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Some Aspects of the Mission of Joel Roberts Poinsett to Buenos Aires and Chile 1810-1814

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SOME ASPECTS OF THE MISSION OF JOEL ROBERTS POINSETT TO BUENOS AIRES AND CHILE 1810-1814

by

Charles Edward Ronan

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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LIFE

Charles Edward Ronan was born in Chicago, Illinois, June 1, 1914.

He was graduated from Fox Valley Catholic High School, Aurora, Illinois, June, 1931, and in February of the following year entered the Society of Jesus at Milford, Ohio. After the four year period of training at Milford, two of which were devoted to classical studies, he began his philosophical courses at West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana. In 1938 he received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois. In 1942, he returned to West Baden College to complete his theological studies and in 1945 was ordained to the sacred priesthood. In 1946, he received his Licentiate in Sacred Theology.

From 1941 to 1942, Father Ronan taught English and Latin at Loyola Academy, Chicago, Illinois and was instructor of Spanish and religion in the same school in 1949. The next two years were spent in graduate work at Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois.
The author did undergraduate work in history at the University of Havana in 1946-1947 and went to Montevideo, Uruguay to make his year of tertianship in 1948. During the summer of 1950, he studied History and Spanish at the National University in Mexico City, and, in the summer of 1952, went again to Havana to teach English at the Colegio de Belen.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY
The proximate occasion of the revolutionary uprisings in Hispanic America was the invasion of the Iberian peninsula by the forces of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1807 and 1808. Against this aggression, the Spanish American creole leaders, in large part, reacted by refusing allegiance to the conqueror despite his flattering promises and offers. Although a precarious obedience was sworn to the Junta de Sevilla, which had been set up to rule Spain and her colonies in the name of Ferdinand VII during his captivity by the French, the dispersion of this body marked the forming of patriotic juntas by influential colonial leaders to rule their respective territories until the restoration of the King. The first were established in Caracas and in Buenos Aires, and their presidents declared that they governed with the same authority as the beleaguered Juntas of Spain. Such a policy could be made with impunity since the Mother Country by this time had lost all effective control over her overseas possessions.

However, the problem cut much deeper than appeared on the surface. Political, commercial, and social discontent had
been growing among the creole upper classes, and by 1807 had reached sizable proportions. The more moderate element, although loyal to the monarchy, was demanding greater commercial privileges, freer trade with foreign nations, and a more equitable representation in the Spanish Cortes. The separatist group not only insisted on the above concessions also but was ready to strike out for complete independence from Spain and looked upon the present crisis as a most favorable opportunity to do so.

Owing to the strong monarchial traditions, however, among the masses, to the robust opposition of royalist sympathizers, very many of whom were found among the clergy and hierarchy, and to the restraining influence of less radical compatriots, the radicals were forced "to trim their sails to the wind," for the time to make the break was not yet ripe. Eventually, these extremists triumphed, by their audacity and inflexible determination, as generally happens in revolutions. Hispanic America was no exception.

Until relatively recent times, almost all American historians have written as though the Hispanic American independence movement was completely a product of French revolutionary thought. That Rousseau, Voltaire, and Raynal had an influence no one will deny, but more solid historical investigation has shown that the rational justification upon which the Spanish American patriots based their defense for revolutionary action
had its origin in Catholic medieval thought as expounded by Thomas Aquinas, and, to an extent, by Descartes, Newton, Condillac, Cassendi, and Malebranche. This political philosophy was, in turn, channelled into the Universities of Hispanic America largely through the teaching of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Jesuits.\(^1\) Regarding this point John Tate Lanning writes

It has long been the custom of specialists to assume that the theoretical foundation of the revolt against Spain rested solely upon the ideas of the French political doctrinaires of 1789. A man dropping from bars to investigate that subject, with all second-hand treatises destroyed and forced to use original papers exclusively, would perhaps not regard the names of Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu or even Raynal as significant enough to emphasize in the book which his association with earthly university professors would force him to write. No doubt, these last gave the late colonial period a definite slant, but the names which would seem of transcendant importance in this hypothetical book would be, instead, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Newton, Condillac, Pierre Cassendi, and Malebranche. Without them, Raynal, Condorcet, Diderot, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine would scarcely have been heard and certainly not understood. An intellectual revolution in America involving these men was the only one consistent with the role of the church in the national period, and such alone could explain the surprising political conservatism of men like Unanue, Monteagudo, and even Bolivar.\(^2\)

Free trade must by no means be ignored in attempting to indicate motives which goaded Hispanic America on to independence. The revolutionaries could see no reason why they could

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2 John Tate Lanning, Academic Culture in the Spanish Colony, New York, 1940, 87-36.
not carry on commercial relations themselves with the outside world instead of through Spanish ports and Spanish merchants. This point was being constantly impressed upon their minds by Yankee and British smugglers and traders who attributed the greatness of their respective countries partially to the freedom of commerce that they enjoyed. Such propaganda had its effect, and it was through offers of commercial privileges and concessions that the warring patriotic Junta's tried to win material assistance from foreign countries and even recognition as sovereign nations.

The spirit of revolution created by the revolt of the thirteen British colonies in North America in 1776 also aided in fomenting a rebellious attitude among other dependent peoples who felt fully able to guide their own political destinies. The example of Yankee independence was not lost on Spanish America, and many of her sons dedicated their lives to win a similar freedom. Of importance, also, is the part religion played in the throwing off of Spanish jurisdiction. This was especially true in the case of Mexico whose patriots, like Iturbide and Monteagudo, feared that continued dependence on Madrid would mean the imposition of the anti-clerical constitution of 1812 with its crippling provisions regarding the Church. Rather than submit to that they resorted to revolt.

