artefactos de guerra, adquiere un aspecto belicoso y parece estar en vísperas de abrir fuego.

Por desgracia para San Juan, los recursos de defensa no guardan relación con el entusiasmo que anima a su guarnición. La artillería de la plaza, aunque numerosa y bien resguardada por muros gruesos, es demasiado vieja para que pueda combatir con ventaja contra los nuevos cañones de largo alcance.

En lo que respecta a la población de la villa, ésta no oculta ni su aversión por la guerra ni el temor que le inspira, en vista de los preparativos que presencia. Por un lado, la villa vislumbra con terror la posibilidad de una ruptura con América; por otro, teme que estos sucesos generen en el país un movimiento contra España.

Lo que es cierto hasta ahora en la situación de Puerto Rico, Señor Ministro, es que la Isla entera aún permanece tranquila y que la capital se encuentra seriamente en pie de guerra. Se han reparado todas las armas viejas que se hallaban en los depósitos; un oficial de artillería, comisionado por el Gobernador, viajó a Nueva York a comprar cinco mil fusiles Remington.

En medio de los rumores contradictorios que circulan en este lugar, si se me pide que emita una opinión, diría que no me parece que Puerto Rico sea capaz de oponer una resistencia seria a los Estados Unidos, y que si los americanos desembarcaran en la Isla encontrarían amigos muy dispuestos a acogerlos y a darles auxilio.

El Sr. Capitán General de Rivera está ausente de la capital desde hace varios días; desconozco con qué fin se trasladó a Ponce. Por órdenes suyas, se llevaron dos mil fusiles a diversos puntos de la colonia.

De la misma manera, cuatro oficiales superiores se encuentran en visita de inspección para estudiar los lugares donde se pueden establecer defensas útilmente.

El elemento español residente en Puerto Rico parece dispuesto, pues, a aceptar la guerra; sin embargo, no le interesa armar al país en el que desconfía y no le queda más remedio que depender de fuerzas muy limitadas para la lucha que va a encarar.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[105] Llegada del nuevo Capitán General a Puerto Rico Cambio en la política de gobierno, Puerto Rico, 11 de febrero de 1874¹³⁰

Señor Ministro,

En la última quincena del mes de enero, un telegrama de La Habana anunciaba a Puerto Rico la caída del Ministerio Castelar y el advenimiento al poder del Mariscal Serrano. Grande fue la decepción de los hombres que dirigían la política del país y hacían actuar, conforme a sus puntos de vista, al Sr. General de Rivera. Al principio se negó la realidad de estas noticias, pero fueron confirmadas por otros despachos y hubo que admitir las cosas como son. El partido reformista entonces quiso intentar hacer de Puerto Rico un cantón federal. Se dice que el Capitán General hizo llegar secretamente a todos los alcaldes populares (en la villa se exhibe el texto del despacho) una circular en la que condenaba el movimiento que acababa de tener lugar en Madrid y les pedía que enviasen a dos miembros de cada municipio a fin de formar en San Juan una asamblea que pudiera deliberar sobre los acontecimientos presentes y pudiese tomar una determinación definitiva en cuanto al destino futuro de Puerto Rico. La reunión de dicha asamblea fue fijada para finales de enero, a la llegada del vapor-correo

¹³⁰ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 80.

español. Mas durante ese intervalo, el telégrafo anunció de nuevo que Cartagena había capitulado y que el General Sanz se había embarcado para venir a asumir el gobierno de Puerto Rico. Por otro lado, el General de Rivera no encontró ningún apoyo de parte del ejército; por el contrario, el Brigadier Enrile le declaró que sería el primero en marchar contra él a la cabeza de sus tropas. Cuando el Gobernador comprendió que ya no era posible dar curso a esa tentativa de independencia, viéndose medio comprometido, se volvió contra sus aliados y en una nueva circular publicada, pretextó su amor por la paz pública e hizo responsables a los alcaldes personalmente por los mínimos desórdenes que pudieran sobrevenir en sus ayuntamientos. Semejante maniobra le alienó a todos sus partidarios sin que con ello obtuviera la simpatía de los conservadores.

El General Sanz llegó en aquel momento y el 2 de febrero desembarcó a las once de la mañana, para tomar posesión de su gobierno. Ese mismo día el General de Rivera, abandonado por todos sus viejos amigos, se embarcó solo en un navío de guerra español para trasladarse a San Thomas.

El desembarco del nuevo Capitán General se efectuó con el ceremonial acostumbrado. Su primer acto, después de haber tranquilizado a los libertos y consagrado en su proclama el principio de la emancipación, fue notificar su llegada a los agentes extranjeros. Al día siguiente, el 3 de febrero, el Cuerpo Consular acudió a La Fortaleza para felicitarlo, y fue recibido con cortesía y agrado.

El General Sanz ya había gobernado Puerto Rico en 1869 y 1870, y había seguido una política conservadora muy enérgica. Habiendo regresado a la Isla con poderes discrecionales, sus primeros actos no han dejado la menor duda sobre cuáles son sus opiniones, ni sobre la entereza de sus resoluciones. A partir del 3 de febrero la gaceta oficial contenía un decreto que suspendía las principales garantías del título 1^o de la Constitución, publicada por su predecesor. De un plumazo, el nuevo Gobernador tachó la inviolabilidad de la persona, el derecho de reunión, la libertad de prensa, y restableció la prisión preventiva. Otro decreto del día 5 disolvía la Diputación Provincial y creaba una nueva, la cual reunía a los hombres más considerables del país. La gaceta del día 7 declaraba disueltos todos los municipios de la Isla y los reemplazaba con consejos nuevos, compuestos por hombres honorables seleccionados de todas las opiniones. En fin, el General Sanz, inspirado por los acontecimientos ocurridos en España, confiscaba todas las libertades concedidas anteriormente y las sustituía con una especie de dictadura.

Yo no aprecio tal viraje político, Señor Ministro, pero lo que tengo que constatar es que bajo el mando de los Generales que precedieron al Gobernador actual, se concedieron todas las libertades a los habitantes de Puerto Rico y que sólo las han usado con miras a su independencia. Dueños de la administración del país, lejos de confiarla a manos honradas que pudiesen ofrecer garantías, sólo enviaban a la diputación provincial y nombraban para los municipios a hombres sin posición y, por lo general, sin honorabilidad. Por otra parte, se hacían representar en Madrid por los partidarios más activos del federalismo. Al no querer comprometer las fortunas del partido radical, habían tenido el cuidado de dejar a un lado a los hombres acaudalados. Por todas partes se había excluido al elemento peninsular y se esperaba el desarrollo final de los sucesos, cuando el General Pavía echó por tierra desde Madrid todos los cimientos levantados en Puerto Rico. Mas se puede asegurar que aquí la revolución se lleva a cabo en las ideas. El odio de los hijos del país contra los españoles ha quedado demostrado claramente y, en lo sucesivo, será necesario que la metrópoli retenga a viva fuerza esta colonia, si no quiere que se le escape.

A estas consideraciones, que ciertamente han tenido peso sobre las resoluciones del nuevo Gobernador, se sumaban otras. Si el General Sanz hubiese conservado los municipios y la diputación provincial, le habría sido imposible gobernar el país conforme a la opinión de los españoles. La fuerza de los municipios era tal que cada uno se constituía en un pequeño estado independiente, y como estos municipios estaban compuestos por hombres hostiles que no tenían nada que perder, en todas partes había que sostener una lucha constante.

Antes de partir, el propio General de Rivera ya había experimentado los inconvenientes de esta franquicia casi absoluta de los municipios.

Si con los nuevos principios proclamados en Puerto Rico, se hubiera acrecentado la prosperidad del país, si se hubieran desarrollado sus riquezas naturales, si hubiese aumentado su crédito, no se habría podido estar sino satisfechos con el cambio. Mas muy por el contrario, se había retirado el crédito, el trabajo estaba suspendido, la miseria aparecía por todas partes y la situación floreciente que señalaba bajo el antiguo régimen había dado lugar a un estado de marasmo que estaba llevando a la Isla a su ruina. Las personas sensatas y deseosas de ver fructificar su trabajo, no tardaron entonces en comprender que si la administración española dejaba que desear, la fortuna pública debía temer aún más a la independencia del país.

El regreso del General Sanz desvaneció el peligro, al menos por el momento, y probó una vez más cuán fácil es manejar al pueblo de Puerto Rico. Se le otorgan más libertades de las que corresponden a su grado de civilización, y se limita a gritar y holgazanear. Le gustaría llegar más lejos, pero no se atreve. Si se le retiran las libertades de forma absoluta, se calla y vuelve a trabajar.

Este es, Señor Ministro, el corto relato de los últimos acontecimientos ocurridos en Puerto Rico. La agitación que produjo en el país el deseo de independencia se calmó ante lo imposible del hecho, y todo ha vuelto a la tranquilidad como en el pasado. La villa de San Juan, en particular, reanuda los hábitos de orden y de trabajo que había comenzado a perder.

Tuve el honor de ver al Sr. General Sanz para entregarle una carta del Conde Meján que me acreditaba en mi nueva calidad de vicecónsul. El Gobernador me recibió con gran amabilidad y me dijo que no dudaba en reconocer mi carácter oficial, aunque ya no utilice más mi exequátur de Madrid. Mientras hablaba extensamente sobre los actos de su gobierno, el Sr. General Sanz me dijo: “En Madrid sabíamos lo que se tramaba en Puerto Rico y el Sr. Mariscal Serrano me envió a toda prisa, con la misión de salvar al país”. “Estoy obligado”, añadió, “a confiscar sus libertades y a nombrarle a los administradores hasta que la metrópoli haya votado sobre las leyes aplicables aquí sin peligro”. El Sr. General Sanz se puso completamente a mi disposición, lo cual luego hizo también el nuevo Secretario del Gobierno, el Sr. Díaz Romero, antiguo diputado conservador que ya tuve el honor de dar a conocer al departamento.

El día 9 de este mes la fragata americana “Worcester” ancló en el puerto de San Juan, trayendo a bordo a su Almirante Scott. Le hice una visita a dicho oficial, la cual se apresuró en devolverme.

El Almirante Scott volvió a marcharse el día 10, luego de haber intercambiado más cortesías con las autoridades territoriales que muchos agentes extranjeros.

El Worcester está armado con quince cañones de gran calibre y ametralladoras que tienen 10 bocas y disparan cuatrocientas balas por minuto. Esta fragata se trasladará próximamente a Martinica.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[106] **Puerto Rico, 23 de julio de 1874**¹³¹

Señor Ministro,

En mi despacho del pasado 24 de marzo, N° 82, con el sello de la Dirección de Consulados, tuve el honor de informar a Vuestra Excelencia los acontecimientos sobrevenidos en la isla de Vieques, luego de los cuales el Capitán General de Puerto Rico y el Sr. Cónsul de Inglaterra llevaron sus quejas a Madrid y a Londres simultáneamente. Unos dos meses después de esta

¹³¹ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° 87.

controversia, un nuevo agente de Gran Bretaña, el Sr. Pauli, se encontraba en la Isla reemplazando al Sr. Cooper, y poco tiempo después de la llegada de éste, el Tribunal Civil de Humacao, ante el cual se seguía el asunto de los trabajadores ingleses de Vieques, sentenció a todos los acusados, según su grado de culpabilidad, a una detención que variaba de tres meses a tres años.

El Sr. Pauli, movido por una feliz inspiración, acudió a ver al Capitán General, retirado en el campo desde hace varias semanas, y le solicitó la gracia de sus nacionales.

El gobernador se mostró muy accesible a esta idea generosa, y acto seguido, envió un telegrama a Madrid para solicitar la autorización para conceder dicho favor. La respuesta del gobierno español no se hizo esperar, y el día 15 de este mes, apareció en la gaceta oficial de Puerto Rico un decreto que concedía la amnistía plena y entera a todos los condenados por los sucesos de Vieques.

Algunos días antes, el Sr. General Sanz se había distinguido por un acto de benevolencia análogo al que acabo de tener el honor de comunicar a Vuestra Excelencia.

Bajo el gobierno del Sr. Capitán General Martínez Plowes, que apenas permaneció en Puerto Rico de febrero a abril de 1873, se hicieron numerosos arrestos como consecuencia de un levantamiento intentado en Camuy y el proceso de los inculpados se siguió hasta el día 11 de noviembre del mismo año. En ese momento, el Sr. General Primo de Rivera publicó un telegrama que decía que el Consejo de Ministros acababa de conceder una amnistía general a las personas comprometidas en el asunto de Camuy y a partir de ese momento, habiendo cesado todas las persecuciones, los prisioneros fueron puestos en libertad.

Ahora bien, desde esa época se han buscado en vano rastros de esa supuesta decisión ministerial sin que se haya podido dar con algo. Muy por el contrario, se ha conseguido la prueba de que nunca se presentó decreto alguno a tal efecto. Había que volver a hacer justicia, pero hubiese sido sumamente impolítico despertar un asunto que ya se encontraba dormido. Así lo comprendió el gobernador de Puerto Rico, quien, utilizando las facultades superiores que lo revisten, presentó el día 8 de julio un decreto de amnistía completa para las personas comprometidas en el levantamiento de Camuy.

Estos dos decretos, cuyo texto tuve el honor de transmitir a Vuestra Excelencia, hacen honor al carácter del general que los firmó. Luego de haberle dado a conocer estos dos hechos, me resta añadir, Señor Ministro, que el país disfruta ahora de una gran tranquilidad.

Todavía tengo que informar a Vuestra Excelencia sobre la llegada a Puerto Rico del ex Presidente de la República Dominicana. El Sr. General B. Báez regresa de los Estados Unidos de América donde permaneció cuatro meses para restablecer su salud, según dice. El ex Presidente fijó su residencia cerca de Mayagüez, sin duda por encontrarse más cerca de su patria.

En lo que concierne a la situación económica de Puerto Rico, Señor Ministro, no tengo nada satisfactorio que anunciar. Al mismo tiempo que los acontecimientos políticos del año pasado alejaban del país los capitales y el comercio extranjero, la Isla se encontraba azotada por la más fuerte sequía que se haya sentido aquí hasta ahora. De manera que todas las cosechas, con excepción de la de café, fueron muy malas. La caña de azúcar, sobre todo, tuvo un rendimiento deplorable y sus productos tuvieron tan mala venta que su precio no cubrió los gastos de producción. La campaña ha sufrido, pues, varias pruebas a la vez y requiere mucho trabajo y mucho orden para poder reparar sus pérdidas.

Siendo Puerto Rico un país agrícola, todas sus riquezas se encuentran en su suelo. Los productos de estos llanos fértiles son los que alimentan y hacen prosperar su comercio. Cuando la fuente de la fortuna pública se detiene, el comercio se paraliza y surge un malestar general en la Isla. Ésta es, Señor Ministro, su situación en este momento.

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el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

[107] **Su Excelencia, el Señor Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores, Versalles (copia), Puerto Rico, 11 de enero de 1875**¹³²

Señor Conde,

El 22 de abril de 1872, el Señor Gómez Pulido, Capitán General de Puerto Rico, transmitió al Señor Ministro de Ultramar en Madrid, una patente de agente Vicecónsul que yo había expedido al Sr. Doctor Eugène Suquet, nuevo titular del puesto de Ponce, en mi calidad de gerente del Consulado de Francia en Puerto Rico. Se trataba de obtener el exequátur del gobierno español para nuestro agente, el cual había solicitado de la Capitanía General de esta isla, cuando produjo su título de nombramiento.

La patente del Sr. Suquet se envió a Madrid sin necesidad, según parece, ya que el Ministro español respondió que el Capitán General de Puerto Rico estaba capacitado para reconocer y autorizar a otros agentes consulares extranjeros que no fueran los de la capital; pero el título de nombramiento no fue enviado y permanece aún en la oficina del Ministerio, a pesar de haber sido reclamado varias veces.

En junio de 1874, luego de haber recibido yo mismo del Sr. Conde Méjan, Cónsul General de Francia en La Habana, la patente que el Departamento de Asuntos Exteriores le exhortó a que me expidiera cuando fui nombrado Vicecónsul en Puerto Rico, también remití dicho título al Sr. General Sanz, quien me lo solicitó a fin de transmitirlo a Madrid. Se le envió, en efecto, el 16 de junio del mismo año.

Mi patente, al igual que la del Sr. Dr. Suquet, se quedó en España. Mi posición aún no se ha regularizado definitivamente y ejerzo mis funciones en virtud de la autorización provisional que me ha otorgado el Sr. General Sanz y que fue ratificada por el jefe del poder ejecutivo.

Tengo el honor de transmitir a Vuestra Excelencia dos documentos que me entregaron en la secretaría general del gobierno de Puerto Rico. Son las copias de dos despachos escritos en abril de 1872 y junio de 1874 por los Sres. Capitanes Generales Gómez Pulido y Laureano Sanz para acompañar las patentes en cuestión.

El jefe de la secretaría me confirmó que recientemente se hizo una última reclamación, pero también me confesó que aún no se ha obtenido respuesta.

Ante semejante olvido, que explica la gravedad de los sucesos que han absorbido constantemente la atención de los gabinetes que se han sucedido en Madrid, no puedo menos que apelar a su autoridad, Señor Embajador, para obtener la restitución de mis patentes y el reconocimiento definitivo de mi situación por parte del gobierno español.

Luego de haber tenido el honor de dar a conocer a Vuestra Excelencia el motivo que me obliga a solicitar su intervención, creo mi deber enviarle una breve exposición sobre el estado actual de Puerto Rico y sobre las alternaciones por las que ha pasado esta isla desde que en ella ejerzo mis funciones.

En este momento, esta nueva provincia de ultramar goza de completa tranquilidad. La gobierna un General dedicado a su prosperidad y que trabaja entusiastamente con todos los medios a su alcance, pero antes de llegar a ese gobierno reparador, Puerto Rico pasó pruebas difíciles.

Desde junio de 1871 he visto sucederse aquí a siete Capitanes Generales:

Los Sres. G. Baldrich, General de Brigada; Gómez Pulido; Ten. General; Simón de la Torre, Ten. General; Joaquín Enrile, Brigadier; Martínez Plowes, Ten. General; Rafael Primo de Rivera, Ten. General; y José Laureano Sanz, Ten. General.

Cada uno de estos gobernadores ha seguido una política diferente a la de su predecesor y, si estos diversos jefes no han podido tener una duración normal en su mando, las autoridades que les fueron subordinadas no han ofrecido mayor estabilidad, de manera que también he visto renovarse varias veces toda la administración del país.

¹³² Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° *

El General Baldrich es el primer Gobernador que, obedeciendo las inspiraciones de la metrópoli, inaugurase aquí la política llamada reformista. Esta tentativa comenzó a socavar la fortuna de un país hasta ahora floreciente. El General Gómez Pulido, sucesor de Baldrich, detuvo un poco el movimiento impreso por su predecesor y se esforzó por administrar desde un punto de vista conservador; pero los sucesos se precipitaban en España y debían ejercer una influencia decisiva sobre el destino de Puerto Rico. El General Simón de la Torre vino justamente a culminar la reforma. Se dice que había comenzado siendo carlista en su patria, pero aquí se mostraba apto para cualquier política. El Partido Español y Conservador perdió con este General toda su influencia en el manejo de los asuntos públicos, mientras que los hijos del país, llamados reformistas, pero separatistas en el fondo, asumían la dirección. La prosperidad de Puerto Rico, ya afectada, se vio mucho más perjudicada. El Sr. Brigadier Enrile y el Sr. General Martínez Plowes, quienes sólo duraron poco tiempo, intentaron tratar con tino a ambos partidos, pero no lograron nada satisfactorio y la situación continuó siendo la misma. Por último, con el Capitán General Rafael Primo de Rivera, los reformistas se vieron en la cima del poder y dueños absolutos de la Isla al mismo tiempo que la fortuna del país quedaba sepultada en las ruinas del pasado.

En España era la época de los cantones, esta política servía a las mil maravillas los propósitos de los insulares de Puerto Rico, y aquí tal vez iba a surgir un movimiento análogo a los que se produjeron en la península, cuando el Mariscal Serrano asumió el poder en Madrid e hizo llegar de improviso a Puerto Rico al Sr. Ten. General Laureano Sanz.

El nuevo Capitán General desembarcó el 2 de febrero de 1874. En ese momento todo se encontraba en reconstrucción en el país. De hecho, se había perdido el crédito de la Isla, su comercio se había arruinado, su agricultura se había abandonado en parte, la administración completa había pasado por las manos de gente irresponsable que, pudiendo ganarlo todo en el juego de la política, no tenían nada que arriesgar aquí. El Sr. General Primo de Rivera, que había proclamado en la Isla la abolición de la esclavitud, la única medida que satisfizo verdaderamente los sentimientos de justicia y de humanidad, se cuidó mucho de reglamentar el trabajo de los libertos, como lo disponía en un interés general el decreto mismo de la abolición. La isla de Puerto Rico, de rica y próspera que era en 1871, se encontraba empobrecida y desorganizada luego de haber andado durante dos años por el mismo camino que comprometía en España los intereses de la sociedad.