Naturally enough, to the European chancelleries filled with the ideal of the Holy Alliance, and to England who needed
the resources of Hispanic America to wage her fight against Napoleon, the uprisings were of paramount importance. The former existed primarily to stamp out revolution, and the latter, in this period at least, was not in favor of the spread of republican forms of government. To the recently established North American Union, events to the south were of more than passing interest, but the Madison Administration was so absorbed in schemes and projects to acquire the Floridas and Texas that it was slow to recognize the full significance of the issues arising in the Spanish dominions. However, the growing realization of the vast commercial possibilities that lay in store for Yankee merchants and the geographical position of the United States, stirred northern leaders into new activity and interest in the lands to the south. Fiery evangels of democracy and republicanism began to see vast horizons opening up for the spreading and implanting of their concept of religious, political, and commercial freedom. If these ideas took root in the rising republic, the righteousness of the North American way of life would gain new luster and prestige in the world. Shrewd observers saw that no time was to be lost if we did not wish to see Great Britain supreme in "our own back yard." Such an eventuality would pose a possible military, commercial, and political threat to the hard won freedom of the United States. The situation that faced us in 1810 can be summed up as follows: British influence in Spanish
America was to be kept at a minimum; the independence movement was to be promoted; trading possibilities were to be exploited; neutrality on our part between Spain and her colonies was to be maintained. This, of course, was an impossible objective, and, apart from the markets that we enjoyed for a short time, we failed miserably. British influence increased rather than diminished. We deliberately overlooked violations of our neutrality policy, and by going to war in 1812 we allowed Great Britain to establish an almost complete monopoly over Spanish American commerce.

Before all this came to pass, President Madison decided to send an agent to Buenos Aires and Chile who would be able to advise the Administration on the right course of action to take commercially and politically, and, it is at this juncture that Joel Roberts Poinsett enters into the picture. Before passing to a consideration of his mission, let us say a few words about the man himself. This information is taken from the Dictionary of American Biography.

On March 2, 1779, Joel Roberts Poinsett was born at Charleston, South Carolina. He was the son of Doctor Elisha Poinsett and Ann Roberts Poinsett. His paternal ancestors were Huguenot refugees who had fled to South Carolina after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Poinsett's early education was received from his father and from Timothy Dwight, later president of Yale. In 1796, he began studies abroad at St. Paul's
School in London, at the medical school in Edinburgh, and at a military school in Woolwich. Military science became his favorite subject. In 1800, his father, who had returned from England where in 1786 he and his entire family had migrated because of his loyalist sympathies during the American revolution, recalled him home displeased with the deep interest his son had developed for the sciences. Joel was then directed to study law under H. W. De Saussure who later became chancellor of South Carolina, but the young student developed such a dislike for the subject that he abandoned the pursuit of it and set out for an extended seven year tour of Europe and Western Asia.

In 1808, when war threatened between England and the United States, Poinsett hastened home hoping that he could secure a longed-for military appointment. His petitions were in vain. War did not break out; and when it did four years later, he was far from the scene longing ardently to return to take part in "his country's battles." Shortly after his arrival from Europe, he was offered the appointment to South America with which this paper deals. Reaching the River Plate in February 1811, he remained in Buenos Aires for nine months. After signing a commercial treaty with the governing Junta and encouraging the movement for independence, he set out for Chile where he arrived in February, 1812. This country was to be his home until April, 1814, where he did all in his power to promote the revolutionary
spirit by giving political and military advice and even taking part in the Chilean campaigns against Spanish rule. The overthrow of the Carrera family with whom he had become so intimate and who had ruled Chile in very dictatorial fashion, the hostile influence of the British, and the disgrace into which he himself had fallen, made necessary his return home.

Retracing his steps to Buenos Aires, he made his way back to the United States via the Madeira Islands, arriving in his native land in 1815. Two years later, President Monroe invited him to accept another commission to South America, but Poinsett declined the offer owing to his political activities.

In 1816, he was elected to the state legislature, being re-elected to the same office in 1818. He succeeded Charles Pinckney in 1821 in the Federal House of Representatives where he served until 1825, casting his vote for Andrew Jackson the preceding year when the presidential election was thrown into the House.

During this term, the former agent made four speeches, two of which are noteworthy. One advocated recognition of the South American Republics, while the other denounced the same measure for independent Greece for fear of involving United States in a foreign war.

Poinsett's career in Congress was interrupted for a short time when he was sent as a special observer to Mexico in August, 1822. He returned the following January, and in 1824,
he published his Notes on Mexico which were, at that time, one of the few works in English on the country south of the Rio Grande. Because of his well known interest in Spanish American affairs, he was appointed in March, 1825 first American Minister to Mexico, although not until this post had been offered to others. Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay, whom John Quincy Adams wished to remove from the country before the elections of 1824 refused the offer. The Charlestonian's term as diplomat in the Aztec capital was anything but pleasant. He was accused of being an intriguer, which he actually was, and an expansionist at Mexico's expense. He was opposed strongly by the English chargé d'affaires, George Ward, and in order to counteract British prestige and to promote American political and commercial interests, he formed among certain liberal elements of Mexico an American party which worked largely through the York Rite Masonic lodges which he also aided to set up by obtaining for them affiliation with the Philadelphia branch. Poinsett became so involved in the internal politics of Mexico in his attempts to further his country's aims that the neighboring government requested Washington to recall him. He returned home in 1830 after causing considerable damage to the harmonious relations between the two countries.

Arriving in Washington, he found President Jackson quite worried over the danger of South Carolina's nullifying the tariff act of 1828, and as soon as he settled down in Charleston
became a leader of the Unionist Party of his state. For the next three years, he carried on the Jacksonian cause with great vigor and zeal. He was largely responsible for the organization of militia to defend the Unionist cause, and President Jackson placed at his disposal arms and ammunition for this purpose.

In October, 1833, the South Carolinian married Mrs. Mary Pringle, the widow of his old friend, Julius Pringle. Retiring to a plantation near Georgetown, he spent his time cultivating his fields and pursuing intellectual enjoyments, but shortly after, President Van Buren appointed him Secretary of War. He served in this capacity with a certain distinction during Van Buren's entire administration, built up the country's military organization, organized a general staff, improved frontier defense, removed forty thousand Indians to territory west of the Mississippi in a manner that does not bear too close scrutiny, directed a war against the Florida Indians, and attempted with little success to better the education of the redskins.

In 1841, he returned to plantation life, and although he took no further part in politics, opposed the Mexican War and the succession movement of 1847-1852, refusing to go to the Nashville Convention as a delegate in 1850. Dying near Statesburg, Sumter County, South Carolina in December, 1852, he was buried in the cemetery of the Episcopalian church of the Holy Cross in that village.
His literary and scientific interests were many and varied. He contributed to the founding in 1840 of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science and the Useful Arts. His manuscripts and other treasures he turned over to the American Philosophical Society and the Pennsylvania Historical Society. Of all his contributions, however, he will probably be best remembered for the flower that he introduced into this country known as the "poinsettia pulcherrima," named after him because of his developing it from a Mexican flower.