El General Sanz estuvo a la altura del cometido que tenía que cumplir, ya que en menos de un año, y sin haberse recuperado completamente de su fuerte sacudida, el país ha hecho progresos muy rápidos. Las pasiones políticas se saciaron, el comercio muestra actividad y una cosecha abundante promete devolver en poco tiempo a la fortuna pública el lugar que ocupaba antes. Se obtendrán, pues, grandes beneficios en Puerto Rico, si es que no ocurren nuevos sucesos que vuelvan a obstaculizar su marcha.

Debo elogiar la actividad del gobernador actual, quien no ha fallado en ninguna de las ramas de su administración. Su primer acto al llegar fue devolver la dirección de los asuntos del país a manos de quienes tenían todo el interés de verlos prosperar. Restableció la disciplina en las tropas, desarrolló la organización de la Guardia Civil, creó un cuerpo de guardianes del orden público, revisó y moralizó la enseñanza, llevó a cabo grandes obras de utilidad general. Siempre está trabajando y no retrocede ante ninguna dificultad para llevar a buen término la tarea que haya comenzado.

¿Quiere esto decir que después de esfuerzos tan loables, el General Sanz se ha ganado el afecto de todos los habitantes de esta isla y ha logrado cambiar los sentimientos de quienes sueñan con su liberación? No lo creo; porque para restablecer el orden en el país, la disciplina en el ejército, la moralidad y el patriotismo en la enseñanza pública se necesitó severidad y hacerse de enemigos secretos. Por otra parte, España tiene aquí, en sus hijos de América, adversarios irreconciliables que sólo se acallan ahora porque se sienten dominados.

Esta es, Señor Embajador, la exposición rápida, pero exacta, de los acontecimientos ocurridos en esta provincia de ultramar desde hace cuatro años. En este momento se espera

en el país por hechos de mayor importancia en España. El pasado 31 de diciembre, un telegrama de Madrid notificó a Puerto Rico que el ejército había aclamado al Príncipe Alfonso. La autoridad se apresuró a celebrar la ascensión del nuevo soberano. Fue necesario restablecer en una noche todas las coronas y todos los emblemas de la monarquía, y los festejos públicos duraron tres días. Sin embargo, hasta esta hora no se ha recibido noticia alguna de fuente oficial que confirme el movimiento anunciado el 31 de diciembre.

Con motivo de este último suceso, la fisonomía de los habitantes de San Juan habría podido dar muestra, de ser preciso, de las opiniones que tuve el honor de expresar en mi informe. Mientras los peninsulares andaban locos de alegría, los hijos del país se mostraban sombríos y silenciosos; es que comprendían bien que la consolidación del orden y el advenimiento de un régimen estable en la metrópoli, fortalecían el dominio de España en la Isla y hacían menos probable la realización de sus esperanzas secretas.

Reciba el profundo respeto, etc.

Firmado: Le Brun

P.D. Sólo tengo tiempo de transmitir, antes del cierre del correo inglés, una hoja que se acaba de publicar para confirmar la noticia del 31 de diciembre. Firmado: Le Brun

[108] **Puerto Rico, 16 de enero de 1875**¹³³

Señor Ministro,

Tengo el honor de transmitir a Vuestra Excelencia la copia del informe que envié al Sr. Conde de Chandordy, Embajador de Francia en España, el día 11 de este mes. Mis múltiples ocupaciones al momento del cierre del último correo inglés, no me permitieron terminar dicha copia a tiempo para adjuntarla a mi carta del día 12, N° 96, transmitida a Vuestra Excelencia con el timbre de la Dirección de Consulados y Asuntos Comerciales.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia,
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Le Brun

¹³³ Dirección de Consulados y de Asuntos Comerciales, N° * El documento original no indica el número del despacho.

CARTAS CONSULARES INGLESAS

[109] **British Consulate, Porto Rico, January 2nd 1897**¹³⁴

My Lord,

I have the honour to inclose herewith, Extract from the Official Gazete of this Island [Inclosure No. 1 Copy], reflecting a telegram of a Royal Decree applying to this Island, the reforms voted by the Spanish "Cortes " just previous to the out-break of the Cuban rebellion.

I also inclose a translation of said extra [Inclosure No. 2 Translation].

These reforms are only in the system of a ministration, and much depends on the manner of interpreting the Bases voted by the Liberal "Cortes " by the Conservative Ministry, and there is much anxiety in the country to know how far-reaching the new law will be, and the manner in which it will be enforced by local government.

The local liberal or home-rule party will not greet it pleasingly unless it is accompanied by a Decree changing the electoral system from the \$10 tax qualification to \$5 tax, as it is in Cuba.

The principal features of these reforms are supposed to be the division of the island into two separate civil governments, one here and the other in Ponce. The drafting of the budget by the local assembly, the administration, by same, of public works, posts and telegraphs, and other minor details, which I will have the honour to report to Your Lordship when the law is published here.

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's Most Obedient and
humble Servant
George Finlay
Acting Consul

Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for
Foreign Affairs
London
Copy

Extract from Official Gazette of Porto Rico No. 2 of the 2nd January 1897

Secretaría

El Exmo. Señor Ministro de Ultramar con fecha de ayer, dirige al Exmo. Señor Gobernador General el cablegrama siguiente:

"En vista unión partidos Cuba y favorables circunstancias campaña que protestan cercana pacificacion provincias más feraces dicha Isla, Gobierno, para demostrar al mundo como cumple nación compromisos espontáneamente contraídos, ha sometido hoy firma S.M. decreto aplicando ley bases a Puerto Rico. Por consecuencia de ello renovárase mitad Ayuntamientos el día 14 de

¹³⁴ FO 72/2046, No. 1, Political.

febrero para sustituir interinos, y el 11 de abril se efectuará votación de Diputados Provinciales para renovación total Diputación". Lo que de orden de S.E. se hace público en la Gaceta Oficial para general conocimiento.

Puerto Rico 1^o de enero de 1897.

El Secretario de Gobierno General,
[rúbrica] Alejandro Infiesta

[110] **British Consulate, Porto Rico, January 31st 1897**¹³⁵

My Lord,

With reference to my Despatch No. 1 "Political" of the 2nd instant, I have the honour to report to Your Lordship, that the Reforms therein mentioned were published in the "Official Gazette" of the 25th Instant, a copy of which I am forwarding to Your Lordship under separate cover.

They will come into effect on the 1st of July, by which time the elections will have taken place, and the Councillors appointed.

These reforms do not seem to satisfy anyone, and though the local political parties are divided in considering their merits, all agree upon one point, and this is, that, so far, there is hardly any difference in the system by which the Island has been governed, politically and economically, and this slight unnecessary reform, costs thousands of dollars per annum, on account of the new employees appointed, such as civil governors, councillors, and the necessary clerks for their offices.

The following opinion summarizes the view taken by those whose criticisms have been mildest, though it has been expressed by a party man and a republican.

He writes:

"In judging these reforms, we must not enter into details of form, but simply hail them as the victory of new ideas over the old discredited system, and the opening of a new political horizon, which may gradually be developed until a complete change be effected. We must believe the words of the Government, who confessing their deficiency, state that they are simply the corner stone of the foundation of a strictly local administration."

The probable fusion of the liberal or "home-rule" party into the Spanish Liberal Party led by Sagasta, threatens to destroy the power of the local "Peninsular" or Conservative Party; and they therefore endeavour to discredit the "Home-rulers" and create obstacles to the "Nationalization" of a so-far "Colonial" Party.

The recent arrests of several Liberals on the south side of this Island is attributed to the said "Peninsular" Party, with the view of carrying, even if contested, the elections in districts where their minority is well known.

Amongst those arrested, there was a prominent French gentleman, who, however, was immediately released, on his Consul's protesting to the Governor of this step.

The other prisoners were also released later, their innocence acknowledged, and no charge proved against them by the military tribunal appointed to investigate the case.

A local paper, though in veiled terms, discloses the cause of these arrests, and appears to accuse the "Peninsular" Party of being the real conspirators, explaining their plan of action as follows:

Two of their agents went into a country shop, whose proprietor they knew could neither read nor write; they had something to drink, and on leaving, hid a book on the premises, containing a list of persons who were said to contribute towards the Cuban rebellion.

The book was noticed by the shop-keeper, who supposing it had been forgotten by them, gave it to his wife for safe keeping until it was claimed, not having, it is said, the slightest idea of what the book contained.

¹³⁵ FO 72/2046, No. 2, Political.

That night they were arrested, their house searched, and the book being found, it led to the arrest of the others.

In conclusion I may inform Your Lordship, that the native Liberals presume that, were it not for the pressure supposed to have been exercised by the United States Government in the Cuban struggle, not even these imperfect reforms would have been applied to this Island, and their local Press is prophesying that Cuba will in the end, get more liberties than Porto Rico.

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's Most Obedient,
humble Servant
George Finlay
Acting Consul

Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State
for Foreign Affairs London

[111] **British Consulate, Porto Rico, 31st March 1897**¹³⁶

My Lord,

I have the honour to report to Your Lordship, that on the 13th of February, at a General Assembly of the local "Home-Rule" party, which met in this city to hear the opinions of the Committee sent to Madrid, it was resolved by a large majority, that the said party should enter the ranks of the Spanish Liberal Party led by Señor Sagasta. A Provincial Committee was elected, which included the most prominent Liberals of the Island.

Some of the leaders of the "Home-Rule" party, who voted against this "fusion", on account of their republican opinions, refused to submit to the will of the majority, and claim to represent the Home-Rule Party, though it has virtually disappeared by the vote of the General Assembly.

The new Liberal Party is now organising, and to judge by its numbers and by the respectable persons that lead it, there is every probability of its being, in time, a powerful party in the Island.

The election of the new Provincial House of Assembly will take place on the 11th próximo, and though the new party has great disadvantages over the Conservative or local "Spanish" Party, its leaders have decided to test the power of their party by contesting this election.

On the 23rd instant a seditious movement broke out in the coffee district of Yauco, instigated it is said, by the New York "Junta " and led by unknown persons.

Everybody was surprised at this unexpected rising, and the troops [&] volunteers, helped by the peasants, and by the most influential persons in the district, soon captured the ringleaders and broke up the small force, which was armed with cutlasses and revolvers only. There are over fifty prisoners at Ponce, pending the investigation of a Court Martial.

The country is quiet, and amazed at the audacity of the organisers of this seditious rising. Any further outbreak is highly improbable and the entire mass of the population would quell a movement which is considered untimely and unwarranted.

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's Most Obedient,
humble Servant
George Finlay
Acting Consul

Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for
Foreign Affairs London

¹³⁶ FO 72/2046, No. 3, Political.

[112] **British Consulate, Porto Rico, April 2nd 1897**¹³⁷

My Lord,

With reference to my Despatch No. 3 "Political" of the 31st último, I now have the honour to transcribe to Your Lordship the following report on the rising in Yauco, which I have just received from Mr. Vice-Consul Toro:

"The town of Yauco being in my district I have to inform you that on the night of the 24th instant, said place was attacked by some 70 men, apparently with the intent of burning and sacking said town. It seems however that the Government had received timely warning of the intended attack and rushed a company of soldiers of the garrison of Ponce, by express train; they arrived just in time to meet the attacking party and one volley sufficed to disperse them. They all fled to the mountains but were closely pursued, many surrendered or presented themselves to the Authorities in town, and after three days[] search nearly all the others were made prisoners.

Some 50 have already been sent to this town to be tried by Court Martial. All so far turn out to be of the lower classes.

Of the three leaders only one has been captured, two are yet hiding, but undoubtedly will soon be found, as there are no less than 1500 soldiers, besides mounted police, in search of them.

When the attack was made, they succeeded in burning three houses on the outskirts of the town, two of the men were wounded by the troops, one slightly, the other one died two days after.

It is difficult to say whether plunder was their only object or whether it was a prearranged plan for an uprising of some importance against Spanish Rule.

The want of proper arms for such a purpose and the class of people who took part in the affair, make it a matter of doubt.

The attempt, however, whatever its object, has entirely failed, and in Yauco itself, as well as all over this district, everything is in a normal State, and business continues its usual course.

As said, about 1,500 soldiers besides mounted police, continue near Yauco, but the Government has neither proclaimed Martial Law, nor have any measures been taken to interfere with usual traffic and business.

Much credit is certainly due to the Governor General of the Island for the manner in which he has proceeded in such an undoubtedly critical moment.

I have etc.

[rúbrica] F.M. Toro

Vice Consul"

I have the honour to be Your Lordship's
most humble and
Obedient Servant
George Finlay
Acting Consul

Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State
for Foreign Affairs
London

¹³⁷ FO 72/2046, No. 4, Political.

GUERRA DE 1898

LAS PRIMERAS MEMORIAS

Mucho se ha escrito sobre las causas y efectos de la ocupación norteamericana de Puerto Rico en 1898, y no es nuestro propósito presentar aquí una lista de tan extensa bibliografía. Sin embargo, sobre un aspecto en particular, poco se ha hablado: qué efecto inmediato tuvieron la guerra y el cambio de soberanía en las relaciones comerciales, culturales y sociales preexistentes entre Puerto Rico y las potencias extranjeras. Después de todo, Puerto Rico, a fines del siglo 19 poseía una economía de exportación, a esas alturas mayormente dependiente de su producción cafetalera. Los compradores de este café no eran los vecinos de la América del Norte, sino los cubanos –cuya industria nativa se hallaba en estado de crisis– y los europeos, acostumbrados al café de buena calidad que brindaba la pequeña Antilla española y dispuestos a pagar su alto precio. Igualmente, la mayoría de las importaciones que llegaban a la Isla no eran de origen estadounidense, sino español y británico.

De manera que, desde el punto de vista *económico*, el cambio de soberanía tiene que haber significado un desajuste momentáneo de los circuitos de distribución de las ofertas mercantiles. ¿Qué pensaban los representantes de estos intereses comerciales extranjeros en ese momento? ¿Temían acaso un aumento en la competencia por parte de productos norteamericanos y la adopción de una tarifa favorable a los mismos? ¿Exhibían indiferencia, confiados en la seguridad de su puesto en el mercado puertorriqueño? Es aquí donde nos asiste la correspondencia de los representantes máximos de los intereses extranjeros en la Isla: los cónsules franceses y británicos.

Es notable el drástico cambio en las actitudes hacia el futuro de los intereses de sus respectivas patrias en Puerto Rico de los cónsules franceses y británicos. Diríase que los papeles se hubieran invertido. Si anteriormente los británicos observaban a la Isla con un optimismo entusiasta, invitando a sus paisanos a emigrar, invertir y comerciar, en el '98, las cartas de Carden destilan un sentimiento de zozobra, de incertidumbre hacia el futuro. La noticia de la falta de respeto que exhiben ciertos soldados hacia unas señoritas ponceñas de buena familia augura mal; y el largo y comprensivo informe que envía Churchward a la Foreign Office en 1899 es francamente pesimista. Ciertamente es que el informe de Churchward se redacta luego de la gran crisis provocada en Puerto Rico por el paso del huracán San Ciriaco el 8 de agosto de 1899, pero este desastre natural sólo acrecienta el sentido de incertidumbre. Mientras que la sociedad vocal de Puerto Rico oreaba sus opiniones sobre la nueva metrópoli y el futuro de la Isla con respecto a la misma –opiniones que recibirían mucha y merecida atención por parte de historiadores futuros– un extranjero observa la situación con visión desapasionada como, de hecho, sólo podía hacerlo un extranjero, vacunado de antemano contra los nocivos efectos del “insularismo”, y nota que una Isla que depende de sus exportaciones de café acaba de pasar a manos de una nación que no siente ninguna inclinación por comprar ese producto. Su colega francés hace la misma observación cuando relata su experiencia a bordo de un barco con destino a Nueva York, donde ninguno de los pasajeros estadounidenses se declara amante del café puertorriqueño –todo lo contrario: todos estaban de acuerdo en que no les gustaba por ser demasiado fuerte. Preferían el más barato –en todo el sentido de la palabra– producto que ofrecía el Brasil. Churchward nota además que los efectos del huracán han sido devastadores para lo que representaba, en esos momentos, la actividad agrícola más importante del país.

Pero siendo extranjero, no cabe que Churchward se lamente más por el estado de Puerto Rico que por el futuro de las empresas de su patria en la Isla bajo la nueva soberanía americana y ya desde un principio comenta con pesar que un buen negocio se ha perdido: el comercio que antes sostuviera Puerto Rico con los Estados Unidos se realizaba casi en su totalidad en embarcaciones británicas. Este negocio de acarreo ha sido afectado drásticamente al introducirse de inmediato las nuevas leyes de cabotaje favoreciendo el transporte en embarcaciones estadounidenses. De 63 buques británicos que visitaron San Juan en 1897, sólo 52 llegaron el año siguiente. Y en el 1899, el número se redujo, aún más: solamente entraron al puerto 42 buques británicos. Alega Churchward que la empresa británica ha perdido un ingreso considerable, ya que en un año "normal" como el que finalizó el 30 de junio de 1898, las embarcaciones británicas acarreaban alrededor de 30,000 toneladas de carga a puertos estadounidenses. Espera, como todos, la resolución del enigma del nuevo arancel preguntándose qué efecto tendrá en el comercio británico. No tardará Churchward, en la primera década del siglo 20, en darse cuenta de que su pesimismo era justificado.

El cónsul francés, por el contrario, parece ser en 1898 la antítesis de sus colegas de décadas anteriores. Aquellos encontraban que Puerto Rico no era un mercado verdaderamente favorable para las mercancías francesas pero Charpentier ve la llegada de los norteamericanos como una oportunidad magnífica para el despegue del comercio francés en Puerto Rico. ¿Por qué el contraste tan fuerte con su colega británico? A pesar de que Francia es un importante cliente del café puertorriqueño, el cónsul no ve razón por la cual el cambio de soberanía deba afectar ese comercio. Pero, más importante es la visión que tiene en cuanto a los cambios que el 1898 provocará en la sociedad puertorriqueña y cómo éstos beneficiarán la importación de mercancías francesas a la Isla. Los nuevos dueños, entiende Charpentier, han de atraer prosperidad económica, y esta prosperidad se reflejará en un aumento en el consumo de mercancías de lujo en la cual, dicho sea de paso, se especializan los franceses. A Charpentier le interesa el mercado de vinos, de tejidos finos, de lanas. Éstos, hasta la adopción de la nueva tarifa en el 1899, estaban dominados por España debido a que eran muy favorecidos por la aduana. El fin de la dominación española significa el fin de la competencia desigual. Con razón el cónsul francés se muestra optimista. Churchward, por el contrario está consciente de que un arancel que favorezca a los Estados Unidos de manera significativa y consistente resultará en un aumento en la competencia a sus mercancías principales en la Isla. Charpentier espera que lo contrario ocurra con los productos de su patria. No es casualidad que el cónsul francés se muestre menos optimista con el futuro de la maquinaria proveniente de Francia aunque no nombra a la competencia estadounidense como la principal amenaza, sino a la alta calidad (y precio) del producto que no desmerece con el tiempo y resulta oneroso a la hora de reemplazar para ponerse al día.

Mas no hay que olvidar otro personaje que, a estas alturas, adquiere un estatus ambiguo: Philip Hanna, cónsul de los Estados Unidos en Puerto Rico, deja oficialmente de serlo el 25 de julio. A Hanna hay que ponerlo en un nivel diferente al de Churchward y Charpentier pues en esa fecha deja de ser, técnicamente un cónsul extranjero y se convierte, al menos indirectamente en el representante de la nueva metrópoli en Puerto Rico.

Personaje interesante, no deja de ser irónico que este representante fuera un verdadero admirador de Puerto Rico y su gente y que sus constantes plegarias a la Secretaría de Estado fueran en favor de concederle a una población tan merecedora, la dicha de participar

plenamente de las virtuosas instituciones de la democracia norteamericana. Además, les ruega a sus superiores que le permitan estar presente en la gloriosa hora en que el ejército de su país desembarque en suelo puertorriqueño (la Secretaría de Estado lo había transferido a San Tomás en junio por motivos de seguridad) y le proporciona consejos no pedidos sobre el número de tropas necesario para un éxito ligero y la mejor localización para el desembarque. Es curioso que Hanna sugiriera repetidas veces que la costa sur era un lugar más propicio para la invasión que la norteña. No sabemos si las palabras del cónsul tuvieron alguna influencia en la decisión de desembarcar por Guánica. Lo que sí sabemos es que su otra repetida sugerencia: que de ninguna manera se le impusiera al pueblo puertorriqueño un gobierno militar, cayó en oídos sordos.

Recapitemos: el pesimismo británico, el desbocado entusiasmo francés y el imperialismo altruista norteamericano —expresado por los cónsules— revelan que no estamos ante una historia fácil. Estas cartas consulares comienzan a escribir la historia del 98 antes del auge de los libros de viajeros, los despachos periodísticos sensacionalistas, los escuetos informes militares o las reseñas científicas. En medio de la guerra y las primeras jornadas inciertas de la ocupación militar, los cónsules registran sensaciones y cálculos instantáneos, sin respiro para reflexionar y criticar con sosiego. En su espontaneidad, garantizada por el carácter secreto del informe diplomático, reside una de sus virtudes.

Por otra parte, estamos ante unas percepciones interesadas en aquilatar el valor incalculable del territorio disputado. Por lo tanto, predomina el juicio económico, instancia parcial de una historia más compleja. Mas el conjunto de los vistazos consulares será útil si sirve para construir otra memoria del 98, con ayuda del estudio de los relatos de los corresponsales, las fotos, la literatura, los símbolos y las utopías.

Pensar el 98 desde los cónsules es relevante si nos ayuda a repensarlo desde nosotros. En la colonia de una metrópoli subdesarrollada y autoritaria, enemiga del proyecto de la universidad boricua, sospechosa de las leales ansias autonómicas y garante del poder económico de peninsulares e inmigrantes aliados, se frustró la formación de un sólido frente anticolonial. Obligada, por debilidad, a regatear con votos de lealtad los derechos ciudadanos, civiles y políticos, la sociedad puertorriqueña convirtió la negociación en una constante política y cultural.

En la coyuntura del 98, los puertorriqueños recurrieron nuevamente a los gestos de fidelidad, en la brega con una de las primeras potencias económicas y militares, más democrática y prometedora de libertades más anchas que las del viejo régimen. Entonces pareció claro el diagnóstico del cónsul francés en 1871: los españoles “de ninguna manera sacrificarán sus intereses por el futuro de un país que no consideran su patria sino... un terreno para explotar.” La profunda transacción del 98 no excluyó una larga historia contemporánea de resistencia-en-la-transigencia, ejemplificada hoy por las simpatías firmes de los puertorriqueños por el cese definitivo de las maniobras de la Marina norteamericana en Vieques. Así, más de un siglo después, el 98 dice presente en la ausencia.

CARTAS CONSULARES NORTEAMERICANAS

[113] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwin F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, July 1st, 1895**¹³⁸

Sir:

In view of a certain article that I have seen, it may be of advantage for the Department to have the following information in reference to the troops sent to Cuba.

There have passed by here from Spain and gone from this Island to Cuba 29,377 soldiers, including 200 prisoners from the Spanish prison of Ceuta across the Strait of Gibraltar.

As nearly all the steamer's troops with a few exceptions, stop here for coal and orders, the above figures can be relied upon. This does not include the two vessels due here in two or three days, with three or four thousand more.

The troops are mostly boys, very young and poorly equipped. They are extremely filthy, poorly conditioned, and little attention is apparently given to their care and comfort.

In consequence disease and epidemics mark their footsteps. Among the new troops left here to replace the former garrison, there are very many cases of yellow fever, many cases of venereal diseases and some small-pox.

Yellow fever is increasing at an alarming rate and the mortality is simply frightful, being between 80 and 90% of the actual cases. There are twenty or more cases in the town outside of the military hospital, and the disease is about, it has not already, to assume an epidemic form. I have today notified the proper Authorities of the Treasury Department to this effect.

I beg to say that for the past fifteen months no clean bills-of-health have been issued from this office. Small-pox has nearly disappeared from this City, but there are still many cases in the country. I am happy to say that as far as I know no American vessel coming to this ports has been infected with this disease. Instructions were given to masters to keep the seamen on board of the vessels, and thus but little opportunity was given for contact with the land.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

[114] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to Edwing F. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, November 23, 1895**¹³⁹

Sir:

I have the honor to state, that in view of passing events in Cuba, the following facts may be of interest to the Department.

Shortly after my arrival here, two Spanish soldiers presented themselves at this Consulate and stated that they were induced to volunteer and embark at Buenos Aires for service in Cuba. They said they were badly and harshly treated, that they believed the Cubans were right and wished my assistance in aiding them to escape on board an American vessel, that

¹³⁸ Despacho No. 47

¹³⁹ El original no indica el número de despacho.

they would change their clothing and if caught would stand all consequences. I of course told them that this was impossible and that I could do nothing for them.

Two ship loads of these volunteers from Buenos Aires, numbering two to three thousand men, came to Porto Rico, and many were landed here prior to sending them to Cuba. A short time ago a number revolted, but the matter has been kept very quiet. These troops will probably furnish reinforcements to the insurgents.

For obvious reasons this dispatch is unnumbered and no copy kept at this office.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

[115] **From John D. Hall, Consul at St. John's to W. W. Rockhill, Assistant Secretary of State, April 16th, 1896**¹⁴⁰

Sir:

I have the honor to state that since the breaking out of the revolution in Cuba, there have entered this port from Spain on their way to Cuba, 97,333 men, this does not include officers and sailors from the vessels guarding the Cuban and Porto Rico coasts. The number of soldiers that have gone direct without touching this port is estimated from 15 to 20,000. These figures do not include the garrison or volunteers in the Island of Cuba before the revolution. The soldiers that I have seen are of poor material, young and their faces show, their ignorance, they appear to be recruited from the laboring and peasant classes, judging from their appearance they do not know how to use the rifle they carry in their hands.

The Spanish Ministry has reported in the newspaper here and elsewhere, that the Spanish losses in Cuba during the past year have been three thousand and some odd men. This statement is a downright prevarication. Spanish officers here admit that their losses have been heavy, and from desertions, sickness, mortality in the field, some estimate the loss at over 50,000 men and from what I can learn this estimate is conservative, if not too low.

The letters from Spanish officers in the field in Cuba to relatives and friends here, say that things are going from bad to worse. One letter from a Lieutenant Colonel states, after relating his hardships, that in his belief Spanish affairs had reached such a pass, that it was now the beginning of the end of Spanish rule in the Island.

The last mail steamer from Spain had only 500 soldiers on board, the same vessel has carried 1800; it would appear that men are not now so easily found as formerly, or that the Spanish Ministry is finding it difficult to keep their [*sic*] promises good of sending the new levies which have been so much talked about in the papers here.

There are many rumors afloat here based more or less on truth. One is, that why so many general officers return here from Cuba on their way to Spain; is [— —] that they refuse to obey the orders of General Weyler to shoot all prisoners taken; whether it is so or not I do not know but it is reported from good sources.

The large mail steamers from Cuba are so full of passengers, Spaniards leaving the Island, that they refuse to take any passengers from here, and those who have engaged passage have had their money refunded.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant
[rúbrica] John D. Hall
United States Consul

¹⁴⁰ Despacho No. 27

[116] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, February 19, 1898**¹⁴¹

Sir:

I wish to call attention to a matter of interest to our American people living in or doing business in the Island. If the Department should recall my trying experiences during the war in Venezuela in 1892, I believe I will be given the credit of not being easily alarmed or easily frightened while in the line of duty. I now deem it important and a duty that I owe to our citizens living in Porto Rico as well as a duty to the Government, that I speak plainly of the fears of our people and the feeling that is manifest here at this time. Nearly all Americans residing in Porto Rico evidently expect trouble and perhaps war in the near future and there is great uneasiness among them at the thought of the great damages to which their lives, their families and their property will be exposed. We have in this island a very superior class of American citizens, people who appreciate their citizenship, they are thrifty, prosperous and well behaved. They are as a class respected and they have not become Americans for the sake of American protection, but a large portion of them are American born or else the children of Americans. Now I sincerely hope and pray that their fears are not well founded and that they will never need the special effort of our Government to protect them and their property. But in case there ever should be trouble (and may God forbid) then I hope the Department will see that our people and property in Porto Rico are properly protected. In case of trouble our people in Porto Rico would be far greater exposed to danger than in Cuba because the people in Porto Rico are loyal Spaniards or at least a very large number of them are. These people have accepted autonomy and seem to be thankful for it, and for anything else the Mother Country sees fit to grant them. They are as a people loyal to the Mother Country and Porto Rico would be a hot place for an American should there ever be trouble. I do not wish to be [?] as believing that there will be trouble. I have been treated here, thus far, with great kindness and all the Spanish officials have been very polite to me. Personally and officially I have no cause to complain, and it is my honest conviction that these people are much better as a class than the Cubans, and I think Porto Rico is now better governed under Spain than they ever [?] would be as an independent government. However, I do think Americans would be in very great danger should there be trouble. I am not asking for a warship and do not think there is now any need for one but in this time of peace and friendly relations, while our ships are in West Indian waters, should our government see fit to have one of our best man of war make friendly calls in Porto Rico, the effect would be desirable, friendly relations strengthened and our American citizens here reassured that our government had an interest in them. This port and the other ports of this Island are healthy. There is not a more healthy Island in the West Indies and there is no danger in our ships coming here if the Government sees fit to send them. As far as I am concerned I think the effect would be better and it would [?] better to have a ship call while relations are smooth than to call when the people all become excited. They think then that the Consul became frightened and called for the ship. I consider it quite important that this office should be furnished with a code. This being the only Consulate in the Island, I respectfully ask that the Department furnish this consulate with a cable code. Said copy of code can be sent to the United States Dispatch agent in New York and he can remit [?] it by a steamer coming here, in the personal care of the purser or Captain.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

¹⁴¹ Despacho No. 32

[117] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. Hohn's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, February 27, 1898¹⁴²

Sir:

I have the honor to inform you that active military preparations are going on at this place. The forts are being strengthened and new guns of 7 and 8 inch size bore are being put in. I do not wish to be understood that these actions mean anything. I simply give the facts for your information, as I have all that I have given in my other late dispatches.

The Government here has asked the consuls for a list of all foreign subjects and citizens living in this island.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
United States Consul

[118] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, April 4th, 1898¹⁴³

Sir:

I have the honor to call your attention to the fact that the supply of coal at this port, which is a naval coaling station for the Spanish Government, has become very low and Spain has here a very small supply of coal. They are, however, now receiving the supply and one large steamship is unloading coal for the Government at the Navy yard. The Captain of the coal steamer told me that he was chartered to bring four (4) more loads and that three other large English steamers with coal were on their way to this port.

The work on the fortifications is being parked [?] night and day. This port is the key to the whole Island. If any nation were at war with Spain and should take this port, they would have the whole Island and all the coal supply would be shut off.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna,
United States Consul

[119] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, April 4, 1898¹⁴⁴

Sir:

Concerning matters at this Capital, I have the honor to report that great excitement exists here at this time over the political affairs of the Island. The editors of three daily newspapers have been sent to prison within the last 24 hours and many mobs are to be seen in the streets. The Governor General today issued a peace circular, calling upon the people to be quiet.

I am of the opinion that American interests deman[d] that warships be kept in Porto Rican waters, or around Saint Thomas, and that this Consulate should be kept well informed of the whereabouts of such ships. I am of the most decided opinion that whatever might take place to mar the peace of nations, there is no better location for an American fleet than in this waters and around Saint Thomas.

¹⁴² Despacho No. 41

¹⁴³ Despacho No. 42

¹⁴⁴ Despacho No. 43

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[120] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, April 5, 1898**¹⁴⁵

Sir:

I have the honor to suggest that, if the Government see fit, it would be [*sic*] to American interests [*sic*] to have a fleet of warships in the waters about Saint Thomas, whatever may take place among the nations and whatever may occur to mar international friendship. Saint Thomas is about the best place in the West Indies for a fleet; such a fleet would without doubt be well situated for action and for watching naval movements of other nations, and, at the same time, be in position to protect our citizens and [tachado] property in Porto Rico. If our American people in this Island know that there is a fleet in Saint Thomas, they will feel as secure as though we had ships in Porto Rican ports, and I think it would answer the case fully as well just now, for, in case of need, they could soon reach any port in this Island.

Americans in Porto Rico have been greatly alarmed of late at reports of trouble, but if I could inform them that we had ships just a few hours away, their fears would depart, and I am inclined to think it would have a very wholesome effect on the people of this Island.

I think that this Consulate should be kept informed of the movements of such fleet so as to be able to call them when needed. Warships coming from Spain must enter these waters for coal and supplies, and our fleet would know what was going on. Americans would be in very great danger in Porto Rico in case of trouble, were no ships in these waters. In case of actual trouble, perhaps our Government would arrange to have British war ships enter Porto Rican ports and remove such Americans as wished to depart, and they would probably protect American property in the Island. But it appears to me that it would be a wise move on the part of our Government to have ships in this part of the West Indies. I give these suggestions to be used for what they may be considered worth.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[121] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, April 14, 1898**¹⁴⁶

Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your cable instructions on the 7th instant, which said: "Tomas, place affairs in charge of British Consul." I asked the British Consul on that same day to look after the American citizens and proper, and to protect the Consulate until my return. His reply was that he would gladly do so unless his Government should tell him not to do so. In the morning of the 8th instant he received instruction from the British Foreign Office for him to protect American interest in case I should ask him.

I placed affairs under his protection on the 8th instant. I arranged with the United States Vice and Deputy Consul to assist the British Consul in making out papers. That is, in case the United States Vice and Deputy Consul should continue to feel safe in remaining at St. John's.

¹⁴⁵ Despacho No. 44

¹⁴⁶ El original no indica el número de despacho.

I sent notice of your instruction for me to depart for Saint Thomas to await instruction and the placing of affairs under British Consul, to all the United States Consular Agents and to American citizens. I think all Americans in the Island have received notice. I sent a polite letter to the Governor General and had the American Vice Consul call upon him. His Excellency made a most polite reply, and my relations with the Porto Rican Government at the time of my parting were most friendly. The Governor General has cabled the Spanish Consul at Saint Thomas to call upon me and to do all he could to make my stay at Saint Thomas comfortable.

I left St. John's on the evening of the 8th instant, along with about fifteen Americans who came here with me, aboard the British steamer "Virginia". That ship took us to Fajardo, where I called upon United States Consular Agent, Jorge Bird Arias, who assisted us in chartering a Spanish schooner which brought us to Saint Thomas, arriving on the 10th instant. I am taking the best care I can of Americans who come here from my District. Consul Van Horn is doing everything in his power to assist us and we would be pleased if the Department would thank him for it.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
United States Consul

[122] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's on orders at Saint Thomas to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, April 20, 1898¹⁴⁷

Sir:

I have the honor to call attention to the following points: In case any nation should ever have trouble that would call for troops being taken to the West Indies, Porto Rico is a much better climate for troops than Cuba and is a safer Island in which to acclimate troops.

Fajardo, the seaport at the east end of the Island, is a good port for landing and is only a short march from the Capital. Fajardo is not protected.

I consider Porto Rico about the most healthy Island of the West Indies. Spanish troops who have become acclimated in Porto Rico stand the Cuban climate much better than the troops landing in Cuba directly from Europe. People from Spain coming to Porto Rico do not, as a rule, stand the climate as well as persons from the United States.

Warships entering St. John's should be warned, as there are reasons to believe mines have been placed at the entrance of that harbor lately.

I have the honor to give you these facts for what they may be worth to the Government.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna,
United States Consul

[123] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, now at Saint Thomas, on orders to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, May 4, 1898¹⁴⁸

Sir:

Since arriving at Saint Thomas I have done my best to keep within touch of affairs in Porto Rico. I received telegrams and mail from the British Consul and I have many others friends there who help to keep me informed of the situation in the Island. I have notified all

¹⁴⁷ Despacho No. 48

¹⁴⁸ Despacho No. 53

Consular Agents of the situation from time to time and I think nearly all American-born citizens have left the Island. Some of our Porto Rican-born Americans will remain in the Island. Mr. Crawford, the British Consul, is doing splendid work in assisting us and I think he is entitled to the thanks of the Department.

The general state of affairs is very bad in the Island and I am informed that there is great suffering among the poor people. I have several needy Americans here at Saint Thomas who have fled from the Island, leaving their goods all behind them. I am doing my best to care for them and will send several to the United States by the next steamer.

I hope that our Government will see fit to land troops in Puerto Rico as soon as possible. I believe that 10,000 American soldiers landed in Porto Rico can hold the Island forever, because I am convinced that a large number of Porto Ricans will arise and shake off the Spanish yoke just as soon as they are assured of help.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna,
 United States Consul

[124] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, May 9, 1898**¹⁴⁹

Sir:

Concerning the Spanish Army in the island of Porto Rico, I have the honor to report that, from the best information obtainable, there are about 2,000 regular soldiers at St. John's 1,000 at Ponce and 1,000 at Mayagüez, and about 600 divided among the other cities of the Island, making about 4,600 regulars in the whole Island. Then they claim 7,000 colonial troops who are composed of young men of the Island. Besides they have of [?] late distributed several thousand guns among the natives of the Island.

I am still of the opinion that Porto Rico should be taken and held as a coaling station, thus supplying our Navy and cutting off Spain. In order to accomplish this we should land in Porto Rico not less than ten thousand men. Let them land at Ponce or Fajardo, or some other port, and march through the Island to meet the American fleet at St. John's. Let the fleet knock down the fortifications there, which are the only ones in the Island, and our land forces of ten thousand can hold the Island forever. Then the fleet can go on its way sinking Spanish warships and the like, and return to St. John's for coal and supplies, just as the Spanish fleet now expects to [do]. From Ponce to St. John's there is the finest road in the whole West Indies, and an army could march across to San Juan with no bad roads to interfere. I wish to be instructed to return to St. John's with the first troops or first warships.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[125] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, now at Saint Thomas to William R. Day, Assistant Secretary of State, May 12, 1898**¹⁵⁰

Sir:

On the evening of May 12, I had the honor to send you the following cablegram:

¹⁴⁹ Despacho No 56

¹⁵⁰ Despacho No. 57

“Secretary Day,
Washington.

“Bombardment St. John’s today. I consider such movements unwise until troops are ready to land to hold the Island.

“Hanna”

I wish to say that this was in no way intended to criticize the Navy for the bombardment, as I have full faith in their judgement. I simply spoke in the telegram my opinion from my knowledge of the situation in the Island. And I think the Navy will agree with me that Porto Rico should not be touched again until a body of troops can be landed to cooperate with them; which troops can hold the Island after the fortifications are destroyed.

Simply to bombard St. John’s and then go away will leave a bad state of affairs in the Island and every American still there would be, [and] all American property destroyed. All Cubans in Porto Rico will suffer like fate, and our friends, who number thousands throughout the Island, may lose faith in our ability to take Porto Rico if we bombard and then leave them to the Spaniards still.

There are thousands of the best men in the Island today who want our Government to take the Island, and I believe they will assist us if we go about it in a way that will cause Porto Ricans to feel that we mean business and will not turn them over to the wrath of Spain after the Island has been taken.

I understand that the Governor General has published all through the Island already that “the Yankees have tried their best to take the Capital and were badly defeated”, and that we lost several ships. But the friends of the United States in the Island are accustomed to such reports and will make short of it. They have faith in us and long to be included among American states.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
United States Consul

[126] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John’s, now at Saint Thomas to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, May 28, 1898**¹⁵¹

Sir:

I have the honor to inform you that I have this day received a long letter from the British Consulate in St. John’s. This letter confirms the truth of my telegram concerning mines in the places where our fleet was located at the time of the late bombardment.

There is terrible bitterness shown towards all foreigners in the Island. They hate British subjects and call them “Yankees”. The estates of several Porto Ricans who are known to sympathize with the United States have been laid to waste and the buildings destroyed with fire. Our friends in the Island all think that American troops should land and take Porto Rico at once. The lives of American families still in the Island are in great danger.

I am told that the Government has its hands full to keep Porto Ricans from open revolution against Spain. It is my opinion that there never will be a better time to land troops in that Island than now. They could be landed at Ponce and march by the Military Road to St. John’s where our fleet could meet them and destroy the forts of that place.

No move on the part of our Government will impel Spain so greatly as the taking of Porto Rico from them. I believe it would end the war. Porto Rico has long been their “pride”,

¹⁵¹ Despacho No. 66

and has never given them trouble, and when we once have it in possession it will never give us trouble. Puerto Ricans are a much better people than Cubans.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[127] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, now at Saint Thomas to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, June 2, 1898**¹⁵²

Sir:

I have the honor to inform you that some days ago I became aware that Lieutenant Henry H. Whitney, of the United States Army, wished to make an inspection trip into the island of Porto Rico, and I was greatly interested in having him make the trip and inspect the ports, forts, roads, etc. in the South part of the Island, about which we had the least information.