And so passed a typical American of the nineteenth century, a man glowing with an idealism which he could make fit any given set of circumstances, moral or immoral, just so long as his country's welfare was promoted.
CHAPTER II

OFF TO BUENOS AIRES

In the summer of 1810, Joel Roberts Poinsett was appointed by President Madison as special agent to South America. In letters exchanged between the Chief Executive and the Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, we see that the Charlestonian was a substitution for one Mr. Celston, who, for certain reasons, was unable to accept the mission to South America. In a despatch written on August 22, 1810, Madison states:

Poinsett promises, by his qualifications, everything to be expected from a substitute for Celston. I have sent the papers to the Department of State, that new ones may be forwarded to you. . . . The document will now specify both a port in Peru and Chile as within the range of Mr. Poinsett if visitable by him . . . Rio de Janeiro is in every view an eligible way for Mr. Poinsett. An advance of §1500 is stated to the Department of State.

Shortly after this communication was written, the appointee received instructions from Robert Smith, Secretary of State, directing him to proceed immediately to Buenos Aires, and from there if

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3 Dorothy M. Parton, The Diplomatic Career of Joel Roberts Poinsett, Washington, 1934, 3.

suitable to Lima or to Santiago de Chile, and, if possible to both places. The Secretary went on to say that a crisis was fast developing in Spanish America and that due to the geographical position on the United States and "to other obvious considerations" the Administration was vitally interested in the events taking place, and, hence, felt it to be its duty to "take such steps not incompatible with the neutral character and honest policy of the United States, as the occasion renders proper."

Poinsett was to strive to impress upon the Spanish Americans that the northern Republic looked upon them as neighbors since all belonged to the same hemisphere, and, therefore, both Americas should act accordingly. Furthermore, he was to assure them that such friendly feelings would exist no matter what their internal system of relations with Europe may be "with respect to which no interference of any sort is pretended." However, Mr. Smith wrote, if the colonists should separate politically from the Mother Country and establish an independent government, such a movement would harmonize with the policy of the United States to foster the friendliest relations and the most liberal intercourse. The new agent was also to find out the attitude of the Creoles towards the United States, towards the European powers,

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5 Letter to Poinsett, Poinsett Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, I, 20
what their commercial relations were, and, in general, to ascertain the characteristics, population, wealth, organization of military power, the state of government finances, and intelligence of those provinces. The communication closes by stating that

...the real as well as ostensible object of your mission is to explain the mutual advantages of commerce with the United States, to promote liberal and stable regulations, and to transmit seasonable information on the subject. 6

Although this letter does not promise to grant recognition to Spanish colonies that declare their independence, it definitely shows that the American Government unofficially approved such trends.

In another despatch written on the same day as the above, August 27, 1810, the South Carolinian was given the title of "Agent for Seamen and Commerce in the aforesaid port of Buenos Aires, and such ports as shall be nearer to it than to any other agent of the United States." He was also told to act as consul for the American citizens residing in those parts.

The President wished to keep this appointment as secret

6 William R. Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States concerning the Independence of the Latin American Nations, 3 vols., New York, 1925, I, 6-7

7 Letter to Poinsett, Poinsett Papers, I, 21
as possible; for, he knew that the English would be very opposed to it. They looked upon Hispanic American markets as their exclusive possession. Then, too there would be the violent opposition of the yet unrecognized but extremely vigilant and thoroughly royalist Spanish minister, Luis de Onis, who was highly indignant at the support he saw the United States extending to so many of the intriguer and revolutionaries from the Spanish Indies that came to Washington for help. For these reasons Madison wrote Gallatin that

It will not do to apply for a Spanish passport; although I fear the want of it may be a serious difficulty, unless Sumter's letters of introduction should answer an equivalent purpose. The Spanish consul at Baltimore on discovering that Lowry was going to Caracas entered a formal complaint on the ground that it was contrary to the colonial system. And to ask a passport, as for a private person, to cover a political one would not, of course, be allowable, if in these suspicious times it were not probably attainable.

What the "Spanish consul at Baltimore" had in mind was, undoubted ly, the royal law of April 24, 1807 which prohibited the residence of foreign consuls in the New World dominions of Spain, and also the Treaty of San Lorenzo of 1795 which forbade the sending of consuls to Hispanic America.  

8 Writings of Albert Gallatin, I, 483-484.
9 Ibid., 484.
10 Charles Lyon Chandler, "United States Shipping in the La Plata Region," HAHR, Durham, North Carolina, II, February,
Finally, on October 15, 1810, the newly appointed agent set sail aboard the Niagara bound for Rio de Janeiro. Apparently, Poinsett was under orders "to feel out the lay of the land," because the effect that his mission would have on others worried Washington, as can be seen in a letter of Gallatin to James Madison written shortly before the Niagara put to sea. He said: "We have found a vessel which will sail for Rio de Janeiro in two or three weeks; it is the only one bound for Brazil, and there is none for La Plata even if it was advisable to go directly there." After a stormy voyage of seventy days, he arrived at the Brazilian capital and immediately got in touch with Thomas Sumter, American Minister to the Portuguese court, which just three years previous had moved over to the New World from Lisbon. In order to avoid arousing the suspicions of the British and Portuguese authorities, Poinsett was announced as an American officer bringing despatches to Mr. Sumter. These two

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1919, 53; William Miller Collier and Guillermo Felicid Cruz, La Primera Missión de Los Estados Unidos de América en Chile, Santiago de Chile, 1920, 26.


12 Writings of Albert Gallatin, I, 490. Italics mine.

13 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 672.

14 Ibid., 673.
Yankee representatives had to move very cautiously if they did not wish the mission to fail since, as the North American plenipotentiary had written to the State Department, deep suspicions were entertained by the Court in Rio and by all foreign ambassadors that the United States was a promoter of "French projects and however the Spanish, English and Portuguese Ministers may agree or differ on other points -- in this they all agree." Moreover, he said, such rumors were rife throughout all of South America. This credence was not without foundation: we know that at least during the period 1810-1812, our government tended to encourage cooperation with France and rivalry with England in promoting its interests in Latin America, and according to Bassano, Napoleon's Minister of Foreign Affairs, President Madison promised the French representative to Washington that he would cooperate indirectly in every way with France to promote the independence of Hispanic America. The military disguise, however, proved to be a boomerang. It removed the possibility of Poinsett's travelling South as a private business man, as Sumter

15 Ibid., 672.

16 Ibid.

17 Whitaker, The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 85.

18 William Spence Robertson, France and Latin American Independence, Baltimore, 1939, 84.
wished him to do. Writing about the matter, the latter said that because of his fellow American's being presented as an official "it was no longer possible to use the best plea which could be assigned for going to that river at such a time as this -- which plea is business -- no other of a private nature would be considered at all reasonable." At any rate, the Charlestonian remained with his diplomatic colleague for several weeks gathering all the information he could on conditions in the southern vice-royalty, and towards the end of January, 1811, with letters of introduction to the Junta of Buenos Aires written by Mr. Sumter, he set sail on board an English merchant ship.