I had the pleasure of assisting him book as the member of the crew on an English freight steamer going to that Island for sugar. There was very great risk and danger on the part of Lieutenant Whitney in making this trip at this time and he surely deserves very great credit for the skillful, cautious manner in which he carried out his part in this very dangerous attempt to enter that Island at this time for military information. I am of the opinion that, up to date, during this war has no act been performed by an official that required more bravery, and the skill with which he performed his duty is worthy of much praise. He had [not] only [to] conceal his official identity, but must [*sic*] avoid being spotted as an American. He was willing to resort to the lowest position on the ship and engage in the hardest work in order that he might with success carry out his plan and render valuable service to his Government. He has returned without harm and his work will without doubt be of great value to the Government.

I hope our Government will see that the expense of making this daring trip does not fall upon Lieutenant Whitney, but that it be paid out of the public funds.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[128] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, on order at Saint Thomas, West Indies to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, June 6, 1898**¹⁵³

Sir:

This day I had the honor to send you the following telegram. I give you here the translated form:

“Saint Thomas, West Indies
 June 6, 1898
 “Secretary Moore,
 Washington

“If our Government intends to invade Porto Rico, I consider it important not to underestimate Spanish strength. Fortifications at St. John's strengthened since last bombardment, mines

¹⁵² Despacho No. 67

¹⁵³ Despacho No. 72

have been placed outside, cannons along shore at all seaports. Her Army consists of five thousand colonial troops. Besides these, sixteen thousand Volunteers are reported likely to increase. We can not now risk less than twenty-five thousand to take the Island without heavy fighting.

“Hanna,
“Consul.”

In this connection I have the honor to say that I am still firm in the conviction that our Government can take and should take Porto Rico and take it without further delay. From what I know of the Island, its people and the situation there, I am convinced that we lose by delay and Spain has time to deceive the people concerning the strength of the United States, causing thousands of Porto Ricans to think Spain is sure to win and that they had better be on the winning side and take arms and fight for the mother country.

Of course, they can not fool all the people, but they do a great many of them and Spain has a much larger following in Porto Rico today than she had a month ago or night after the Manila fight, at which time I think fully 90 per cent of the natives of the Island were ready to become Americans and ready to join a fight against Spain in order to insure their becoming Americans. But within the last month the Governor General and Spanish officials have published so many glowing accounts of Spanish victories and of Americans warships sunk, that many of the working class are preached into line and honestly think that the United States is not as big as it used to be. I know these people; at heart the most of them are for us, but they don't want to be whipped and then left exposed to the wrath of angry Spain.

If we should attempt to invade Porto Rico with a small force of troops we would now have to fight the regulars, the colonial troops and the volunteers and at this time, we would obtain little help from the people in the Island who are our friends, because they would fear to join us. But let our Government send there a large army, say of twenty-five or thirty thousand men, all to land on the same day. Then the Porto Ricans would at once believe in us, and it is my opinion it would be a hard matter to learn “what had become” of the Spanish Army in Porto Rico.

I believe we could take the Island without a fight. And I am convinced that, for the sake of the people in the future, we should land a large enough Army to cause surrender without fighting them. Because it would be rather tough on them in all time to come, after they have become a part of the Union, to have to think they were compelled to join to fight against their liberty, instead of having had the honor and glory of fighting for it.

If we took Porto Rico with a small Army, Spain would probably never attempt to enter the Island again. It would probably have the effect to bring the missing Spanish fleet out of the woods and settle with our fleet. But, after knocking down the fortifications at St. John's our fleet could enter and find plenty of coal ready for them, and San Juan would make a fine headquarters for our Navy during the balance of the war. If later on it was found a part of our large Army in Porto Rico was needed for Cuba, they could better stand that climate, for having spent some time first in Porto Rico.

I see no cause for delay. Our people seem to be anxious for action, and I think the taking of Porto Rico will do the cause great good. Then during the unhealthy season in Cuba, we can take Porto Rico without having to risk so much in the way of disease among the invading Army.

I confess that I am anxious to see my Consular District invaded and fall into the hands of Americans. And I hope earnestly that the Department will see that I get back to Porto Rico by the time our Army and Navy are ready to take it. I most earnestly request that I would be informed when to go back and, if possible, that the Government assist me in reaching the Island in time to assist our Army and Navy.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna,
United States Consul

[129] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's on duty at Saint Thomas, West Indies to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, June 7, 1898**¹⁵⁴

Sir:

In case our Government sends troops to Porto Rico, I have the honor to call attention to the following points. If we should send twenty-five thousand men at one time to that Island, a fleet of warships would, without doubt, accompany the transports to the ports of landing. I suggest that the first landing be made at Ponce, which is the largest city of the Island, is situated at the south side, has no regular fortifications and is very poorly protected to resist an armed force and a fleet. Ponce is about 70 miles from St. John's and connected to St. John's by a very fine military road, which road passes through many towns of the Island.

By the time the troops which landed at Ponce reached St. John's everything in that part of the Island would have surrendered. As the Ponce troops would have a longer march they should be landed first. But that is really the only good road in the Island.

Then the fleet could start back towards St. John's via Mona passage, land enough troops at Mayagüez to take it, but roads are poor for an Army from there to St. John's. They could, however, march on to Aguadilla and meet the troops landed there and then on to Arecibo, where the last of the troops might be landed. Arecibo is about a [?] days march from San Juan and is connected by a narrow [?] railway which could be used. Then the fleet and transports could move on to St. John's to meet the troops landed at Ponce and other ports.

I think, however that, troops themselves without heavy equipment could be landed at points nearer San Juan than Arecibo. But Arecibo is quite a fair port and has fair connections with St. John's.

But the Army should know that there is only one good road in the whole Island, that from Ponce to San Juan, and everything heavy should be landed at Ponce or else carried by transports to the place where it will be needed.

Fajardo is at the East end of the Island with bad roads between there and St. John's, but troops without heavy luggage could move from Fajardo to St. John's, as the distance is not great.

I think we may say to the Navy and Army look out for mines in almost every Spanish harbor which applies as well to Porto Rico. These suggestions may be of little value to the Army and Navy. I only give them as suggestions, being acquainted with the situation.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna,
United States Consul

[130] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, now on special duty at Saint Thomas to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, June 21, 1898**¹⁵⁵

Sir:

In case the United States takes possession of Porto Rico, I hope the Government will rightfully consider the condition and needs of that Island and, from the very day of possession, prove to the good people of Porto Rico that Americans are better than Spaniards, that American Government is far above Spanish and that the United States is indeed their friend, come to give them a taste of the benefits of true liberty. I hope our Government will adopt such

¹⁵⁴ Despacho No. 73

¹⁵⁵ Despacho No. 79

methods as will convince them that the war is against Spain and not against Porto Rico, that the fight is for them and not against them.

The people of Porto Rico are peaceable and quiet and, because of their goodness, and disliking for war, they have suffered much from Spain. They long and pray for liberty and they ought to have it. But they do not want to be a part of a Cuban republic or a little one-house republic by themselves. They are Americans in heart and their highest hope is to become a part of the United States.

While we are in the great act of fighting for the liberty of Cubans, we should hear the cry of the Porto Ricans, drive Spain out of that beautiful Island and take Porto Rico to be ours forever. They are much better than Cubans and Porto Ricans would never give the United States trouble in the future. They will love and appreciate liberty and I believe within two years, under the teaching of our Government, Puerto Rico will be in every way ready to be admitted as state into the Union.

I have the honor to suggest that, when our troops land in that Island, they first whip Spanish Army and drive Spain forever from Porto Rico. Then let our Government begin to show this people some of the benefits of being Americans. While the Army and Navy are there keeping Spain from the Island, we should at once begin to teach Porto Ricans how to govern themselves. We should instruct them concerning the American system of government and get them ready for home rule and statehood. We should at once establish a local Civil Government for the Island under such regulations as our Government may consider best; and our Army and Navy will have power to uphold such local Government. But after Spain has been driven out of the Island, I hope [a] strong enough force of Army and Navy will remain to keep them out until the war shall end.

The Army and Navy will not be needed to govern Porto Ricans; they will, however, be needed to keep the Spanish from returning. I confess I am not in favor of an American military rule in Porto Rico. These poor people have had too much military rule in Porto Rico. These poor people have had too much military rule already, and our Army should go there to destroy the military rule and bring peace and true liberty to the Island.

I offer the above as suggestions and I hope they may be of some little value.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna

United States Consul

[131] From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, on special duty at Saint Thomas to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, June 21, 1898¹⁵⁶

Sir:

I herewith enclose a statement from a Scotch gentleman who is a civil engineer living at St. John's. I know him very well and he has sent plans of [the] City and harbour of St. John's, with fortifications marked, to [the] Department. Some of his suggestions may be of use.

I am convinced, however, that we should not send less than 25,000 men to invade Porto Rico. With less than that number they will make a fight on us, but I think 25,000 American troops landed in Porto Rico on the same day will take the Island without fight. Ten thousand can be kept in the Island to hold it after taken and the other 15,000 can be sent on to Cuba later in the season.

¹⁵⁶ Despacho No. 80

Porto Rico should be taken at once. Such a movement will have a good effect upon our Army and will be pleasing to the Lord and the American people, as well as the Consul at St. John's.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

Enclosure

[132] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, on duty at Saint Thomas, West Indies to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, July 12, 1898**¹⁵⁷

Sir:

I would recommend that as soon as possible, after the taking possession of Porto Rico, such laws of the United States as will be of practical benefit and such as will tend to immediately offer relief to the suffering people of Porto Rico be extended and applied to that Island. The whole people of the Island would be very greatly benefited by allowing the free entry of the raw products of the Island in the United States. There never will be a time where such generous act will be appreciated as now. And I am sure it would not only aid the Island financially, but produce a grand moral effect upon the people, teaching them something of the benefits of being Americans. And just now they stand in need of "the benefits" more than of "the burdens" of our Government.

I, therefore, earnestly recommend that at an early date the producers of Porto Rican products and the dealers in such raw products (such dealers only as live in Porto Rico) be allowed to enter all said raw products from Porto Rico, free of duty, into the United States.

We should also establish United States Custom regulations at an early date, collecting United States rates of duty on goods from all foreign countries and admitting American goods free into the Island. Later on, and as soon as the people of Porto Rico have had a chance to rally financially, I would recommend that the internal revenue laws and regulation be applied to Porto Rico.

I have the honor, to be Sir,
 Your obedient servant,
 [rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
 United States Consul

[133] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's at Saint Thomas, West Indies to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, July 12, 1898**¹⁵⁸

Sir:

I have the honor to recommend that as soon as the Army of the United States shall land in Porto Rico, the United States postal service be established in that Island and that officers from the Post Office Department be sent to Porto Rico to superintend the establishing of the postal system of the United States throughout that Island. I recommend that in each city and large town, a United States post office be established not only for the benefit of our Army, but for the benefit of merchants and people of Porto Rico who have business to transact in the United States. Porto Rico has long been cut off in its business relations with the United States

¹⁵⁷ Despacho No. 88

¹⁵⁸ Despacho No. 87

on account of the War and something should be done promptly to reestablish business relations as soon as our Army is in possession of the Island.

As the banking system of that Island is now in very bad shape and bills of exchange on the States very difficult to obtain, I deem it most important that money orders be issued throughout the Island payable in the United States.

I suggest that the Post Office Department have made for use in Porto Rico special designs of postage stamps and postal cards. I have the honor to recommend that the same rate of postage be established in Porto Rico, and between Porto Rico and the United States, as already exists in the United States.

I shall gladly assist the Government and the Post Office officials in establishing said postal service.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna

United States Consul

[134] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, now on duty at Saint Thomas, West Indies to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, July 14, 1898**¹⁵⁹

Sir:

I have received information through a party whom I sent to inspect Porto Rico that the "Antonio López" (the Spanish steamer which went ashore near St. John's to avoid capture) has landed on the sly much of her cargo, which consisted of cannons, arms and war supplies.

I am informed that much of the cargo landed is in bad condition, the greater part worthless. My reporter says he saw several cannons which had been taken off and seemed to be all right. Several of the cannons were eight inches.

There are very many cannons in Porto Rico which have been there for years waiting to be mounted. Some of them appear very rusty and many of them are, without doubt, worthless. However, Porto Rico is well supplied with that sort [of] war implements, but they are evidently short of ammunition. I have made a careful inspection of their stock of ammunition and I am convinced that, while there is quite a large stock of old stuff in the Island, there is really only a small supply of up-to-date and new ammunition, and this appears to be about the weakest point of their case. Only a small supply of ammunition which is fit to use in new guns. But a part of their old stock of ammunition can be used in old-styled guns, but our friends think that much of the old ammunition is worthless. But with what they have they would give us a hard fight while it lasted [*sic*], if we should try to enter the Island with a small Army.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna,

Consul

¹⁵⁹ Despacho No. 89

[135] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, now on duty at Saint Thomas, West Indies to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, July 16, 1898**¹⁶⁰

Sir:

I have the honor to request that, as soon as the United States shall take possession of Porto Rico, you instruct me to receive correspondence from the Consuls of all foreign Governments in Porto Rico who may have occasion to correspond with the local Government in Porto Rico, that I be instructed to report such matters of their correspondence as may relate to or interest the United States Army and Navy to the General in command of the United States troops in that Island and to the highest Naval officer in command; and that in matters of importance I be instructed to confer with such Army and Naval officers concerning the requests of said foreign Consuls; that I be instructed to report all such correspondence to the Department of State. There are fifty or more consular officers in Porto Rico and I deem it important that the above instruction[s] should be given me at an early date, so that I will be in position to attend to such matters at once on my return to the Island.

I suggest that I be instructed to act (until the close of the war) as "Consul and Executive Agent of the United States" and that I receive my instructions until the close of the war through the Department of State, and that I attend to the business affairs of the Government in that Island. My business experience of several years as the manager of an American banking house, besides several years in the service of the Government, ought to be of some value in looking after the affairs of our Government in that Island.

I have the honor to further suggest that whatever title I act under of whatever name the Government may see fit to add to my office as Consul, that until the close of the war no greater salary than what I receive as Consul be allowed, for I am not in favor of large salaries during war times. I think, however, that it will be proper to allow any necessary expense which may be made in carrying out the instructions of the Government and that only in addition to the regular salary now allowed me as Consul.

I want to meet our Army and Navy in Porto Rico before the first day of August, and I earnestly request the Department to recommend that the Island of Porto Rico be taken at once. If our Government takes possession by the 1st of August, I will be glad to waive the item of extra expense in obtaining information from Porto Rico, referred to in my dispatch marked "Special Service", [of] June 30, and in my dispatch number 90 of July 14, 1898, and present the same to the Government for the good of the cause or for the use of the hospital service. Not that I am a rich man, but my heart is set on seeing Porto Rico set free from the cruel grasp of Spain. I love Porto Ricans; my sympathy is with them and they are everyday crying to me to induce our Government to come to their help and to rescue them from bondage.

I pray that our Government will hasten the glad day of freedom for the people.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant
[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna
Consul

[136] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's, now at Saint Thomas, West Indies to J. B. Morre, Assistant Secretary of State, July 22, 1898**¹⁶¹

Sir:

On this day, I had the honor to send you the following cablegram:

¹⁶⁰ Despacho No. 92

¹⁶¹ Despacho No. 96

“Saint Thomas, West Indies

July 22, 1898

“Secretary [of] State

Washington, via Bermuda

“A great many people of Porto Rico leaving the Island. A great many suffering. Would not recommend blockading any other ports against foods. However, we must prevent ammunition arriving. I hope you will hasten invasion.

“Hanna.”

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna,

Consul

[137] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, September 14, 1898**¹⁶²

Sir:

I believe that the Department will give me credit of having the interests of this Island at heart. I know this people and I know their desires and needs to some extent at least.

Concerning the Government of this Island, I am free to confess I am most decided in my opinion, because there is and can be but one opinion by a real true American if he is acquainted with Porto Ricans and the situation in this Island. There is no question in the minds of Porto Ricans or of Americans who are friendly to the interests of Porto Ricans as to whether or not a civil government for this Island should be established at the earliest possible date. For over four hundred years have these people been oppressed and now they rejoice at the prospect of liberty. They have great faith in Americans and they know that our people have a voice in the affairs of the Government. They expect, and have a right to expect, that they shall have a voice in the affairs of the Government of this Island.

Our people should not confuse Porto Ricans and class them with the fighting tribes of Cuba. I have witnessed an election in Porto Rico at which nearly all the men of legal age voted, and it was conducted in as orderly a manner as an election in Ohio or Iowa. I confess I see no more reason for a protracted military rule in Porto Rico than I do for Ohio or Michigan.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna,

United States Consul

[138] **From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, November 25, 1898**¹⁶³

Sir:

I have the honor to state that the intelligent people of this Island look forward to the time when the United States will remove the Spanish style of government with all of its complicated, poorly-working and expensive machinery which has proved to them a burden in the past, for ages. A very intelligent Porto Rican gentleman of Spanish stock said to me today: “It is

¹⁶² Despacho No. 102

¹⁶³ Despacho No. 128

best for this Island that everything Spanish be entirely changed. Spanish form of government, Spanish law, Spanish courts, Spanish methods of taxation, Spanish customs, Spanish school system of ignorance among the poor, Spanish superstition, Spanish filth, and I hope even the Spanish language will shortly become a thing of the past in this Island."

An impartial person cannot attach much blame to Porto Ricans for holding a dislike for the things that constantly remind them of years of burden and oppression, and it becomes only natural to sympathize with them in their earnest desire for an immediate establishment of American institutions, laws and customs.

It seems to be the general wish of the people that an ordinary territorial form of government such as [it] exists in the western territories of our country be established here. I am of the opinion that the form of territorial government given to this Island should be of the most simple style and with as little complicated machinery as possible. The reformed government which Spain started out to establish for Porto Rico, known as "autonomy", was too complicated and altogether too expensive. The ordinary territorial form of government is in my opinion very well adapted to [the] needs of this Island and the situation here demands that some such form of government be provided for Porto Rico at this winter's session of Congress.

The people will become greatly dissatisfied if they are left under a long protracted military rule. All of the people look upon a military government in time of peace as unnecessary and *un-American*. They have a right to expect better things at the hands of the United States.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna

[139] **Consul From Philip C. Hanna, Consul at St. John's to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, January 23, 1899**¹⁶⁴

Sir:

In contradiction to that class of reports and published opinion that the annexation of Porto Rico will prove a great burden to the United States, that there is a large element of restless insurgents always ready to make trouble, that it will require years of hard labor and great expenses to civilize and americanize them and that they purchase so few manufactured goods from the United States that our merchants will derive no benefit from a commercial standpoint, I have the honor to reply that there is no insurgent element in this Island. Porto Ricans are as a rule quiet, polite, obliging, temperate, orderly, honest and decidedly well-behaved. It is true there were a few cases at the close of the War, when long abused laborers, angry at their masters, took advantage of the unsettled state of affairs, sought revenge and set fire to some plantation houses out in country places. But I find by investigation that the extent of such burnings was greatly magnified and the damage of property and loss of life would not compare with some of the "strikes" so common in the United States. Porto Rican laborers who have work and half the wages of American laborers never strike, but are law-abiding and contented.

The people of this Island never gave Spain trouble and they never will the United States. Their cry is for plenty of work, fair wages, education for their children, American laws and good government. They are appreciative of the blessings of Americanism and will make excellent Americans.

The Island has about a million inhabitants and for honesty, good behavior and temperate habits, they will favorably compare with any million citizens in any part of the United States. The list of crimes committed here is far less than for the same number of people in the large

¹⁶⁴ Despacho No. 140

American cities. There are very few paupers and a genuine tramp in Porto Rico would be a curiosity. The Porto Rican saloon is the "café", where all classes, both women and men, assemble in quiet, orderly manner to spend a half hour and sip some favorite beverage. Everyone drinks what he wants, but in so temperate a manner, that when a party have finished drinking and are leaving the café, an expert cannot tell which one drank the brandy or which the coffee, each member being equally quiet about it. There is one Spanish institution at least which I hope will not be superseded by an American one. I hope the quiet, orderly Spanish café of Porto Rico will not be superseded by that howling, disorderly institution usually known as an American bar-room. Nearly all Porto Ricans drink whatever they want, but it is only just and true to state that during the year before the War, I never saw an intoxicated Porto Rican.