The circumstances surrounding Poinsett's departure from Brazil are a bit mystifying when we recall the fact that the British were so antagonistic to the presence of Americans in the Spanish New World. The American diplomat to Rio wrote to the Secretary of State that

He Poinsett went away in an English Merchant ship with some letters from the English Consul (and some officers to whom he had been introduced) to officers and Merchants of the same nation at Montevideo; Buenos Ayres, and the Cape of Good Hope -- this vessel was to go direct to Buenos Ayres -- but should she be brought to by the

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19 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 673.
20 Ibid., 672-673.
blockading squadron he will probably from his appearance and the superscription of these letters, be taken for an Englishman, and in case he should, by any chance, get to Montevideo he has a letter from me ... to the governor of the City, on the subject of our commerce, which it may be hoped will be a sufficient recommendation to the good offices of that officer as long as he shall find it necessary to remain within his jurisdiction.21

On the basis of this letter, Rippy draws the conclusion that Poinsett left for the Rio de La Plata disguised as an Englishman.22 If this is true, the two Yankees certainly were clever in their strategy. However, the disguise must have been assumed only to evade the Spaniards. It is a bit difficult to believe that the British were taken in. Perhaps, the scheme of travelling as a private business man was finally resorted to since Sumter mentioned in the above letter that Poinsett had letters from the English to officers and merchants at the Cape of Good Hope. Could he not have told the British that he wished to go there hoping to deceive them regarding his true mission? The diligence that our agent employed to cover up his movements was, after all, in strict accord with his official instructions,23 and when the British diplomats did discover that he had set out for South America, they felt it of sufficient importance to notify their

21 Ibid., 673.

22 F. James Rippy, Rivalry of the United States and Great Britain over Latin America, Baltimore, 1929, 9.

23 See note 8.
home government. Augustus J. Foster, British Minister to Washing-
ton, who did not find out that Poinsett had departed until sever-
al weeks after his sailing, wrote Wellesley concerning the fact
and stated that the former was the "most suspicious character"
from the United States in Hispanic America and that he had gone
to Brazil with the purpose of making his way into the interior of
South America to ascertain the sentiments of the natives and to
foment discord.24 A few weeks later, the British Foreign Office
received a despatch from Lord Strangford, English Ambassador to
the Portuguese Court in Brazil stating that he did not even know
of the presence of that "most suspicious character" in the Carioca
capital until after he had left for the River Plate territory and
that he was probably in constant communication with the French
with whom he had been seen in conference in Baltimore upon his
return from Paris.25 The British, of course, had every reason to
oppose the entrance of North Americans into the Spanish Indies,
and this, not only for commercial reasons but also to prevent the
spreading of revolutionary propaganda. His Britannic Majesty
wished the creoles to maintain their dependence on the Spanish
Crown at least until the forces of Napoleon were crushed because

24 Letter of Foster to Wellesley, No. 33, December 20,

25 Ibid.
any serious form of Hispanic American revolt would hinder the
flow of colonial supplies so badly needed to carry on the cam­
paign against the Corsican. The strangest report of all, though,
concerning our South American traveller came from the Spanish
agent, Don Luis Onis. Over a year after Poinsett had left the
United States, Don Luis came upon the information that the for­
mer was residing in Mexico and had gone there for the purpose of
stirring up revolt among the people with the ulterior motive of
bringing about the annexation of the territory south of the Rio
Grande to the American Union. He wrote to the Mexican Viceroy,
Francisco Javier Venegas, under date of January 1, 1812, inform­
ing him of Poinsett's presence in New Spain and urging immediate
action against him. On the basis of this misinformation, Don
Francisco sent a circular letter to the governors of all the
Mexican provinces on April 3, 1812 acquainting them with the
facts and ordering the intruder's capture. He wrote

Noticiándome el señor don Luis Onis en carta de 1 de Enero
de este año, los movimientos hostiles que observa en
Filadelfia, como Ministro Plenipotenciario de S.M.C.,
cerca de aquél gobierno, me expone que en su concepto, se
dirigen a fomentar la revolución de este Reino, con el
objeto de unirlo a aquella Confederación, y que se sabe
de positivo que reside aquí un agente del referido gob­
erno llamado Poinsett, según manifiesta la copia de lo
conduciente de dicha carta, que acompaña a Ud. para su
inteligencia, y que disponga se solicite con la mayor
eficacia la persona del citado agente Poinsett en ese
distrito. Dios guarde a Ud. muchos años, April 3, 1812,
Francisco Javier Venegas.26

Our emissary arrived at Buenos Aires on February 13, 1811.27 On the very same day he was presented to the governing junta by one of its members, Juan Larrea.28 At first, the officials presented the form in which Poinsett's commission was drawn up because it was not directed to them nor signed by the President; but as soon as it was explained that similar commissions were held by the other American agents and under the same form, they expressed satisfaction.29 What took place on that eventful day was summed up in a letter which the new arrival forwarded to Washington the very afternoon of his disembarkation. He wrote

Sir, I landed this morning from Rio de Janeiro, and hearing that an American vessel will sail this afternoon for Philadelphia, and being desirous of giving the government all the information I could obtain in so short a time, I waited upon John Larrea, one of the members of the Junta and was by him immediately presented to the Junta who were then sitting. . . . You will see that they have recognized me as agent for the commerce of the United States. . . . It is their determination to declare themselves independent of the mother country the instant they are attacked; in short, all their measures tend to that end. . . . Lorenzo, a member of the Junta, embarked for London today. I don't know yet the object of his mission. I am just informed by a member of the Junta that they had written to the President some days previous to my arrival

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26 Cited in Lucas Alamán, Historia de México, 5 vols., Mexico City, 1849, III, apéndice 12, 45.


28 Ibid.

29 Parton, Diplomatic Career, 6.
and that their despatches will be on board the vessel expected to sail this evening. 30

The letter written by the Junta to President Madison which Poinsett refers to in the above letter served as a sort of apologia which was aimed at getting the support of the United States and eventual recognition in the contingency that independence should be declared. The despatch lauded the President for his kindness towards the province of Caracas, as Madison had allowed agents from Venezuela to reside in the United States and to buy arms and ammunition, and hoped that Washington would "tighten with the Provinces on the Rio La Plata the common chain of Nations by a cordiality more firm and expressive." The situation in Buenos Aires was much the same as that in the northern provinces. The Junta pointed out why they resisted the dispersed Central Junta of Cadiz, that "Body of Ambitious Egotists...which had lost Character of Dignity and Independence," and why they had deposed the Viceboy and his "Club of proud oligarchists" who instead of alleviating "the evils of the Country and of gaining our confidence," attempted to keep them in a wretched condition and thus to confirm their tyranny. Happily, the letter continued, such ruthlessness had been replaced by a governing Junta from which

30 Letter of Poinsett to Silas Atkins, Poinsett Papers, I, 31
nothing but blessing had flowed and which had restored the "im-
prescriptable rights" that nature had bestowed on all men. For
the purity of their intentions they appealed "to the Tribunal of
Reason . . ." and to the nations of the world and to posterity.
The closing observation was that "This Junta has too exalted an
idea of the high Character which distinguished the United States
of America to doubt for a moment the Equity of its decision. It
does your Excellency the justice to believe that you are friendly
to its cause, and that you will receive with Pleasure the grate-
ful impressions of its friendship." 31 Another letter written by
the Junta a few hours after the presentation of the new agent
informed Mr. Madison that

Don Josef R. Poinsett has just presented himself to this
Junta with a credential signed by the Secy of State to
be accredited as commercial agent of the U States in this
America and this government conformably to the cordial
and friendly intentions which it made known to Y E in its
official Letter dated yesterday has decreed his admission
to the full exercise of his agency, which it considers as
a preliminary to the Treaties between Nation and Nation
which will be formed to point out the Rules of a permanent
Commerce and of the greatest amity and Union between the
two States. 32

This letter clearly represents the paradoxical situation of so
many, or, of all the revolutionary Juntas of that period, namely,
protestations of loyalty to Ferdinand VII but at the same time

31 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 319-320.
32 Ibid., 320-321.
referring to themselves as sovereign nations. This is what they wished to appear as before the world, and they felt that agents coming to them from the great powers strongly strengthened their position.

The group ruling Buenos Aires on Poinsett's arrival was the patriotic Junta which had been set up by "popular acclaim" on May 25, 1810. The two most influential members of the assembly were the president, Cornelio Saavedra, and one of its secretaries Doctor Mariano Moreno. These two men led opposite factions within the government: Saavedra headed the conservative party which favored gradual independence but the retention of colonial forms and customs, while Moreno led a much more radical following that urged an immediate declaration of independence and a complete break in every way possible with the colonial past. It seemed for a while that the "Morenistas" faction would dominate the Junta, but their leader's vigorous opposition a bit later to the entrance of provincial deputies into the government ruined all such possibility and drove Moreno from office. In order to rid Buenos Aires of this fiery revolutionary, the "Saavedristas" saw to his appointment as agent to England, but enroute to his new post he died and was buried at sea. The May, 1810 Junta remained in power during most of Poinsett's stay in the River Plate area, but continuous quarreling among the members forced this patriotic party to give way to the Triumvirate made up of Chieclana, Paso,
and Sarratea. It was with this group that D. Bernardino Rivadavia entered into Argentina's public life.

Poinsett wasted no time in getting down to work. His most pressing task was a commercial treaty. Since the latter was one of the major reasons for sending him to the colonial provinces, it will aid in our understanding of Poinsett's activities to consider briefly the mercantile value of this area to the United States. Was it important to our merchants and manufacturers?

By 1811, the time of the South Carolinian's arrival at Buenos Aires, American commercial contacts with the La Plata region had been going on for ten years. This trade had its origin, as did our initial business contacts with Cuba, the Spanish Floridas, and New Orleans, in the exigencies of war; for, in 1796, Spain was drawn into the Napoleonic strife against England on the side of France. In order to stave off financial ruin from its overseas possessions in the New World, Madrid was constrained by the royal cedula of November, 1797, to throw open all her Atlantic and Caribbean ports to neutral trade. The United States profited enormously by this concession because at the time it was the only neutral nation with a sizable merchant marine. As Charles Lyon Chandler writes: "The United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century had vessels enough to spare to supply many trade routes throughout the world and to
avail themselves of every opportunity to use their shipping abroad."33 Once we got our foot inside the door, we had no intention of withdrawing it. By 1797, the United States had discovered through smuggling and through the trading permits with the Floridas, New Orleans, and Cuba that had been periodically granted her by the Spanish government since 1779 that all of Hispanic America was of vast and rich commercial potential and that unless Yankee merchants established themselves in these southern ports, England would have a monopoly of trade. This determination was further strengthened in 1798 when statistics showed that our exports to the Caribbean area alone had risen from a value of $2,879,170 to $5,298,659.34 To the slowly growing American Republic, a thriving commerce was of vast importance if the recently inaugurated federal government was to survive, and, hence, her merchants were willing to probe any commercial possibility, legitimate or not. It was to their interest that strong government be sustained. They knew from sad experience what had happened to commerce under the Articles of Confederation.

As is well known, Buenos Aires and Montevideo had enjoyed growing prominence since 1776 when the Plata colonies were


34 Roy F. Nichols, "Trade Relations and the Establishment of the United States Consulates in Spanish America," HAHR, XIII, August, 1933, 313.
created into a Viceroyalty. Madrid had, by new trade regulations, diverted the silver from the Potosí mines to these ports. Formerly, Vera Cruz, Callao, and Havana had been the principal centers of Spanish trade exchange, but now access was much easier to Spanish silver and gold through the two Plata ports. There the precious metal could be had in barter for foreign merchandise, and Yankee merchants found in this cow country a market for their flour which was sold in return for jerked beef and hides, the former being sold in Havana and the latter being brought back to the United States for the shoe manufacturers. The first North American ship to put in at a port of the Río de La Plata was the frigate John which arrived at Montevideo in November, 1798. Her captain, Samuel Day, citing the royal cédula of 1797, asked for permission to trade. His request was granted, and he remained there for several months, not sailing for Philadelphia until March, 1799. In that same year, nine other American vessels dropped anchor at the same port, and at least one touched at Buenos Aires. By 1800, one Union ship if not more was making regular journeys between the United States and the River Plata.