As to the prospects for increased business between the States and Porto Rico there is evidence already. American shipping interests have greatly increased as is evident by a comparison of the tonnage of American vessels in Porto Rican ports in December, 1897 and in December, 1898. I find that the American merchant vessel tonnage of December, 1898 was nearly twelve times the tonnage of December, 1897. The sale of American products has greatly increased and dealers tell me that as soon as the United States tariff laws are applied to this Island, they will purchase nearly all their goods in the United States.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

[rúbrica] Philip C. Hanna

United States Consul

CARTAS CONSULARES FRANCESAS

[140] **Fin del bloqueo - Apertura [o] Restablecimiento de las Relaciones comerciales y reanudación del servicio postal, Puerto Rico, 1^{ro} de septiembre de 1898**¹⁶⁵

Señor Ministro:

El pasado 22 de agosto se abrió el puerto de San Juan a la navegación y al comercio.

Aunque bloqueado por una sola nave, la “New-Orleans”, había estado cerrado —en realidad de forma muy efectiva— a toda comunicación y en el transcurso de los últimos dos meses no hubo navío, vapor o goleta que lograra burlar la vigilancia del navío de guerra norteamericano.

Además, muy recientemente y como medida de seguridad suprema, el gobierno local había obstruido a propósito la entrada de la ensenada. El 31 de julio, de hecho, el Gobernador General me avisaba mediante comunicación oficial que había hundido en el canal dos navíos españoles: el Cristóbal Colón y la Manuela.

Por eso la primera medida en tomarse, desde que se conoció la noticia preliminar de paz, fue despejar la entrada del puerto. Hubo varias conferencias al respecto (entre las Autoridades Marítimas y algunos oficiales americanos), a raíz de las cuales parece haberse decidido que el material especial necesario sería pedido a Key West o a Santiago. Afortunadamente no fue necesario esperar la llegada de dicho material. Una tormenta bastante violenta, de las que son muy frecuentes en esta época del año, levantó y arrastró uno de los navíos mencionados, la Manuela. El puerto volvió a quedar abierto, de manera natural, unos noventa metros de ancho, lo suficiente para facilitar el tráfico. De todo esto se me informó el 22 de agosto mediante un nuevo aviso oficial que envié inmediatamente por cable a nuestro Embajador en Washington para su conocimiento.

Desde entonces varios navíos han entrado en San Juan. El primero, un barco de guerra alemán el [“Geier”], luego un barco de la Compañía Inglesa de Cables y finalmente, hace tres días, el New-Orleans, el mismo que lo bloqueó, cuyas siluetas y líneas eran bien conocidas por la población y cuya llegada provocó una gran curiosidad.

En dos días el buque francés vendrá a restablecer las comunicaciones postales que se interrumpieron, y no es necesario decir con cuánta impaciencia se espera su llegada. Desde el 13 de julio, y estamos hoy a 1^{ro} de septiembre, no he recibido ni una carta, ni un periódico, ni una comunicación del extranjero. Los periódicos locales apenas han sido mejor provistos y no creo que de todas las consecuencias de este largo bloqueo haya habido una más amarga que esta completa privación de cualquier noticia del mundo exterior.

Lo que no deja de ser curioso es que ignoramos totalmente, en el momento mismo en que escribo, dónde se encuentra la correspondencia que llegó destinada a esta isla. En principio, cada cual la creía depositada en San Tomás. Afirman que luego debió de haberse enviado a Ponce y después a Haití, ante la negativa de los americanos a transportar una cantidad tan considerable de sacos postales.

De Ponce y, en fin, de todo el territorio ocupado por el enemigo, estamos igualmente sin noticias. Se anunció y prometió un intercambio regular de comunicaciones, pero realmente en la práctica ha sido unilateral. Desde hace 12 días, nuestras cartas con destino a Ponce son aceptadas y transmitidas, pero no nos llega ninguna respuesta. Se alega que el gobierno lo-

¹⁶⁵ Dirección de Consulados y Asuntos Comerciales, Subdirección de Asuntos Comerciales, Núm. 3.

cal, sin prisa alguna por dejar saber a esta parte de la Isla las innovaciones y las reformas que llevan a cabo los americanos en la otra, suspenderá la distribución de las cartas hasta último momento y hasta el mismo día de la evacuación. Esa versión, tan extraordinaria como pueda parecer, no me parece hoy de modo alguno imposible.

¿No fue siguiendo esos mismos principios y esa misma política que el desastre de Cavite se convirtió aquí en gloriosa batalla; o que la capitulación de Santiago se negó y disimuló hasta mediados de agosto; o que a las negociaciones preliminares de paz se les dio el carácter de una simple suspensión de armas, dejando a los españoles todas sus posiciones y con ellas todas sus esperanzas, todas sus pretensiones, todo el arrogante orgullo de su actitud, con la cabeza siempre en alto, la mano siempre amenazante empuñando la espada?

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
Y. Charpentier

[141] **Puerto Rico, 20 de septiembre de 1898**¹⁶⁶

Puerto Rico y la Colonia Francesa. Sus simpatías [pro-americanas] y sus causas, [esperanzas], plusvalía del [terreno], transformación de la moneda, modificaciones aduaneras ventajosas [a la] entrada y a la salida.

Señor Ministro,

“Acabo de llegar a Ponce. Todos nuestros compatriotas, cerca de 2,000, están unánimemente a favor de la anexión con los Estados Unidos.”

Este fue el primer cable que envié, el mismo día de mi desembarco en Puerto Rico, a nuestro embajador en Washington. Me parecía que esta información podía serle de utilidad, en medio de la campaña que tenían los gringos en contra de nuestras supuestas simpatías españolas.

De igual modo, ésta fue la primera cosa que me sorprendió. Desde el principio, los pocos franceses que me había presentado nuestro excelente Agente Consular, el señor Bougeois, se habían pronunciado sin rodeos. Todos deseaban el fin de la dominación española tanto como temían cualquier gobierno autónomo o independiente; deseaban la anexión.

Desde entonces me he encontrado con muchos de nuestros compatriotas; no hay uno sólo que haya expresado el más mínimo pesar por la administración que está destinada a desaparecer.

Se encargaron además de explicarme las causas y éstas son bien claras. Son corsos: grandes o pequeños propietarios, colonos, capataces; a sus ojos, la llegada de los americanos se resume en varias formulaciones muy precisas —plusvalía de los terrenos, establecimiento de una moneda fuerte, modificaciones aduaneras ventajosas a la entrada y a la salida.

I.- La primera no es la menos seductora. Es agradable pensar, cuando uno posee bajo el sol varias hectáreas de café o de azúcar, que de la noche a la mañana van a aumentar su valor en 25% ó 30%. Sin embargo, nada parece más dudoso. La llegada de los americanos es la llegada de los compradores, de los bancos, en pocas palabras, de capitales y de capitales deseosos de invertir y de ayudar activamente a la explotación económica de la Isla (¡lo cual quizá se deba no sólo a un espíritu empresarial sino también a un cierto movimiento de entusiasmo y chauvinismo por tener su primera colonia!). Eso ya se percibe claramente. Desde hace un mes los periódicos relatan todos los días que tales y tales casas o compañías norteamericanas han enviado ingenieros y comisiones técnicas con vistas a comprar terrenos. Precisamente en este momento los españoles, presurosos por liquidar sus posiciones, abandonan los lugares y ello genera una especulación muy activa. Todavía hoy se pueden conseguir, a razón de 150 piastras la fanega, miles de fanegas de azúcar que reportarían al año 40 piastras netas. Ahora bien, la piastra que valía hace cuatro meses 3f50, hoy vale 2f50

¹⁶⁶ Dirección de Consulados y Asuntos Comerciales, Subdirección de Asuntos comerciales, Núm. 8.

al cambio de 100%. El precio de compra es entonces 375 francos, para el que pueda pagar en francos, mientras que la ganancia seguirá siendo siempre 40 piastras. En tres meses el mismo terreno valdrá aún 150 piastras, pero piastras de 3f50 o de 4f, o sea, 525 ó 600 francos. Muy probablemente, y tomando en consideración la tasa de interés, el terreno valdrá de 7 a 800. Pero no sólo habrá plusvalía en el terreno debido a un mayor poder adquisitivo, al mismo tiempo habrá plusvalía en los productos debido al desarrollo de los medios de transportación, sobre todo a la creación de fábricas en los mismos lugares de producción. Esos dos factores revisten una importancia capital. Nos extrañaba a veces que ciertos productos del interior, el arroz por ejemplo, no se vendieran en San Juan. Pero, en realidad, por qué debería sorprendernos si consideramos que, con los medios de transportación actuales —bueyes y carretas— resulta más económico traer los productos de Nueva York, incluso de Shanghai, que de Coamo o de Sabana Grande.

En cuanto a las fábricas, éstas se imponen. Las de azúcar que ya existen son viejas, están anticuadas. Casi todo su material, el cual —hecho notable— sale de los talleres de Caïl o de Décauville, será sin duda reemplazado por maquinaria comprada esta vez en Filadelfia o en Pittsburgh (sobre todo si Caïl no escoge un agente más activo para este lugar). En fin, es necesario crear nuevas industrias, entre otras, las de aceite de coco. La isla produce una gran cantidad de cocos. Ahora bien, hay que enviarlos tal cuales, mercancía voluminosa, para venderse en Francia o Inglaterra. Elaborar los productos aquí traerá un beneficio seguro. Hay que crear otras además: una cervicería que no hay, una fábrica de papel, una alfarería.

II.- Así se anticipa la llegada de la prosperidad, de la fortuna. Si a esto se añade que se vislumbra una afluencia no ya de moneda depreciada sino de oro, el entusiasmo es fácil de comprender. Sería penoso recordar la desgraciada historia monetaria de este pequeño país: antaño el régimen del oro (el oro español y sobre todo el oro francés, todavía favorable a la piastra mexicana) luego el dinero español y en último lugar la moneda especial acuñada con la efigie de la Isla. No sólo ha impuesto España a la colonia su propia moneda, que pierde ya 30, 40 ó 60% en el extranjero, sino que le ha impuesto una estampilla especial que pierde un 20% frente a la de la metrópoli. El cambio, que estaba en estos últimos años entre 60 y 65%, subió desde la guerra a 80, 100, 125 y por último a 150%. Es la ruina del país. Nada es más engañoso, más decepcionante que esas monedas de cien céntimos, que realmente valen 40, una especie de medallas sin poder adquisitivo.

Un colono que hubiese trabajado aquí toda su vida, que poco a poco hubiese acumulado una pequeña fortuna de diez, veinte mil piastras, hubiera pensado que no pasaría necesidad, que sería casi rico. Si hubiera salido de la Isla, queriendo reponer su salud en un clima más clemente, de pronto su peculio se hubiera visto reducido a la mitad. Otra cosa, el margen de ganancias había subido tanto que era imposible comprar productos del exterior. Nuestros vinos, nuestras conservas tan apreciadas costaban el doble y se volvieron inaccesibles. Un profesor me citó un ejemplo más contundente. Me decía que “Acostumbraba comprar mis libros siempre en París. Ya no puedo hacerlo. Tengo que pagar 7 francos de mi dinero por el volumen de 3 francos 50 céntimos, y al añadirle los costos de envío, de puerto, se vuelve una compra imposible”.

Además de todos los problemas que se le plantearán a los americanos, éste es el de más urgencia y a la vez el más complejo. Preocupa a todos y es objeto de numerosos proyectos. La gente de la Isla parece estar unánimemente de acuerdo en un punto: la necesidad de restablecer, desde este momento, el equilibrio y la paridad entre su moneda y el oro, entre su piastra y el dólar americano. Eso puede hacerse. La circulación es bien restringida, 6 millones de piastras. Seis millones en realidad sólo valen tres, se trata en fin de cuentas de conseguirse tres millones. Algunos optimistas no ven dificultad en encontrarlos. ¿Por qué los Estados Unidos no se los regala, añadiéndoselos a los 8 ó 900 millones que les costará la guerra? Esa añadidura desaparecería para ellos dentro del conjunto y no podrían pensar en un regalo de llegada más agradable para sus nuevos súbditos. Los puertorriqueños más sensatos, el señor Carbonell por ejemplo, el Ministro de fomento, con quien he tenido conversaciones frecuentes, entiende

que esa cantidad debe pedirse en calidad de préstamo. La isla no tiene deudas y no habrá obstáculo alguno para conseguirlo. Una vez suscritos, esos tres millones servirán para darle a la moneda el valor y la garantía que le faltan y, una vez la piastra local se haya retirado de circulación por 50 céntimos, hasta permitirán dar al portador de una piastra, además de esta suma de 50 céntimos, un bono reembolsable en un tiempo dado.

Una dificultad se presenta en cuanto a los contratos ya contraídos. Hace dos o tres años, tomé prestadas mil piastras. Eran mil piastras que no valían 5,000, sino 3,800 ó 4,000 francos. ¿Estaré en la obligación de reembolsar a mi acreedor 5,000 francos en caso de un restablecimiento repentino de la paridad? Ahí está el asunto. Para evitar esto, bastaría adoptar sobre los contratos contraídos una tasa uniforme de 70%, por ejemplo, basada en el valor promedio de la piastra en los últimos años.

Son estos proyectos bastante seductores y explican por qué los banqueros y hombres de negocios sagaces, que han tenido la previsión de acumular en sus cajas piastras devaluadas durante los últimos disturbios, son hoy sus más fervientes defensores.

La buena voluntad de los americanos, hasta más información, parece más dudosa. Desde su punto de vista, la piastra puertorriqueña vale de 40 a 42 céntimos, no más. Ellos se proponen simplemente sacarla de circulación tan pronto se den las mejores condiciones posibles. En sus establecimientos, aduanas, correos, etc., la aceptan solamente por un valor de 50 céntimos, es decir, al 100%. Una vez la obtienen, no la ponen más en circulación y piensan así ir haciéndola escasa hasta suprimirla para dar paso al dólar americano. Ese plan me lo expusieron los señores Luce y Dumaresq, agentes fiscales del gobierno (quienes me fueron recomendados en una carta privada de nuestro Embajador en Washington), y el General Brooks me ha confirmado los datos en principio. Naturalmente nadie quiere creer en tal medida cuya adopción bastaría para enfriar el entusiasmo de los insulares.

III. - Las modificaciones y facilidades de aduana conforman el último punto. Primero a la entrada, y sobre todo a la salida: la cuestión del azúcar y de saber en qué condiciones será admitida en los Estados Unidos sigue siendo primordial. Seguramente, estará exenta de derechos de aduana y por ello mismo será una fuente de riqueza para la Isla. El azúcar exenta de derechos de aduana y pagada en oro! Qué sueño, y además se espera un movimiento de actividad económica enorme.

La isla produce de 60 a 65,000 toneladas de azúcar bruta que valen cinco millones de piastras, pero puede producir trescientas mil toneladas con un valor de 25 millones. Trescientas mil toneladas requieren treinta ingenios de azúcar de diez mil toneladas cada uno; eso es prosperidad, vida, fortuna. Un llano como el de Río Grande que con ganado produce veinte mil piastras, podría, sembrado de caña, dejar 200,000.

El café preocupa menos. Los grandes vendedores, los Ochoa, los Villamil, para los cuales me habían remitido cartas desde Nueva York, me afirman que seguirá enviándose a Europa. El mercado americano es muy especial. Los Arbuekle, los [Hervenieger], con sus inmensas fábricas de torrefacción, no le compran a los puertorriqueños. No los aprecian en su justo valor y todo hace pensar que se dirigirán siempre a Le Havre, al Mediterráneo, al sur de Alemania.

Estos primeros factores —plusvalía del suelo, modificación de la moneda, facilidades a la salida— son los que tocan más de cerca a nuestros colonos. Es posible que éstos últimos sufran ciertas decepciones. Su entusiasmo inicial fue demasiado fuerte para que sea de otra forma. Sin embargo, haré todo lo posible por que reciban las más grandes ventajas dentro de la transformación. No dejo pasar la más mínima oportunidad para declarar que, de todas las colonias extranjeras, la francesa es la más rica, la más poderosa, y también de dar a entender que es la más simpática; puedo decir que ésta ya ha obtenido ciertos beneficios, tanto en Ponce como en el mismo San Juan, en donde conseguí que un francés se encargue del suministro de provisiones destinado a los navíos de guerra americanos en el puerto.

La fijación de tarifas de entrada interesa sobre todo a nuestros [...]**

* N. del T. — Esta frase quedó incompleta y tachada en el documento original.

Los negociantes exportadores de Francia no deben olvidar que realizan en Puerto Rico ventas de cerca de dos millones de francos y que pueden encontrar aquí nuevos mercados. Ese mercado no será considerable, pero sí serio. Algunos de nuestros vinos, nuestras conservas, muy apreciadas en Puerto Rico, deben encontrar un mercado más amplio. Mumm debe encontrar un Agente para la venta de sus champanes brut; al igual que Moët-et-Chandon para sus productos "White seal", Louit Frères para sus mostazas y sus vinagres (de los cuales he encontrado malas imitaciones bajo el nombre de L. Frères et Cie.); las sardinas de [Amieux] pueden tomar el lugar de las Sprats, que se ofrecen aquí bajo el nombre de sardinas francesas.

Lo mismo vale para nuestros guisantes, vegetales, aceites de oliva, chocolate, ciruelas.

Nuestra perfumería es sumamente conocida y apreciada aquí: Roger Gallet, Delettres, Rigaud y también Pinaud, de cuya quinina encontré una vergonzosa imitación bajo el nombre de L. Pirraud perfumista de París.

Todos los productos farmacéuticos vienen de Francia. Una venta que hay que conservar, al igual que nuestros granos de hortaliza.

Otros de los artículos que importamos tendrán más dificultad en mantener su lugar: nuestras maquinarias, telas, cotonadas. Sin embargo, nuestros negociantes deben tener algo en cuenta y es que las ventas de España, que son hoy de treinta millones de francos, van a disminuir y que ellos podrán disputarse una parte de éstas con los americanos. Esto será así sobre todo en el caso de nuestros sombreros de fieltro y ciertas telas ligeras de tipo inglés, actualmente fabricadas en Barcelona.

En realidad esto es solamente una apreciación general. No pretendo conocer ni juzgar todo después de sólo dos meses de estadía en la Isla, uno de los cuales pasé refugiándome de una amenaza de bombardeo. Menciono, sin prometer nada, algunos artículos que pueden interesar a nuestra industria.

En fin, no son éstas más que unas ideas iniciales. No hay que olvidar que todas están supeditadas a la nueva tarifa que se nos aplicará. Esta podría ser alta y contrarrestar la ventaja que resultará de la baja del cambio. Pero podría también ser liberal y en ese caso sería útil fortalecer las posiciones adquiridas y crear nuevas sin esperar la intervención definitiva de los americanos.

Nada es más fácil que intentarlo. Por 600 francos, un viajante puede venir a San Juan en catorce días pasando si lo desea por Nueva York, lo mismo al regreso. Son 1,200 francos por el viaje; en 30 días a 20 francos por día puede visitar la Isla. El gasto total no llega a 2,000 francos. ¿Qué importa eso si el viajante representa de 6 a 8 casas francesas a la vez?

Si algún comerciante quiere venir en persona, le será fácil extender su visita de negocios a las Antillas vecinas, a nuestras colonias de la Martinica. En fin, si es emprendedor quizás encontrará aquí la oportunidad de cerrar un negocio ventajoso, un contrato importante, una compra de un terreno, de inmuebles que le pagarán con creces sus molestias.

No niego que corra algunos riesgos en ese juego, pero tampoco creo que esté exento de éstos cuando, desde su país, sentado en su butaca, suscribe bonos de ferrocarriles por 500 francos, como los de Puerto Rico, que, a pesar de estar garantizados por el "Gobierno", no están cotizados hoy a más de veinticinco francos o veinticinco cincuenta.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
Y. Charpentier

[142] **Mina de hierro de Juncos, Puerto Rico, 9 de noviembre de 1898**¹⁶⁷

Señor Ministro,

La toma de posesión definitiva de Puerto Rico por parte de las autoridades americanas, el 18 de octubre, marcó el inicio de una verdadera invasión de comerciantes, capitalistas y

¹⁶⁷ Dirección de Consulados y Asuntos Comerciales, Subdirección de Asuntos comerciales, Núm. 14.

hombres de negocios. En San Juan mismo, dos bancos americanos están hoy abiertos al público y están en funciones una casa de corretaje, una de cambio y una compañía de mensajería. En este momento se realizan planos de las calles de la ciudad para establecer un tranvía eléctrico. Un tren suburbano que servía al área de Santurce, donde se han instalado numerosas casas de campo, fue comprado por una sociedad anónima que está modificando su funcionamiento de forma sustancial. Compras de terrenos, de ingenios azucareros, de plantaciones de café, se dan todos los días. El tráfico de nuestra compañía ferroviaria se ha triplicado. Los viajantes de comercio por fin afluyen y ayer mismo recibí la visita de un agente enviado especialmente a la Isla por un poderoso sindicato nuyorquino para lanzar el famoso aceite de algodón la "Cottolène".