35 Chandler, "The River Plate Voyages," AHR, 816.
36 Ibid., 816-817.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 820.
39 Charles Lyon Chandler, "United States Shipping in
and it was not uncommon to see American newspapers advertising Argentine hides at that early date either.\textsuperscript{40} During the period 1801-1802, at least forty-three Yankee merchantmen traded at the Rio Plata ports some of which remained over a year.\textsuperscript{41} In 1803, not more than twelve ships appeared\textsuperscript{42} and even fewer came in 1804.\textsuperscript{43} However, the port records of Montevideo show a sharp upturn in American business for the year 1805. Twenty-two ships arrived bringing slave cargoes from Africa.\textsuperscript{44} In the following year, the total number of vessels entering was thirty, and of these twenty were slavers bringing about 2500 slaves not counting the 500 or so who had died on the voyage from Africa.\textsuperscript{45} Regarding this nefarious traffic, Professor Whitaker says

According to the Montevideo records, most of the principal Atlantic ports of the United States, but especially those from Baltimore northwards, were interested in this traffic.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Archivo General Nacional, Montevideo, Fondo ex-
"Archivo Administrativo," Libro No. 95, "Libre maestre de entrada-
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 16.
The American ships engaged in general commerce likewise represented the whole Atlantic coast of the United States with a similar concentration in the ports from Baltimore northward; and they brought assorted cargoes in which important items were rum, brandy, wine, salt, naval stores, dry goods, and furniture, with occasionally a coach, a set of drawing instruments, saddles, and horse-shoes.46

In the years 1806-1807, records show that forty-two merchant vessels put in at Plata ports.47 Mr. Chandler tells us in another installment of the above article that "... in Buenos Aires ... the inhabitants were then largely dependent on imported articles for their clothes, their shoes, their liquor, their furniture, their lumber, their crockery, and even saddles for their horses. Some of these articles were coming from the United States as well as the coach in which Doctor O'Gorman, the first practitioner in Buenos Aires rode about that city which possessed according to the Argentine scholar, Ravignani, 42,482 inhabitants in 1810.48

Our ships would return with sugar, coffee, tobacco, indigo, cacao, and as mentioned above, hides and jerked beef, not to mention huge amounts of specie although very severe restrictions prohibited its exportation.49

46 Whitaker, The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 16.
49 Whitaker, The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 8.
Despite the subsequent restrictions of license and contract imposed by the Spanish Court in 1799, 1801, and 1804 on neutral traders, the free port system established by Great Britain in the West Indies and in the Caribbean, the general tightening of English restrictions on neutral commerce beginning with the Essex decision of 1805, and the handicaps imposed on American commerce by the undeclared naval war with France in 1798-1799, our mercantile interests with Hispanic America in general, and with the La Plata area in particular continued to grow.\(^{50}\) Jefferson's Embargo Act of 1807 cut it down considerably, however, but by this time American merchants had come to a full realization of the high stake in Hispanic America and were bitter in their criticism of President Jefferson's economic measures because of their effect on trade with the creole ports.

And so, when the Niagara, the ship carrying Poinsett, sailed up the Rio de La Plata to Buenos Aires in February 1812, well over a hundred American merchantmen had made the same voyage since 1797.\(^{51}\) The British were not without strong competitors in these markets, and, as is obvious, our trade with Montevideo and Buenos Aires was well under way by the time of the British

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 9-10.

\(^{51}\) Chandler, "United States Shipping in the La Plata Region," HAHR, III, 1920, 159.
invasion of the River Plate in 1806. The United States was going to keep it that way. That is why she sent to that country an "agent for seamen and commerce." Let us see how he carried out his task.

The situation in his new field of operations filled Poinsett with hope and fear. By February 23, 1811, he felt that he had sized up the political and commercial picture well enough to give a report on it to the State Department. He stated that he had already had several very encouraging conferences with members of the Junta, that they had all assured him of their desire to foster the closest relations with the United States and that they would see to it that North American commerce would be placed on a "most favored nation" footing. 52 He also mentioned that he had induced them to investigate the "subject of the enormous duties and the vexatious manner of levying them," 53 and he forwarded the good news that Juan Larrea, the same who had been so helpful to him the day of his arrival, proffered the information that the Junta was determined to issue a declaration of independence when the proposed Congress of Buenos Aires should meet and that in the event of Spain's falling into the hands of France, it

52 Letter to State Department, February 23, 1811, Poinsett Papers, I.
53 Ibid.
would be declared immediately. His letter struck an alarming note, though, regarding the behaviour of the English. "They [the Junta] fear, distrust, and court Great Britain who hitherto bound by higher engagement with Spain has refused to countenance them openly, but endeavor to conciliate and prevent their taking any decided measures until those engagements have ceased. If they remain in the state they now are, then Great Britain must acquire a most decided influence in their councils." To forestall such a catastrophe, our agent had a definite plan which advocated North American intervention. "Could they [the Insurgents] be brought to act promptly and Great Britain were openly to oppose them we might counteract that influence." "They want encouragement and arms," he cried; "their whole force does not exceed 10,000 men. . . ." In other words, if the United States would support the Creoles by giving them material assistance in arms and men, Britain would have to oppose such a step and thus lose favor and prestige. Then, the Yankee government could appear as a friend and protector of the revolutionaries in their fight for freedom. The resultant benefits would be enormous, so Poinsett

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
argued. He went further and urged that the Administration encourage the union of all southern Hispanic American provinces into a federation that would offset the encroaching Brazilian Empire so completely under English control.58 Apparently, our emissary was of the opinion that independence from Spain of the Spanish New World dominions was just a matter of time because he asked to be "furnished with more positive instructions as to how to act upon the appearance of their declaration of independence," and strongly suggested that three credential letters be written by the President addressed to the governments of Buenos Aires, Chile, which seemed well on the road to independence, and to Bogota. With these documents he would be in a very advantageous position to deal the authorities of said countries when they declared their freedom.59 Closing his letter, he proclaimed: "All South America will be separated from the Mother Country. They have passed the Rubicon.60

Poinsett received an answer to this letter on April 30, 1811 from the new Secretary of State, James Monroe.61 It must

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 39.
60 Ibid.
61 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 11.
have been quite a disappointment in its vague and non-committal tone.