Entre estas empresas, hay una que apenas comienza a llamar la atención y que sin embargo, me parece la más interesante de todas.

Se trata de una mina de hierro situada en Juncos, en la costa este de la Isla, no lejos de Humacao.

Aquí se reúnen las condiciones más favorables. El mineral se encuentra en masas compactas y extraerlo sería muy fácil. En parte al descubierto, en parte bajo una capa de tierra extremadamente delgada, los yacimientos se extienden bajo un montículo de 150 metros de altura, que desciende, en suave pendiente, a una bella planicie que continúa hasta el mar. El trayecto es de 14 kilómetros con una pendiente de 2%. El puerto de embarque, Naguabo, admite barcos de 20 pies de cala y podría establecerse un embarcadero con pocos gastos.

Se calcula que la riqueza de la mina alcanza de 7 a 10 millones de toneladas, y la extracción podría llevarse a cabo tan rápido como se quiera. Actualmente debe de haber unas 30 ó 40,000 toneladas, por así decirlo, al descubierto.

K. K. Patterson y Strall, de Middlesborough ha realizado un análisis científico del mineral secado a 212 que produjo los siguientes resultados:

	%
Peróxido de hierro	72.5
Protóxido de hierro	19.671
Protóxido de Magnesia	0.232
Alúmina	trazos
Cal	0.271
Magnesia	0.17
Sílice	5.3
Azufre	0.008
Acido fosfórico	0.056
Arsénico	nada
Acido carbónico	trazos
Agua	1.79
	99.998

No hay trazos de plomo, zinc, barita, bario, o sulfato de barita.

Acabo de enterarme de que la casa Decauville había pedido por cable los precios y las condiciones de venta de la mina en cuestión, y que el señor Pedro Santisteban, su dueño, le envió varias proposiciones. Ofrecería al comprador la opción entre desembolsar de una sola vez una suma fija o pagar un canon mínimo por tonelada extraída. En este último caso, el concesionario podría, en un momento dado, renunciar a su contrato sin tener obligaciones con su vendedor.

En verdad, una empresa tan grande no podría acometerse sin un estudio profundo, y la información arriba mencionada, dada por demás sin garantías, contiene solamente datos preliminares.

Tampoco es menos cierto que, en vista del desarrollo económico que en manos emprendedoras puede tener esta pequeña isla con su millón de habitantes, si la mina de Juncos cayera en manos francesas poseeríamos con ella y con el ferrocarril de circunvalación las dos empresas, por mucho, más considerables del país.

Reciba el profundo respeto de quien tiene el honor de ser,
Señor Ministro, de Vuestra Excelencia
el muy humilde y muy obediente servidor
[rúbrica] Y. Charpentier

CARTAS CONSULARES INGLESAS

[143] Mr. Lionel Carden to Mr. Cockerell, 26 August, 1898¹⁶⁸

Dear Mr. Cockerell,

I arrived here safely on the 9th after a pleasant trip. The "Talbot" is a very comfortable ship and her Captain, Gamble, a particularly nice fellow. On arrival at San Juan, as the entrance to the harbour was blocked by torpedoes and sunken vessels, we could not go in, and I had to wait till they sent out a tug to take me in. There was a heavy sea running and the process of getting into one of the Talbot's boats and from there into the tug was not easy: indeed the boat had two planks of her gunwale smashed and came alongside. Fortunately my wife is pretty handy in a boat and we got on board without accident.

I found Crawford in a pitifully nervous condition. I had never met him before but he certainly looked to me as if he had incipient softening of the brain. He certainly was not fit to go on board with such a sea on, indeed, I feel sure he *could* not have gone off the tug into a boat, so he decided to wait till the next morning, much to the disgust of Captain Gamble who had to lay off harbour all night exposed as he wrote from St. Thomas, to the inquisitiveness of an American cruiser which kept steaming round him [all] the time.

I will say nothing about the condition in which I found the consulate, for you most know as well as I how things have been carried on of late here. The real trouble has consisted in the fact that while Crawford was not in a fit state to attend to anything, he seems to have been jealous of his father-in-law, Mr. George Finlay, and would not allow him to see the dispatches which consequently were in many cases not attended to at all, nor did anything but help him in some of the ordinary routine work. In a fortnight's time I shall have the office in good order so that there will be no difficulty in anyone keeping it going when I leave.

The town when I arrived was like a city of the dead. Most of the shops were closed and probably two thirds of the private houses, scarcely any one being left besides the officials. Everyone who could had gone out to the country in fear of a second bombardment and even servants were hard to find for the same reason. Now [that] they understand that peace is secure they are beginning to return. It certainly was a great shame for the Americans to have bombarded a commercial town, the capital of the Island, full as it was of non-combatants, without giving the smallest warning. I don't know if Crawford wrote anything about it, but in case he did not I will give you a few details. The American fleet arrived off San Juan at 5.30 am on May 12th and immediately began to bombard, the hail of projectiles large and small, being kept up without intermission till 9 am. Spanish naval officers tell me that they estimate the number of rounds fired at about 5,000 of which about one fifth fell in the town or forts and the remainder in the bay. Everyone was in bed at the time and indescribable panic took place, men and women and children rushing into the streets and out to the open country hardly dressed and without boots or shoes. The casualties between killed and wounded were 50 [and] 60, mostly non-combatants.

There were of course some ludicrous scenes, and the [?] at the Hotel Inglaterra where we are stopping, and which was struck by a large shell, described to us the efforts of one of the passengers to run down the stairs with one leg of his trousers on and the other in his hand. The Spaniards were so unprepared that half an hour elapsed before they fired the first

¹⁶⁸ FO 72/2082

gun. In spite of the heavy fire maintained by the Americans, very little damage was done to the forts and only one gun so far as I can learn was dismantled. The Spanish artillery was quite inadequate to cope with modern artillery, consisting in great part of old fashioned mortars. It is generally supposed that the Americans attacked because they thought Cervera's fleet was in the harbour which would account for so large a proportion of projectiles having passed over the town into the bay. A French ship of war which was in harbour had a very narrow escape, being struck twice. Immediately on the cessation of firing by the Americans she put out to sea, and the fact that the firing was not resumed after this seems to show that when the Americans learnt from her that Cervera was not inside they had no further interest in continuing the bombardment. A German cruiser, the "Elier" [?] had left the harbour only two days before and I have been told by Spanish naval officers that she would in all probability have been sunk if she had remained, as the greatest number of projectiles fell in the part of the bay where she had been anchored.

The Spanish officials are I think as a rule thankful that the war is over, as Porto Rico is not in a position to make much of a defense. They are much disgusted at the behaviour of their volunteers who showed themselves very lukewarm as regards defending their country against the Americans. The defence was therefore practically left entirely to the regular forces which only number 6,000 men. The native Porto-riqueños though not actively hostile to Spain are almost to a man ready and willing to accept American rule. A certain factious element is taking the opportunity of the partial occupation of the Island by the Americans to form irregular corps and, under pretence of helping the invaders, to pay off old scores against individual Spaniards. These parties are being suppressed by the Govt. with some severity, and I fear that if the American correspondents make use of these encounters to fabricate sensational news for their papers, it may give rise to disagree[able] complications. The Secretary of the Govt. Gen. is alive to this and I have expressed my willingness to assist them in any way I properly can though I should of course when any case arises first ask specific permission from the F.O.

Although it is known officially that the Preliminaries of peace have been signed, no details have as yet come to hand, and no foreign mails have been either received or sent since I arrived here. I am availing myself of the German cruiser "Geier" [?] which is sailing tomorrow to send this letter via Germany.

In conclusion I may say that the Captain General and other officials have received me with the greatest friendliness, and I feel sure that as far as they are concerned, I shall have no difficulties here.

I will write again by the first opportunity and in the meanwhile I remain
 Very faithfully your [*sic.*]
 Lionel Carden

P.S. I think the best way of writing here would be via New York and Ponce, as mail communication has just been opened through with that town by land.

[144] **Her Britannick Majesty's Consulate, Porto Rico. Oct. 17th, 1898**¹⁶⁹

My Lord,

I have the honour to enclose for Your Lordship's information a short report showing the effect which the occupation of this Island by the American forces has had up to the present time on its trade and Commerce.

¹⁶⁹ FO 72/2082, Commercial No. 2

I have the honour to be
 My Lord
 Your Lordship's Most obedient
 humble servant
 Lionel Carden

The Most Honable
 The Marquis of Salisbury K.G. [?]
 Foreign Office

Report of the effect of the American occupation of Porto Rico on trade and commerce

The months of greatest commercial activity in Porto Rico are from October to April, when the exports of sugar and coffee take place; the importation of merchandise being also larger during this period.

The prejudicial effects to commerce arising from the blockade of the Capital at the end of June last were therefore minimised, the more so that no attempt was made by the Americans to extend the blockade to other Ports of the Island, with the exception of Ponce, which was not done until somewhat later. Hence merchants in San Juan were able to continue to make their importations through the Port of Arecibo which is connected with it by rail.

Since the cession of the Island to the United States was determined on under the terms of the Protocol of August 12th, and during its gradual occupation by the American forces, commerce has been practically at a standstill, owing to the uncertainty as to the conditions which will rule here in the immediate future.

Currency

The question of perhaps the most vital importance, which imperatively calls for an immediate, even though it be only a provisional, solution, is that of the Currency, which directly affects not only the commercial classes but also, and perhaps to a still greater extent, the planters, whose profits depend on the relation between the price obtained for their produce abroad *in gold* and the cost of its production, which is payable in local silver money.

The existing currency is the Porto Rican silver dollar, of the same weight and fineness as the Spanish dollar, which was first coined and issued in December 1895 and took the place of the Mexican dollar which used formerly to pass current in the Island. The amount of silver dollars in circulation is not great, probably not exceeding five millions, but the fiduciary obligations in currency represent a very much larger and practically an undeterminable amount. The exchange value of this dollar has varied from \$7.50 to the £ in 1896 to \$8.50 in 1898, equivalent to a premium on gold ranging from 50 to 70 per cent. It is scarcely necessary to point out that the exchange value of these coins is much greater than their intrinsic value, due to the limited number in circulation.

In dealing with the question three alternative courses are open to the United States Government:

1. -To establish the currency on a silver basis, the value of which in its relation to gold would be determined as it is now by commercial operations.
2. -To issue a silver currency, convertible at a fixed rate into United States gold money = in other words to establish a bimetallic system.
3. -To establish the currency on a gold basis, with subsidiary token silver coins, calling in the silver dollars actually in circulation at a rate of exchange to be fixed arbitrarily.

As regards the first of these courses there is so little probability that it will be adopted, that it is scarcely worth taking into consideration, though I venture to think that the retaining as nearly as possible of a system to which commerce has already adapted itself and which is well known and understood throughout the country could not fail to offer considerable advantages.

As regards the second, the problem of bimetallism in general has been so often and so extensively discussed that I will not attempt to add any arguments of my own to those already known.

Finally, I cannot but think that a gold basis would be prejudicial to a country such as Porto Rico which depends for its wealth on its agricultural resources, as it would be practically impossible to persuade the laboring classes to accept a reduction in the existing rate of wages, even though the substituted dollar had a larger purchasing power. This could then involve so large an increase in the cost of production that the cultivation of sugar cane and even of coffee would almost cease to be profitable. Moreover the fixing of an arbitrary rate for exchanging the existing dollars into gold, though perhaps inevitable, can scarcely fail to give rise to commercial complications.

Customs Tariff

The uncertainty as to the Customs Tariff which will be put into force in Porto Rico, and the time when the change will take place, as is only natural has had the effect of paralysing the import trade; the more so when taken in conjunction with the uncertainty about the currency. Exporters also are holding back their goods until it is known whether Porto Rican produce is to be admitted free of duty into the United States. The importance of this, to sugar planters especially, may be gathered from the fact that the duty leviable on centrifugal sugar polarizing 96° is \$1.68 1/2 cents per 100 pounds, while the selling price of the same sugar at a Port of Export in the Island in this year was only \$2.10 United States Currency.

Application of the American Coasting Trade Law

The application of the American Coasting Trade Law to vessels taking cargo from Porto Rico to Ports in the United States, which has already begun to be put into force, will be severely felt by British Shipping, especially the small sailing vessels, from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick which used to bring cargoes of fish and lumber and then load sugar and molasses for American Ports. The amount of this freight carried annually was about 40,000 tons, or nearly four fifths of the total produce of Porto Rico which found a market in the United States.

Import and Export Trade

The following table, which is compiled from the Official returns for the past four years, shows the average proportion of the Porto Rican trade, both, import and export, enjoyed by different countries:

Import trade		Export trade
25 per cent	Great Britain and British Possessions	5 per cent
40 "	Spain and Cuba	48 "
23 "	United States	16 "
	France	13 "
12 "	Germany	10 "
	Other countries	8 "
100 "		100 "

The average annual value of the imports and exports during these four years was as follows: Imports \$18,507,000, Exports \$17,669,000, both in Porto Rican currency.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the Spanish import trade, now that the special protection formerly afforded it is removed, will fall off very largely, and that its place at the head of the importing countries will be taken by the United States. It is however impossible to predict how far the trade of other countries may be affected by the change of Government until it is known what Customs Tariff will be adopted. It must however be borne in mind that the trade relations of a country are not changed in a moment and that the preference for well known articles and brands is not easily eradicated.

In the export trade, it is safe to assume that all the sugar produced will go to the United States, and, although at present the amount is not great, not exceeding 7,500 tons including centrifugal and muscovado sugar and molasses, it will probably be largely increased if the duty on its importation is removed.

Coffee, which represents in value two thirds of the total exports, is exported principally to Spain, Cuba, France, Germany and other European countries, being too high priced for the United States market. It is not probable that this branch of the export trade will be diverted to any considerable extent from its present channels.

The only other product of any considerable importance is tobacco, which hitherto has been shipped principally to Spain and Cuba. If admitted free into the United States it will probably all be diverted in that direction.

Lionel Carden
Porto Rico. October 17th, 1898

Comentarios al dorso del documento escritos por el destinatario en la Foreign Office con fecha Dec. 3/98:

"A valuable report which throws light on the extent to which political changes might affect our Trade in Porto Rico, where we have recently held 25% of the Import and 5% of the Export Trade, the US having had 23% of the former and 16% of the latter.

It appears also that 4/5ths of the carrying trade was [transported?] in British, chiefly Colonial, Vessels.

These facts and figures may be useful to Mr. [?] Paunceforte in support of his representations though there is, I fear, little chance of redress in Porto Rico.

Copies to: Mr. Paunceforte for this object
Board of Trade
Colonial Office

Treasury [----] [Currency?]"

[145] Report by Consul Carden to Marquess of Salisbury (Received November 26), Porto Rico, October 18, 1898¹⁷⁰

My Lord,

With the reference to my despatch No. 2 of the 15th September, I have the honour to transmit herewith a short Report on the work done by the Evacuation Commission and on the general political condition of the island from that date down to the occupation of the capital this morning by General Brooke 's forces.

I have, &c.

[rúbrica] Lionel Carden

Enclosures

¹⁷⁰ FO 72/2076 4460

[145a] **Report by Consul Carden on the Proceedings of the Evacuation Commission in Porto Rico and the general Political Condition of the Island**¹⁷¹

At the first meeting of the Evacuation Commission, it was mutually agreed that the proceedings should be kept strictly secret, so that no particulars on the subject have been given to the public. From information, however, which I have received confidentially from one of the Commissioners, I am able to give a general idea of the system they adopted for the transaction of business and of the principal points dealt with.

In addition to the Commissioners there were present at the meetings two secretaries, two interpreters, and two stenographers. The discussions were conducted *viva voce*, being translated by the respective interpreters as they went on, and both the original remarks and their translations were taken down in shorthand and afterwards reduced to writing. All letters and documents submitted to the Commission were attached to the "dossier" in the order of their presentation, so that a complete chronological record was obtained of everything connected with the proceedings.

As soon as the Spanish Commissioners had received their instructions, which was not until several days after the first meeting was held, the American Commissioners asked them to formulate in writing their views as to the bases for discussion. When this was handed in several points bearing on the future government of the island and the status of the Spanish residents were struck out by the American Commissioners, who maintained that they had no authority to deal with any other subject than that of the evacuation of the island by the Spanish forces and the measures required to be taken to insure its being carried into effect at the earliest possible date.

The work of the Commission was therefore practically confined to making arrangements for the gradual concentration of the Spanish troops on the capital, where their embarkation was to take place, and the occupation of the different towns and districts, as evacuated, by American troops. At first a certain interval of time, rarely exceeding a few hours, was allowed to elapse between the departure of the Spanish troops from any given point and the arrival of the Americans; but it was soon found that this interval used to be taken advantage of by some of the country people to play off old grudges against individual Spaniards by burning their properties or maltreating them personally, so that towards the end of the evacuation arrangements were made for the two operations to be conducted quite simultaneously. Indeed, at Arecibo, where serious disorder was apprehended, the American troops entered and assumed control of the town before the Spanish troops left, lining the streets as the latter marched to the railway station.

The taking over of the Custom-House and other Government offices in the country towns was conducted for the most part in a very summary way, the formalities being confined to the giving of a simple receipt to the official in charge by the officer in command of the force detailed to occupy the place. In a few cases even this formality was omitted, the officials being unceremoniously ordered to leave. In the capital and the large towns inventories in detail of all Government property of whatever nature were made out and receipted for, a value being in every case expressed even for the lands and buildings, with the object, presumably, of trying to obtain a consideration of some kind for them at some future time from the American Government.

The mechanism of the municipal governments was invariably left intact, a few changes only being made in the personnel where important offices were held by persons of pronounced pro-Spanish proclivities. In such cases, the substitutes were selected from among the native Porto Ricans. The principal posts of the Customs and Post Office Departments were filled by American officials sent down for that purpose from the United States.

¹⁷¹ Adjunto 1, FO 72/2076 4460.

The prisoners undergoing sentences for political offences were set at liberty by the Captain-General, but those accused or convicted of criminal offences were handed over to the American authorities, together with all the evidence and other documents connected with their respective cases.

I have already mentioned in a previous despatch that the American Commissioners were surprised and dissatisfied to find on their arrival at San Juan that no arrangements whatever had yet been made for the transportation home of the Spanish forces. The readiness, however, shown by the Spanish Commissioners to do everything in their power to meet the wishes of their American colleagues and to facilitate their operations made it so evident that they were not to blame in the matter, that as soon as this fact was realized all danger of friction was removed; indeed, the proceedings were throughout characterized by perfect harmony, and on the termination of their labours the members of the Commission parted from each other with feelings, if not of friendship, at any rate of mutual esteem.

The regular force usually maintained by Spain in Porto Rico was about 10,000 men, but as several battalions had been withdrawn in 1897 for service in Cuba, this number had been reduced at the commencement of the war to about 6,000. The total number including the officers' wives and families, the rural and urban police and their families, and the civil employés, for whom transport had to be provided, did not exceed 9,000, so that five good-sized steamers would have been amply sufficient to meet all the requirements of the case. For some unexplainable reason, however, the Madrid Government took no steps at all to send out any steamers until the 22nd September, and then they only sent two, which arrived at San Juan on the 1st October, and started on their return journey respectively on the 3rd and 4th, taking with them about 4,000. About 1,000 more, including sick soldiers, had been in the meantime embarked on the mailsteamers which called at San Juan on their way back to Spain from Havana, so that only 4,000 in all remained to be shipped on the 4th October.

As the Spanish Commissioners were unable to give any definite assurances as to when these would be embarked, the President of the United States, after a few days' delay, notified the Madrid Government that the American forces would occupy San Juan on the 18th. This decision, to which there was no alternative but to submit, was communicated on the 9th to the Captain-General, who, availing himself of the arrival of the mailsteamer "Covadonga" on her way to Havana, had her cargo unloaded and turned her back to Spain, embarking himself on board of her on the 16th October with 2,000 troops.

No demonstration, hostile or otherwise, took place at his departure, but the personal esteem in which he was held was shown by the number of persons who respectfully saluted him as he walked down to the wharf. The only regrettable incident which occurred was the behaviour of the Commander of an American volunteer battalion on board the steam-ship "Mississippi", then lying in the harbour, who permitted his band to strike up "Yankee Doodle" as the "Covadonga" got under weigh, and to continue playing it amid uproarious cheering until she was out of sight. I may mention that he was severely reprimanded for this act of discourtesy by the American Commissioners.

The cannon mounted in the fortresses and the supplies of powder and ammunition stored there and in the magazines were handed over to the Americans, but the field artillery was all sent back to Spain. The only difference of opinion which arose between the Commissioners was with regard to six guns, which, though actually in position at one of the forts, the Spanish Commissioners contended were of a movable character. It was eventually decided to refer the matter to the Paris Commission. The troops in every case marched down to the place of embarkation fully equipped and with their colours flying, and then packed up their arms on the wharf in cases provided for the purpose, and took them on board with them.

The coal stored at the arsenal, the reserves of arms and ammunitions for the auxiliary forces, and the furniture and fittings of the military hospitals were sold locally by the military authorities.

The men were all fully paid before embarking, and presented a soldierly appearance, being well dressed and, with few exceptions, in healthy condition.

On the morning of the 18th the American forces occupied the forts and barracks, the remaining Spanish troops being transferred to the arsenal, which was temporarily placed at their disposal. At 12 o'clock, at the invitation of Major-General Brooke, I attended the ceremony of hoisting the American flag over the Captain-General's Palace. The only invited guests were the American members of the Evacuation Commission, the French Consul and myself, as representing the Consular Corps, and the members of the Autonomist Cabinet of Porto Rico. A company of infantry and a squadron of cavalry, numbering 200 in all, which constituted General Brooke's personal escort, were the only troops present. As the clock struck 12 the flag was hoisted, the band struck up the national anthem, and the forts fired a salute. There was no demonstration of any kind on the part of the spectators, who numbered perhaps about 200, and the ceremony terminated in ten minutes. The same day General Brooke published a Proclamation, a copy and translation of which is appended to this Report, announcing that he had assumed the Military Governorship of the Island of Porto Rico, which is therein styled a "Department", and briefly outlining the conditions under which for the present the administration of the Government would be conducted.

The most absolute quiet reigned in the city after the occupation, where the place of the "Orden Públicos", or military police, was taken by men of the American regular army, the local municipal police being retained for duty as well. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the country districts.

When the American forces first landed in Guánica Bay their advent was welcomed by Porto Ricans of all classes, the immense majority of whom were ready and anxious to exchange Spanish for American rule. Some desultory attempts were made at first to organize a native contingent to co-operate with the invaders, but they met with little encouragement and were abandoned. As the American forces, however, advanced and the Spanish fell back, armed bands of men, mostly of the lower orders, and without any cohesion, began to be formed with the ostensible purpose of assisting the Americans and keeping order, but really bent on wreaking vengeance for real or imaginary grievances on the persons and properties of individual Spaniards. The true character of these parties was soon recognized by the American Commanders, and shortly after the protocol was signed, and hostilities were suspended, an understanding was arrived at between the Captain-General and General Brooke for mutually suppressing them. As the evacuation proceeded, and the civil guards, a force resembling in its organization the Irish Constabulary, was gradually withdrawn, the number of these parties increased instead of diminishing, the American troops, from their ignorance of the language and the localities, being far less efficient for police service than their predecessors. In view of the immunity thus obtained, all pretence at objects of a quasi-political nature was eventually abandoned, and indiscriminate plunder and pillage are now the avowed purpose of the so-called insurgents. To give an idea of the extent of the destruction of property by these bands, I may mention that I have just heard from a resident of Mayagüez that in the past few days no less than sixty properties have been burnt in that district alone. How long this state of things will continue it is impossible to say, but there is no doubt that General Brooke is fully alive to the necessity of immediately suppressing all such outrages with a firm hand, though unfortunately the force at this command, which consists largely of almost undisciplined troops, cannot be expected to successfully cope at a moment's notice with so difficult a task.

I cannot conclude without making some reference to the behaviour of certain of the American troops, especially those in Ponce, which has gone far to make the inhabitants regret the warm welcome they extended to them when they first arrived. I will cite two instances, although they are not by any means isolated ones:

1. An American officer, accompanied by two privates, all mounted, rode up to one of the seats in the public square at Ponce, where three young ladies of good family were sitting, and most grossly insulted them, almost riding their horses over them and making offensive proposals to them. My informant, an English gentleman of good standing, actually witnessed this.

2. The dock labourers at Ponce, having refused to accept 75 cents in American gold in lieu of 1 dol. 50 c. in Porto Rico currency, which was their regular wage, the guard which was superintending the unloading of some Government transports opened fire on them with ball cartridge, although the strike, if such it can be called, was of the most pacific description, and when they ran away and took refuge in private houses near by they followed them, bayoneting them as they ran. The number of wounded, as published in the newspapers, exceeded forty.

It is only fair to say that in both cases the officers and men implicated were arrested and court-martialled, but the effect produced on the general public will not easily be erased, and until a proper police force is organized and stricter discipline maintained among the soldiers, there are small grounds for expecting that outrages of this kind will not occur again.

On the 21st October, as no transports of adequate size were yet forthcoming, General Ortega, the Acting Captain-General, impressed the Spanish mail-steamer "Montevideo", then on her way to Havana, and embarked on her with the remaining Spanish troops on the 23rd, thus completing the evacuation of the island.

[rúbrica] Lionel Carden
Porto Rico, October 18, 1898.

[145b] Extract from the Official Journal of Porto Rico of October 20, 1898. Head-quarters of the Department of Porto Rico¹⁷²

GENERAL ORDER (Translation)
San Juan, October 18, 1898.

In conformity with the instructions of the President of the United States, the undersigned take over from today the command of the Department of Porto Rico.

1. For the convenience of the military and civil administration, the Department of Porto Rico is divided into two geographical districts, to wit:

2. The district of Ponce, the limits of which comprise the jurisdictions of Aguadilla, Mayagüez, Ponce, and Guayama. Brigadier-General Guy V. Henry, of the volunteer forces of the United States, has been selected for this command, with headquarters in the city of Ponce.

3. The district of San Juan, the limits of which comprise the jurisdictions of Arecibo, Bayamón, Humacao, and adjacent islands. Brigadier-General F. D. Grant, of the volunteer forces of the United States, has been put in charge of this command, with headquarters in San Juan.

4. The Commanders of districts are responsible for the provisioning health efficacy and discipline of their respective commands, as laid down in the regulations and ordinances of the army, and are authorized to make, or to order to be made, such inspections as may be necessary for that purpose.

5. In no case can the Tribunals of Porto Rico exercise jurisdiction in respect to crimes or offences committed by officers or soldiers belonging to the United States Army, or by persons attached to or in the service of the said army; nor in respect to any crime of offence committed against any of the foregoing by persons residing in or passing through the territory. In such cases, the jurisdiction belongs to courts-martial of Military Commissions.

¹⁷² Adjunto 2, FO 72/2076 4460.

[146] **Report on the Trade and Commerce of Porto Rico for the Year 1899 By Mr. Consul Churchward (Received at Foreign Office, June 9, 1900)**¹⁷³

The last report from this Consulate being that of 1896, I have, to preserve continuity of record, taken the liberty of preceding the statement of 1899 with such statistics and information for the intermediate years as have been found procurable. This latter year must, however, remain incomplete, up to the date of the United States assumption of the direction of the customs, as, in consequence of the war, no trustworthy records can be obtained.

At the various ports of the island, according to the last Spanish report, there arrived a total of 1,135 vessels -809 steam and 326 sail- of an aggregate tonnage of 1,356,989 tons, which brought 143,818 tons of 1,000 kilos of various merchandise and took away 108,245 similar tons.

Of the above vessels, 134 steamers and three sailing vessels were registered in Great Britain, and 31 steamers and 148 sailing vessels were from various British possessions, the whole discharging in Porto Rico 39,833 tons of cargo.

The British ship tonnage for the year came second to that of Spain with her 400,832 tons, as also it did in cargo tons which follow Spain's lead of 41,433 tons of 1,000 kilos.

By the same Spanish returns, from which are extracted the above statistics, it is shown that the total value of the imports for the year amounted to 17,859,063 pesos*, and the exports to 18,574,678 pesos, which shows a falling off in comparison with the previous year of 1,087,730 and 413,985 pesos respectively.

Of the above Great Britain is credited with 1,755,754 pesos of imports and 77,341 pesos of exports; British India with 913,068 pesos imports only; making a British total of 4,114,422 pesos of imports and 331,760 pesos of exports, a loss upon the previous year's figures of 432,985 pesos of imports and of 101,933 pesos of exports.

British imports for 1897 thus are placed second in value to those of Spain, which leads with a value of 7,152,016 pesos, due chiefly to favor; the United States follow with 3,749,815 pesos worth, and Germany ranks fourth with 1,314,603 pesos.

British exports by no means show so favorably, coming only eighth on the list after Spain with 5,067,466 pesos, Cuba with 3,515,066 pesos (both of these highly favored), France with 3,037,984 pesos, the United States with 2,614,259 pesos, Germany with 2,117,802 pesos, Italy with 1,019,784 pesos, and Austria-Hungary with 408,211 pesos.

For the period extending from the end of 1897 to the date of the Americans taking charge of the customs, no official information of a reliable nature can be obtained of the trade of the island.

However, from that date to the end of 1899, a period of three days over 17 months, a return has been made irrespective of years by which it is shown that during that term Porto Rico imported goods to the value of 12,546,542 dol. United States currency, and exported articles valued at 11,621,049 dol. of the same value.

In imports Great Britain stands first in agricultural implements, cotton goods, flax, and flax goods, iron and steel, paints and colors, and wool and woolen manufactures; second in machinery, oils, and rice, and third in provisions. The British North American possessions stand first in the importation of fish, the United States second with 181,135 dol.; they also stand second in lumber.

It must, however, be borne in mind that, whether these positions be retained or not will entirely depend upon British imports being able to sustain the changes in the tariff, which came into effect with the installation of Civil Government in the island.

With regard to the exports of fish and lumber from British North America, their diminution is certain, as the regulation forbidding freight between Porto Rico and the States, save under the national flag, came into force from January 1, 1900.

¹⁷³ PP 1900 [cd.1] XCVIII. 1, No. 2465, *Reference to previous Report, Annual Series no. 2465.*

* 8 pesos 10c. per 1l. can be taken for the purposes of calculation.

In the year 1897, 63 British vessels -38 steamers and 25 sail- of an aggregate tonnage of 61,374 tons, arrived at the port of San Juan.

Of these, two only, both steamers, cleared from home ports; one with coal, the other with general cargo. Four steamers and 19 sailing vessels, the latter with lumber and fish, came from British North American ports. 16 more steamers arrived with various cargoes from the United States ports, 10 from Antwerp, and the balance from the different Porto Rican coast ports.

There was no outward sailing for Great Britain, but 10 steamers left for the United States, five for Cuba; one for Haiti, and the remainder, with the exception of 13 sailing vessels for North American ports and the Bahamas, left for the Porto Rican coast.

In the year 1898, 52 British ships -28 steam and 24 sail- of an aggregate tonnage of 57,334 tons, visited the harbour of San Juan, showing a falling-off of 11 ships -10 steamers and one sailing vessel- and of 4,040 tons.

Of these, six steamers, all with coal, came direct from British ports; one steamer and 20 sailing vessels from the British North American possessions, another steamer from Antwerp, and the balance from the various island ports and St. Thomas.

No vessel sailed for Great Britain; one steamer and 11 sailing vessels left for different British North American ports, six steamers and 19 sailing vessels for the United States, and the balance went to St. Thomas and the various Porto Rican ports.

A still further reduction in British shipping is to be reported in the year 1899, the returns showing only 42 British arrivals -21 each of steam and sailing vessels- with a total register tonnage of 31,159 tons, showing a loss on the previous year of seven steamers and three sailing vessels.

Only one steamer came from British North American possessions, five steamers arrived from Antwerp with general cargoes, and rest hailed from Porto Rican ports and St. Thomas.

No ship cleared for Great Britain; one steamer and 23 sailing vessels left for British North American ports and the balance went to Cuba, St. Thomas and Porto Rican ports.

It is only just to mention that a large part of this British shipping is made up every year of the monthly visits of the Royal Mail boats from Barbados via St. Thomas. The year 1900 will not have the advantage of counting this, as the service beyond St. Thomas was discontinued last November and will not be resumed.

Again by reason of the newly imposed regulation, that all traffic between Porto Rico and the United States must be carried on only by American vessels, British lumber and fish schooners from North American ports will suffer considerably in the loss of their return cargoes, a large proportion of which went to the States. The new rule may very possibly divert the trade in fish and lumber entirely away from British sources.

To give an idea of the loss to British shipping by the enforcement of the above-mentioned regulation, it will be sufficient to quote the totals arrived at in a statement of cargoes shipped in British vessels from Porto Rico to the United States for the year ending June 30, 1898 - supplied of the International Conference at Quebec.

It there appears that, in the 12 months indicated, 29,333 tons of cargo were carried in British bottoms to the United States.

The general condition of Porto Rico at the close of 1899 was by no means good.

The effects of the war on the commerce of the island have been paralyzing. On Spain surrendering dominion, she of course closed her ports to Porto Rico, whilst the American occupation of Cuba destroyed the only other market of any great importance it had for its produce. The commerce in two of the three staples upon which Porto Rican prosperity depended was at once ruined, viz., those of coffee and tobacco, and nothing up to the end of the year has been provided to relieve the situation. Money was not, in the majority of cases, procurable for the payment of the interest on the planters mortgages, which are estimated to amount in value to over 30,000,000 pesos, and are held for the greater part by the merchants and bankers of the island at rates of interest from 24 per cent down to 12 per cent.

On August 8 a terrible hurricane wrecked the plantations, destroyed the food supplies and resources of the lower classes, and left the large majority of the agricultural population bereft of the means of earning their living. The bananas and plantains upon which they were dependent for food were completely swept away and with no other alimentary crop in sight, many thousands would have starved outright had not the United States Government come to the rescue and organized a large and very complete system of relief which will remain in action until the food crops are once more available or the laborers by some other means regain a position to earn their living.

According to the official return of the Military Government the hurricane caused the deaths of 2,184 human beings and injured 2,764.

Further it caused special damages in value as under:

	Value
	£
Sugar plantations	405,630
Coffee plantations	2,291,563
Tobacco plantations	44,966
Ordinary crops	595,622
Urban properties	918,260
Cattle	56,384

making a total loss of 4,312,425£.

Besides these actual losses, it is estimated that the commerce and industries of the island suffered damages to the extent of 173,543£. which added to the above makes a tangible loss of 4,485,968£.

The severity of the blow may be measured by the fact that the hurricane is said to have destroyed 90 per cent of the coffee crop, the export of which represents seven-tenths of all exports and to be worth annually about 6,500,000 pesos. Further, that through the damage done, the 1900 crop cannot be worth more than 500,000 pesos, the trees being so injured as to be unable to make a larger effort. Indeed they will not recover their full bearing for at least four years.

The sugar estates, from the nature of the plant, did not suffer so heavily, but the damage to machinery, buildings and the cane fields was sufficient to reduce the planters' chances of financial recuperation from the losses resulting from the war.

Tobacco, the third staple, sustained the least damage, not being a recurrent crop, but merely single and periodical

The monetary system at the close of the year remained in an unsatisfactory state, which creates a universal demand for its assimilation, as soon as possible, with that of the United States. The rate of exchange through the year has ranged spasmodically between 8 pesos 20c and 8 pesos 10c. to the 1£. The United States authorities, however, for government purposes have decreed the United States dollar to value 1 peso 66²³ c. The peso is generally received at 60 c. on the dollar, but its bullion worth is only about 40c.

The assessed value of island realty, imperfectly got at, is estimated at 100,000,000 pesos; the island revenue at 2,000,000 pesos; it has no debt, but there is a universal demand to be empowered to contract one to an amount not greater than 10 per cent on the assessed value of all property.

Taxation at present is indefinite, no regular collection having been made since the occupation; taxes will soon have to be imposed, but the form is yet to be decided upon. The tax on land as it now stands is 1 peso per acre on first-class land; 50c. on second-class and pasturage; waste lands pay 25c; residents abroad pay 50 per cent surcharge.

The value of land is anything up to 500 pesos an acre, sugar land in a good state of cultivation and well equipped is estimated to give a good return at this latter price. There is a considerable quantity of land not planted and fit for coffee that can be got at 10 or 20 pesos an acre, but intending purchasers must beware of unreasonable demands put forward in hopes of a good time to come under the approaching new rule. They must also look well into the title under which the land is sold, as boundaries in many cases are determined by the limits of lands of individuals who have long since passed away, and which have since been many times transferred. The laborers are reported to be docile and for the tropics satisfactory workers. Their wages range from 20 to 30 c. *per diem*.

Though called Porto Ricans, the people are of all sorts and degrees of mixed breed, Carib, negro, and white in every possible blend, and of all colors from jet black to quite light yellow.

About 70 per cent, are said to be of the Caucasian race, but that proportion is, however, too large if appearances have anything to do with distinction. Some 70,000 are estimated to be negroes, and 240,000 mulattos of all sorts.

A noticeable thing in the island statistics is, that about 3,500 of the population are returned as Corsicans and are still French citizens.

Since the occupation much has been done in all parts of the island to improve its sanitation. Compulsory vaccination undoubtedly saved it from a threatening epidemic of small-pox. Sanitary boards have been established in all parts, with liberal powers for the abatement and extirpation of sources of disease, with the result that the health of the island may be reported as being fairly good.

There are no general statistics published on the sanitary condition of the island by the Superior Board of Health, but I have been furnished with the following returns for the past 10 years:

Year	Number of Deaths
1890	25,204
1891	24,350
1892	22,271
1893	20,573
1894	22,888
1895	22,708
1896	22,638
1897	28,473
1898	30,222
1899	36,598

The lowest rate being 23.2 per 1,000 in 1893, and the highest 39.2 in 1899.

During the year 1899 the deaths from the principal diseases were as follows:

Disease	Number of Deaths
Small-pox	219
Typhoid fever	338
Meningitis	334
Dysentery	3,288
Tuberculosis	44
Tetanus	1,623
Anemia	1,027
Total	8,560

With respect to the increase of mortality in 1897 and 1898 there was no epidemic to account for it, although deaths from anemia and dysentery greatly increased in many municipalities, particularly in 1898.

The 1899 ordinary death roll was swelled by the deaths of nearly 3,000 individuals directly brought about by the hurricane of August 8, entailing indirectly the deaths of thousands more.

There was no case of yellow fever during the year.

All accounts and surveys of the island agree in the suitability of nearly the whole of its interior for coffee growing above the elevation of about 600 feet above sea-level.

These lands are described as being "admirable" and it is stated by experts that there is no reason why Porto Rico should not become one of the principal coffee-growing countries of the world, as the natural conditions required are probably more favorable than elsewhere.

The berry produced is also described as being "admirable" of particularly good flavor, and in quality quite as good as that which fetches the highest retail price. A proof of its superior quality is that the trade while refusing to admit it as a distinct grade have been frequently known to dispose of it as Mocha or best Java.

On the whole island there are about 200,000 acres in coffee or preparing for it, but its cultivation is capable of large extension. According to experts its cultivation has hitherto been carried on somewhat improperly, such as the use of too much shading and of neglect of nurseries for the young plants. By improvement in methods it is estimated that the average yield could be doubled, while as to productive capability, the island could produce all the high-grade coffee required by the United States.

The crops of 1896 and 1897 were 59,780,000 and 57,390,000 lbs, respectively, but it has mounted to over 60,000,000 lbs.

The average yield is about 500 lbs. per acre, but this may be greatly exceeded by improved culture.

Good coffee land may cost anything from 25 to 100 pesos per acre. Wild land will cost about 30 pesos an acre to put into cultivation, and the expenses of production are estimated at from 6 to 7 c. per lb.

The sugar lands of the island, of which many hundreds of acres are lying abandoned on account of not paying expenses without considerable outlay in the shape of fertilizers that the planters cannot afford, were never what is called prime. Replanting is required every three to five years, while there is land in Cuba which lasts for 12 years and more without a change. In

all there are estimated to be some 50,000 acres in sugar in the island, which represents about one-third of the land capable of producing it.

The average yield is from 4 to 5 tons per acre, with a decrease of about 10 per cent, per annum, down to under 2 tons when the land is ploughed up and replanted or left for a rest in pasture. This acreage does not include a large extent of land in the south side of the island, which could be brought into cultivation by irrigation and terracing.

The crop of 1899 amounted to 47,000 tons. A 10 years average tells up to 58,471 tons of sugar and 14,358 hogsheads of molasses per annum. The crop on one occasion went as high as 60,000 tons, and with improved methods might be brought up to 100,000 tons.

Like all other island products, owing to the war and the hurricane, sugar production is by no means in a flourishing condition.

The tobacco interest is small, but is capable of great extension. It appears to be grown more as a subsidiary crop than a steady pursuit and though the quality is said to be poor as compared to the Cuban article, nevertheless about half the entire crop always went to Cuba, to reappear in the various forms of Havana manufactured tobaccos. That is, it was so before the war, when it could be introduced under favorable conditions, but since that time its commerce has fallen off almost completely. The crops, from want of a market, have had to remain at home, which, however, may in the end prove a benefit, as the necessity of doing something with the material to avoid total loss has resulted in the creation of several manufactories in which is now made a very fair brand of cigar.