The instructions already given you are so full, that there seems to be little cause to add to them at this time. Much solicitude is felt to hear from you on all the topics to which they relate. The disposition shown by most of the Spanish provinces to separate from Europe and to erect themselves into independent States excites great interest here. As inhabitants of the same Hemisphere, as Neighbors, the United States cannot be unfeeling Spectators of so important a moment. Should such a revolution however take place, it cannot be doubted that our relation with them will be more intimate, and our friendship stronger than it can be while they are colonies of any European power.

He was informed, however, of his appointment by the President as consul general to Buenos Aires, Chile, and Peru with delegated power to appoint deputy consuls wherever he thought them necessary. Whether the American Chief Executive knew it or not, he came very near acknowledging the independence of the above-mentioned countries without knowing whether they were independent or not by appointing our American agent as consul general.

Commenting on the above letter, Professor Rippy states that the communication might have been "interpreted as a sort of incitement to revolt."
Undoubtedly, before Poinsett left his homeland he had been told that he would receive a very cold welcome from the British, and it was not long after arriving that he clearly saw opposition rising against him from that quarter. He entered the Plata provinces when English prestige was at flood tide, and in his efforts to undermine their position, he brought down on himself bitter antagonism. The United Kingdom had political and commercial plans for Hispanic America which would swing this territory very neatly into the British sphere of influence. For about thirteen years after the rupture of the alliance between Spain and England in 1795 when His Catholic Majesty’s government swung over into the French orbit, English statesmen frequently discussed the advisability of inciting revolt in the Spanish colonies. Taking his cue from London, Thomas Picton from the island of Trinidad, which the British had seized in 1797, attempted to foment rebellion in Venezuela. Francisco Miranda had the moral support of many influential British officials in his unsuccessful efforts to raise the standard of insurrection in Venezuela, and, although the British invasion of the Plata area in 1806 did not have the official approval of the home government, England, after reprimanding Sir Home Popham, the instigator, prepared to take advantage of what appeared to be a conquest. Subsequent reports, however, brought news of failure. Sir Charles Kingsley Webster asserts that little prudence was exhibited by
the authorities in endeavoring to recover their prestige by sending a second expedition the following year which also had to capitulate to the creoles. In the latter part of 1807 emphasis reverted to the old idea of revolutionizing the colonial dominions of Spain because Castlereagh admitted that the country was too extensive to be conquered. What the British government intended to do was to create native forces under English supervision which could fight for colonial independence. By 1808, the Prime Minister, Sir Arthur Wellesley, thought that Hispanic America was ready for such a move and proceeded with vast preparations. Without a doubt, the attack would have been made, but the Spaniards' uprising against the invasion from over the Pyrenees diverted these troops to the Iberian peninsula and occasioned an uneasy alliance between England and Spain in order to defeat the Corsican's almost completely successful Continental blockade of the Island Kingdom. This rapprochement meant a shift in policy on the part of London towards their ally's South American possessions. Now, the program was to exert every effort through

67 Ibid., 12.
68 Ibid., 14.
diplomacy and suasion to effect a reconciliation between the Creoles and the metropolis so that all of the colonial resources would be at the disposal of Anglo-Spanish forces in waging war against the invader. Using this idea of "united war effort" as a pretext, Great Britain insisted with a very reluctant Junta, ruling in the name of Ferdinand VII, that all Hispanic American ports be open to ships flying the Union Jack. Since it was English troops that were defending Spain against "Pepe Botellas," the Spanish "government" was unable to hold out against constant pressure and finally granted a permission for direct trade with the colonies that was to last for a limited space of time. But once an opening had been made, English merchants saw that it would be widened and under no circumstances were they going to surrender their concession now especially that their trade with Europe had been so seriously affected by blockade. English wars on the continent with the subsequent adverse falling off of trade was one of the principal reasons for the upsurge of interest in forcing a wedge into the royal monopoly Spain exercised over trade with her New World dominions. Britain would have attained this objective by promoting revolution among the creoles if necessary, but the Peninsular wars against Napoleon offered the occasion without bloodshed. 69

69 Ibid., 15-20.
This dominance in the commercial field that Britain exercised brought with it a resultant political influence in government circles that effected a certain dependence on England, and, consequently, closer ties with Europe. Naturally enough, the criollos looked upon London as a friend and protector. They had enjoyed free trade with British merchantmen and fully realized what this business meant for their prosperity. When the Platean patriots forced Cisneros, the Spanish Viceroy, to open the ports of the Viceroyalty to neutral ships in 1809, the enormous increase in revenue enabled the government not only to meet current expenses but also to liquidate its standing debt and to show a favorable balance of 200,000 pesos monthly. At the end of the year the total revenue averaged 5,420,000 pesos which was an increase of 4,300,000 pesos over the revenues received in 1808.70 Business with England accounted for a very large part of this good fortune, and Creole leaders looked with favor upon that country considering her their friend and protector especially since the British Navy controlled the seas. Out of deference to England, the separatist elements among the colonials played the double game of paying lip service to the deposed Spanish monarch. They ruled and signed documents in his name, but at the

70 Bartolome' Mitre, Historia de Belgrano, 2 vols., Buenos Aires, 1859, I, 79.
same time were bending every effort to win recognition as sovereign nations from other powers. The typical revolutionary attitude was expressed by Cornelio Saavedra to Peter Heywood, a British naval officer, when he said that the Viceroyalty had no desire to be independent of Spain but that the inhabitants could not submit to the faction at Cadiz which was intent on preserving its commercial monopoly in the New World to the exclusion of Great Britain. The idea of free trade and its rich profits played a not insignificant part in promoting the spirit of independence. Creole Chiefs argued that direct trade with the world was their right instead of the exclusive privilege of monopolistic merchants hundreds of miles away. Britain was in agreement with such a philosophy and was in a position to enforce this view. Is it any wonder that the English Crown won such ascendency in Hispanic America?