The acreage in tobacco is estimated to be something above 3,000 acres, which produce about 12,000,000 lbs. per annum, the surplus of which after supplying home wants, used to go to Cuba, with the exception of a small quantity of the very poorest grade that found its way to France and Germany. At present all remains in the country, and will do so until more settled times find a new market.

The conditions of the climate and country of Porto Rico are specially favorable for banana growing, but it is estimated at least 500 acres must be cultivated to make a regular trade possible and profitable. As yet they have not found their place as an article of export, but with proper cultivation it is expected that the 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 dol. worth annually imported into the United States might be produced on the island.

Pineapples grow wild in great luxuriance, and with proper care produce a fruit not to be excelled. As an article of export they as yet have had little notice, but are gradually gaining an increasing market in the United States.

The country produces a splendid orange which, however, has not been as yet seriously regarded from a commercial point of view. This will not be the case for long as tracts of land are being taken up every day for planting, which in due time must prove highly remunerative.

Vegetables of all descriptions can be grown with profit at the various altitudes suitable to them, so much so, that great hopes are entertained of Porto Rico supplanting Bermuda in the very profitable supply of early vegetables for the mainland.

With all the special agricultural qualifications of the island it must not be thought that such may be turned to profit by anyone who may acquire land there. In the words of a United States Government expert: "For men without capital or experience in the industries of tropical countries there are no openings in Porto Rico, but with the improvement of the means of communication there will be much to encourage the settlement of farmers of sufficient enterprise and intelligence to carry on diversified farming, and profit by the advantageous local conditions."

Cacao has been proved to grow very favorably, but has not been essayed as yet in any but a small way.

There can be no doubt that sisal hemp such as is now being successfully produced in the Bahamas can be freely grown, as also the manilla form of the article.

A great many inquiries have been made as to the adaptability of the island for rubber-growing. This is a question for actual experiment, for although several kinds of rubber-producing trees are to be found wild in the bush, Porto Rico does not possess the climate which appears

to be necessary to the growth of the principal or Pará rubber tree, nor the soil congenial to many of its substitutes.

Cattle thrive well, and there is no doubt that their raising as a business could be developed with little trouble to an important degree.

The island breed is of African origin, and of a specially docile nature. Nobody appears as yet to have taken the trouble to improve the breed, which approaches in quality the good grades of cattle in the United States; smaller but much better proportioned than the Texan sort.

Through San Juan, Porto Rico may be said to be more than ordinarily fortunate in its facilities for communication with the outside world.

It had before November, when the "Royal Mail" discontinued its monthly connection with the English mail from Southampton via Barbados, four direct monthly mail services from and to Europe, viz., the British, French, German, and Spanish, sailing respectively at different dates from Southampton, Havre, Hamburg, and Cadiz, the last three continuing their routes to various West Indian islands and South American ports, returning thence through Porto Rico to pick up the homeward mails and passengers. Other direct communication is afforded by the steamers of the Larrañaga and Serra lines running frequent boats from Liverpool under the Spanish flag but carry no mails or passengers. There is also an Italian service with no fixed dates.

From the United States the Red D line run a fine regular service three times a month to Curaçao and Venezuela via Porto Rico, by which comes the bulk of the European mails and passengers. Further, the fine steamers of the Porto Rican Company run to New York and back at similar intervals though at different dates, also taking mails and passengers. These with a Government Transport Service of fast boats running scarcely ever less than three trips a month, carrying mails, supply frequent and regular communication with all parts of the world.

Intercoastal communication is very well served by special steamers of the Porto Rican Company, which makes the round of the island at stated and frequent intervals arranged to correspond with the comings and goings of the various calling steamers.

Other coastal communication is maintained by a considerable fleet of schooners constantly in movement on the coast or to the adjacent islands.

Beyond the erection of a commercial pier no improvements have been attempted in the harbour since the American occupation. Great works, however, from naval and military points of view are projected, and must naturally improve the commercial conditions. Amongst these, not the least difficult, if at all possible, will be to make the basin safe and suitable for heavy warships, for which a considerable deepening must be effected. At present the larger ships do not use the harbour on account of not having a secure margin of water under their keels.

The ships sunk during the war for the protection of the port are still there but are reported to be no source of danger.

There may be said to be only one road worthy of the name in the island, viz., the excellent military road right across from San Juan to Ponce.

With the exception of short branches from it, here and there, the communications must only rank as tracks. The military authorities, however, for their special work have put all the most important of these into temporary working order, but have effected nothing that may be called finished or permanent.

Great schemes are under consideration for the future, to be put into execution when the island shall have settled down.

The only railway, intended originally to encircle the island, carries out a very inefficient service on four much disconnected sections on different parts of the coast.

The original concession was granted to a French company by the then Spanish Government, who guaranteed that the enterprise should earn 8 per cent upon 10,000,000 pesos, the estimated cost of about 380 miles of road.

Four sections of this road only were built; the more difficult portions were not attempted nor are they being provided for to this date. The time limit and extensions ran out, and now

the United States authorities refuse to recognise the terms of the concession as any longer in force, and the whole matter will have finally to be adjudicated upon in the Courts.

It is currently stated that this railway project cannot under any conditions earn the 8 per cent on the capital, as serving only the coast line it cannot compete successfully with the cheaper form of water carriage.

Great expectations are entertained, and many plans are being formed for the installation of short inland railways from the central range to the coast to be worked by electricity.

The power is to be developed through the agency of the multitude of streams to be met with in every part of the mountain range which traverses the island from end to end.

The only other form of steam traction is a short line for passengers from the capital to Río Piedras, a track of about 9 miles. This very shortly is to be replaced by an electric service.

The plans for the projected docks, &c., are reported to be of an ambitious order, and to provide for the supply of docks, works, and roadsteads necessary for a thoroughly efficient naval station. But for the opposition of the civic dignitaries of San Juan, who objected to the spot selected as checking the expansion of the town, the works might have been commenced this year.

In connection with this naval scheme it is further planned to carry out defense works at an estimated cost of 11,728,938 dol. United States money.

The waterworks, which a previous report mentions as being left incompleted by a British company, who had suffered the forfeit of their concession, have since then been taken in hand by the municipality during the Spanish Dominion and completed. They work very well and furnish a supply of good water from the works at Río Piedras, through some 9 miles of outlying villages and suburbs of the capital, where, although by no means thoroughly distributed, it is becoming every day more so, and is an undoubted aid to the health of the town.

In conclusion, I would draw attention to the observations [made] by Mr. Vice-Consul Wilson, of Arecibo, upon possible openings for British capital in his district, and would remark that such possibilities extend to the whole island.

PONCE

Mr. Vice-Consul F.M. Toro reports as follows:

Ponce is the richest and most populous district of Porto Rico. It produces over one-third of the total exports of the island, with the exception of tobacco, of which it produces only about 20 per cent.

The following figures corroborate this statement:-

The island exported, since American occupation, from August, 1898, to December 31, 1899 the amount of 11,896,807 dol. (United States currency) of which Ponce exported 4,456,403 dol

The exports in 1899 were: Coffee, 10,809 tons; sugar, 11,522 tons (foreign export); sugar, 7,500 tons (inward and coastwise for island consumption); molasses, 1,543,700 gallons; tobacco, 486 tons; representing a total value of 3,872,489 dol. (United States currency) against imports about 3,700,000 dol.

In spite of this apparent prosperity, however, the year 1899 has been extremely critical for this district owing to very low price of coffee, which was about 50 per cent less than the previous 10 years, representing a difference in value or loss to planters of nearly 300,000£.; and further the terrible hurricane which swept this district on August 8, destroying buildings and crops, and worse yet an inundation next day in which about 1,500 persons were drowned.

The loss by the hurricane and floods was enormous. Coffee plantations suffered most, nine-tenths of the crop being lost, which represents several million dollars apart from the still heavier loss of numberless coffee trees, which will take years to replace.

On sugar plantations most of the buildings were destroyed, but fortunately little damage was done to sugar mills and other machinery. Loss on sugar crop by floods is estimated at about 40 per cent.

The crisis this district is undergoing is a serious one, and more so as there are no local banks which could help planters.

Land, both improved and rough, is high; land producing sugarcane is valued at about 200 dol. per acre; coffee land under cultivation from 100 to 300 dol. per acre; for pasture, 100 dol. per acre; rough land at about 20 dol. per acre, all according to location.

In cane lands, at above price, irrigation facilities are included.

Some land suitable for cane-growing and which can be irrigated, has been leased at 10 dol. per acre; pasture land at 3 dol. per acre. Labor is 50 c. to 1 dol. per day.

Prospects of free trade with the United States accounts for these high prices.

Suitable land for growing fruits, especially oranges and bananas, could yet be bought cheap in the interior of this district, as for want of proper roads there is no profit in them now, but as undoubtedly the United States Government will soon give proper attention to much needed roads, such land may prove a very good investment in the near future.

Communication by sea is well provided by coasting steamers which make regular trips four times a week, and a fleet of coasting schooners which trade regularly.

Communication by land, however, is difficult and very expensive; there are but two good roads and some mountain paths.

Transport from the interior is as high as 1 dol. to 1 dol. 50c. per 100 lbs.

Since my last report the railway communication in this district has not been extended, the only line running continues to be the one between this city and the town of Yauco, about 25 miles; it is a French enterprise, which owing to financial troubles has not been able to comply with original contract.

There is a good field for railways to the interior of this district, but the United States Government seems opposed at present to granting concessions for the same.

An electric road between the port of Ponce and city proper, a distance of about 3 miles, is much wanted and would be certainly a paying enterprise: several applications have been made, but so far no one has obtained the concession.

There is an electric light plant in this city which is working very successfully, Capital, 10,000£., all subscribed locally. Cash dividend for 1899 was 22 ¹/₂ per cent.

Harbour Works: Nothing has been done in this line by Government, but an American banking firm has bought up all the land available for wharf building, and has obtained Government grant to build same, and is now trying to form a company with that object.

Wharves are much needed as shipping is on the increase, and discharging and loading are exclusively in the hands of one lighter company with extremely high charges, and if the wharf company is well managed there is no reason why it should not be a paying investment.

British shipping has fallen off considerably owing to navigation between the United States and this island being confined to American vessels.

Of the 57 foreign sailing vessels, however, 50 were British, while of the 143 foreign steamers only six were British.

The Royal Mail Steamship Company began a regular service, connecting with Barbados, via St. Thomas, but they soon gave it up apparently owing to quarantine restrictions in the above islands.

The Hamburg-American Steamship Company is doing a good business here, touching outward and homeward twice a month, and extra steamers are sent whenever sufficient cargo warrant it. They are also doing a good business carrying almost all the Cuban trade from this port.

The French steamers, Compagnie Generale Transatlantique, touch here regularly with their inter-colonial boats.

The Italian Steamship Company, La Veloce, are doing well with a monthly trip.

From Spain we have three steamship companies which call regularly every month.

From England we have two steamship companies under Spanish flag, with monthly sailings from Liverpool but without fixed dates. No steamers under British flag touch this port, in regular trips, which is certainly very strange.

Port charges are as follows: Pilotage is obligatory; 70 c. (United States currency, in and out if drawing up to 15 feet; 1 dol. (United States currency), in and out if drawing more than 15 feet.

Shifting berth, 2 dol., up to 15 feet; 4 dol., over 15 feet.

Vessels under 50 tons are exempt from pilotage.

Water tax: 5 dol. gold option of any quantity filling water casks and carrying same alongside at vessel's expense.

Tonnage dues: 20 c. (United States currency), per net ton register; if not full cargo, 1 dol. per ton at option of master.

Yachts belonging to an organized yacht club are exempt, also vessels entering in distress.

Trade with the Dominion of Canada continues to be of importance, especially with Nova Scotia, from where dry and tinned fish, potatoes, and lumber are continually imported on a large scale.

No less than 44 cargoes were imported during 1899 mostly from Luxemburg (Nova Scotia) and Halifax (Nova Scotia), representing a value of 408,236 dol. (81,600£.) Custom-house duties collected on above amounted to 23,544 dol. (4,700£.) .

Exports to Dominion of Canada; 60,000£., mostly molasses.

Imports from the United Kingdom: It is impossible to get detailed statistics of imports; they were mostly cleaned Rangoon rice, hardware, galvanized iron, empty bags, and other manufactured goods, amounting to 436,442 dol. (87,288£.). Custom-house duties on same, 65,391 dol. (13,078£.).

Custom-house statistics show a trade with England since American occupation, or from August 1, 1898, to December 31, 1899, of 581,043 dol. (116,208£.). Custom-house duties on same 93,367 dol. (18,673£.) against exports, 158,044 dol. (31,609£.).

With Nova Scotia during same period: Imports, 578,896 dol. (115,779£.) Custom-house duties on above, 34,266 dol. (6,853£.), against exports, 344,689 dol. (68,938£.).

There is only one bank in Ponce, a savings bank with a subscribed capital of 200,000 pesos (Porto Rican money), (25,000£.). Dividend for 1898 has been 12 per cent.

The public health in this port and city has been very satisfactory throughout the year; during the first month small-pox threatened to spread, but obligatory vaccination rigorously enforced limited this epidemic to only a few cases.

MAYAGÜEZ

Mr. Vice-Consul Monefeldt reports as follows:

Since my report for 1895 many circumstances have contributed in reducing the importance of this district, both in agriculture and commerce. The steady falling-off, year by year, in the production of sugar and low prices prevailing tended to create general impoverishment, and brought about a very extensive and prolonged financial crisis, which culminated in many failures during the years 1896 and 1897, when it became of vital importance to curtail the long credit system formerly in general vogue. Meanwhile the coffee crops, which for a number of years had commanded remunerative prices, did not increase as might have been expected in consequence of the monetary crisis, while tobacco, the third important staple of the island's production, has languished exceedingly in output and value since the civil war in Cuba. The subsequent war between Spain and the United States has culminated in the almost total ruin of the island, for while the markets of Spain and Cuba have since then been almost closed for our coffee and tobacco, the existing tariff with the United States and the low value there of our coffee, have prevented the continuance of advantages derived from those staples, previous to the change of sovereignty.

To all these elements of distress must be added the effects of the severe hurricane which swept over the island on August 8, 1899, destroying more than 40,000,000 pesos (Porto Rican currency) of property and although being at the time yet in its early growth, the sugar-cane did not suffer as much as was feared, and may produce yet about 75 per cent of an average crop, but the same cannot be said regarding coffee, which will not yield this season throughout the district more than about 15 per cent of last year's production and several years must elapse

before it be possible to regain its former importance, provided always that prices may be maintained at a remunerative level.

All the preceding circumstances have contributed to reduce enormously the import trade of the district both from England direct and from the British Possessions, which is illustrated by the fact that while in 1896, 66 vessels of 47,863 tons register entered this port under the British flag, 61 of 43,449 tons entered during 1897, 27 of 25,571 tons entered during 1898, and only 12 of 5,618 tons entered during 1899.

With the removal of import duties in the United States on sugar and molasses, &c., the production of these products in Porto Rico and the greater cultivation of tropical fruits, oranges, bananas, coconuts, &c., cannot but create special openings for the investment of capital, inviting to all, and in no little degree to British enterprise, for open lands may be acquired, probably at moderate values; with a teeming population which throughout the islands numbered, by last census, nearly 1,000,000 inhabitants, field labor will be plentiful and obtainable at an average of about 50 c. Porto Rican currency (equal to 30 c. American gold) per day.

It is to be expected likewise that there will be great openings for the importation from England of valuable machinery for the manufacture of sugar in its crystallized form, while British fabrics are bound to hold the preference they have maintained in time past, and will be patronized by importers for years to come and until undoubted advantages may be acquired by competitive American manufacturers.

ARECIBO

Mr. Vice-Consul Wilson reports as follows:

Cane growing and sugar manufacture is the ideal investment to-day. Old sugar lands are rated high, 120 dol. per acre. Virgin lands suitable for cane growing can be had on easy terms to buy or lease. These lands are situated near the port of Arecibo with railway alongside.

Americans from the south are very enthusiastic over fruit growing, principally oranges, limes and pineapples.

Coffee plantations require capital to build up those devastated by the hurricane.

Tobacco cultivation is a lucrative business, quality being good.

A large business might be done here in the growing of potatoes and onions, as all used on the island are imported.

Rich guano and phosphate deposits awaiting capital to work them. Returns estimated from 25 to 30 per cent.

Water works well advanced require capital to finish. Municipality offers 8 per cent on 60,000 dol.

Harbour requires breakwater, which from its natural formation could be easily accomplished.

Good opportunities for electric railways into interior towns. Water-power is abundant.

AGUADILLA

Mr. Vice-Consul Ganslandt reports as follows:

The year under record has been one of the most disastrous in the history of Porto Rico, and particularly trying for this district.

The events which followed the evacuation of the island by the Spaniards have been felt deeply; the commercial houses in the towns of this district, mostly Spanish, have been unable to collect outstanding accounts, and to meet their creditors at the seaboard. A law prohibiting the foreclosure of mortgages until January 19, 1900, added to the difficulties of the creditors, whilst the debtors, deprived of all means to go on cultivating their farms, did not derive the anticipated benefit of the law referred to. The merchants were unable, as in previous years, and the few existing banks not disposed, under the circumstances, to come to the assistance of the sufferers; still in the expectancy of an exceptionally good coffee crop for 1899-

1900 matters became more settled, and everything commenced to assume a more favorable aspect, when the terrible and unexpected hurricane of August 8 once more crushed the hopes of everybody, working in a few hours of that never-to-be-forgotten day the complete ruin of the agricultural interests, and causing fresh damages to the trade of the district. The devastation has been enormous, the ruin to the growing coffee being about 80 per cent, the hurricane and the unprecedented inundation doing immense damage to coffee trees and buildings on the farms and to sugar estates. Moreover, vast plantations of rice on the plains have been annihilated by the inundation, corn and plantains destroyed by the fury of the storm, which played havoc too with coconut, orange, mango, and all other fruit trees, depriving the poorer classes of their customary food supplies.

The Government, in view of the deplorable state of affairs, as well as of the impossibility for the poorer and working classes to sustain themselves, generously assisted by the charitable citizens of the United States, came immediately to the rescue of Porto Rico. Large shipments of relief supplies were distributed by the military officers to mitigate the terrible calamity prevailing and to provide for the most pressing wants and necessities of life. Later on, important repairs and a general system of construction of roads from and into the interior have been ordered to be executed at once (and the funds required for such works have been voted) to give employment to the thousands in need, most of the ruined planters not being in a position to hire and pay working men. Strong hopes are entertained that with these measures the most urgent wants of the people, always living from hand to mouth, may be remedied, and American capital be induced to become interested in the island, which never has stood more in want of assistance than at present. A few years of prosperity in sugar, coffee, and tobacco prices will be sufficient to counterbalance the effects of the deplorable disasters of the last two years.

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cónsul (del latín consul): Persona autorizada en puerto u otra población de un estado extranjero para proteger las personas e intereses de los individuos de la nación que lo nombra, e informar sobre el clima político, las oportunidades comerciales e industriales y, en tiempos de guerra, espiar.

¿Quién descifra y cómo se conoce mejor un país que todavía esquivo las explicaciones fáciles? Los representantes consulares de los tres principales centros imperiales del siglo 19 analizaron la colonia española con las ventajas y las limitaciones que les daba el contraste de experiencias y conocimientos adquiridos en los centros metropolitanos. Los lectores de sus informes constatarán que muchos de sus juicios fueron atinados y, a la larga, pesaron en el desenlace del 98. Al coincidir en la crítica de la incompetencia, las injusticias y los dislates del dominio de España, ayudaron a justificar la adquisición de la Isla por una metrópoli más moderna y más democrática.

Por otro lado, repensar la Isla más de un siglo después, despierta la tentación de ver la historia decimonónica de Puerto Rico como un desarrollo que conduce inexorable y fatalmente a la invasión y captura del país por los Estados Unidos. En consecuencia se podría concluir, apresuradamente, que el pasado boricua parece presidido por la mano del "destino" que impulsa nuestra historia por una avenida de un solo carril, sin caminos secundarios ni veredas en dirección contraria. Supondría, además, que los resortes principales de la sociedad puertorriqueña (economía y política coloniales, estructuras sociales y culturales) giraban al unísono y se orientaban exclusivamente hacia el Norte, por encima de la voluntad de criollos y peninsulares. En la búsqueda de nuevos significados de esos y otros cansados términos, proponemos el repaso de las miradas de los cónsules extranjeros. Entonces, quizás veamos el fin de siglo como punto de llegada y de partida, maduración y epifanía de procesos, persistencia y renovación de aspiraciones añejas.