To Poinsett and the leading statesmen of the North such a situation was anything but desirable. Although United States was running Great Britain close competition in the commercial world, it was also the aim of the Washington experts on Hispanic American affairs that Yankee influence be the decisive political influence at the creole council tables to prevent English domination in all fields. From the very earliest days of our republic...

it had been the aspiration of men like Jefferson and Franklin to keep the Americas for the Americans, to preclude any foreign nations, especially France or England, from attempting to surround the American Republic, to coup her up behind the Alleghenies, and possibly to drag her back into the European framework through the "backdoor of Spanish America." Non-American powers, other than Spain who was gradually losing her grip, south of the Rio Grande posed in the minds of patriotic Yankees a serious military, naval, and commercial threat to the republican institutions and way of life. The whole matter was brought to the fore especially by Napoleon's invasion of Spain, and President Jefferson whose main objective was to acquire the Spanish borderlands "by hook or by crook" attempted to play off France against England so that the winner in the contest would be willing to give us what we wanted among Spanish possessions for the price of our neutrality. We had legitimate fears of Great Britain occupying Cuba, the Spanish Floridas, and Louisiana, but our opposition to such an eventuality was not out of love for Spanish rights but because we wished to reign supreme in place of Spain. Obviously, she would soon be dispossessed of her colonies through revolution to which we gave our moral and, at times, unofficial material aid. The Sage of Monticello did relatively little to advance American interests in Hispanic possessions other than in the borderlands. President Madison advanced the cause somewhat further. All of
them, of course, worked without too much regard for the rights or feelings of the Spanish Crown, but, due to growing tension with England, had to devote all their efforts to a solution of the American-Anglo disputes. However, the revolt against the Mother Country that broke out in New Granada in 1810 changed the Spanish American picture considerably and thus compelled the Washington administration to send an agent to the south who could act as an observer in matters political and commercial. We wished to have someone on hand to take further advantages of the free trade that would blossom forth once the spirit of revolution spread.

During his nine month’s stay in the capital of the Viceroyalty, Poinsett had two sharp encounters with the British. Both centered around matters commercial. Shortly after his arrival, he discovered that the English emissary was endeavoring to obtain special commercial privileges for his fellow countrymen. The Yankee lodged a sharp protest maintaining that the preferences granted were in violation of previous agreements with the United States. The Junta replied that all concessions

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72 Whitaker, United States and the Independence of Latin America, 41-60.

73 Memoranda, Poinsett Papers, I.
granted to other nations would also be granted to the northern

74 Republic. The alert Charlestonian, however, detected in an ar-
ticle published on the question that, according to the new rules,
American shipping that stopped at Montevideo would have to dis-

75 charge its cargo there instead of at Buenos Aires. A second
remonstrance was made, and in due time the unfavorable law was
rescinded thus allowing our merchantment to put in at Montevideo,
without having to unload their cargo if not necessary and then

76 proceed to the port across the river. The second quarrel was
over a matter of lower and more stable commercial regulations.
Immediate resistance sprang up from British merchants who had
brought in large stocks of goods and who feared that a reduction
of rates would diminish the market price of their products and

78 thus cause severe financial losses.

Because of the ever present threat to American mercan-
tile interests in the Plata provinces, Poinsett very early in
1811 strongly urged the State Department to appoint a resident

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Poinsett Papers, I, 34
77 Letter of Poinsett, Poinsett Papers, I, 56
consul in Buenos Aires. The suggestion was acted upon, and President Madison appointed Louis Goddefroy to act as deputy consul.

Just how extensive Poinsett's activities were in promoting a break between the governing Junta and Spain is quite difficult to determine for lack of evidence, but that he did attempt to bring about such a rupture there can be no doubt. In June, 1811, when the Buenos Aires' Junta sent two agents, Diego de Saavedra and Juan Pedro de Aguirre, to the United States for military supplies, the American gave them his full support as we can judge from the letter he wrote to the State Department regarding said military mission. He wrote: "Sir, this letter will be delivered to you by Don Diego Saavedra and Don Pedro de Aguirre whose business I mentioned to you in my letter of the 16th of May." Rippy writes

It is likely that Poinsett soon attempted to bring about a complete break between the Junta of Buenos Aires and the Spanish provisional government (now the Regency of Cadiz) but the extent of his activities has not been fully revealed. British influence was probably the main factor that frustrated all his efforts to encourage a pronouncement of independence. The English who wished to avoid offending either the Regency of losing their trade, pursued a temporizing policy; and the Río de la Plata Insurgents, although desiring to retain the friend-

79 Ibid.
80 Poinsett Papers, I, 67.
81 Poinsett Papers, I, 86.
ship of the United States dare not arouse British opposition....82

Another indication, and a strong one, that the South Carolinian was immersed in revolutionary activity was the remark by the Infanta Carolata living in Rio de Janeiro in a despatch to the Spanish Cortes written in June 1811 that the United States' envoy had not ceased to influence the revolution of Buenos Aires.

Despite the support and backing that Poinsett had given to the separatist movement, he was not at all satisfied with the creole reaction to his republican efforts. His aim was always to weaken British prestige and to set up his own country in the eyes of Hispanic American leaders as their truest and most interested friend. In a letter to the State Department on June 16, 1811, he stated that the general tendency in those parts was to look to England for protection and guidance just as the Thirteen Colonies in the rebellion of 1776 looked to France. This attitude annoyed our envoy no end. It was constantly being brought home to him in many ways that the governing Junta, despite its repeated desires to form closer ties with the United States, looked

82 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 40

83 Charles Lyon Chandler, Inter-American Acquaintances, Sewanee, Tennessee, 1917, 180

84 Letter to State Department, Poinsett Papers, I, 83
upon that country as a second rate power and that their relations with other nations was always shaped with an eye to please the British Crown. Writing eight years later in retrospect and giving to the State Department his reasons for not recognizing Buenos Aires' independence, he asserted

The disposition of the late Government of Buenos Aires was especially manifested during the late war between this country and Great Britain. They avoided as much as possible all public communication with our citizens. They suffered the British officers to examine all foreign letters, so as to enable them to intercept our correspondence; and they permitted the British cruisers to capture our ships in the outer roads within sight of Buenos Aires without remonstrance or complaint.

The growing and well established influence of England in addition to the flattering offers to the patriots by France urged Poinsett to suggest to the Junta through the medium of a Creole friend the formation of an alliance of all Spanish America which would make one simultaneous thrust for freedom from Spain declaring itself prepared to solicit aid and protection of the United States. He felt that such a proposal would at least prevent the Spanish American provinces from making any European alliance, as he explained to Monroe in a letter. Such ideas very clearly

85 Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, I, 440-441
86 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
foreshadow and portray the same philosophy that would find its
definite enunciation in Monroe's Doctrine fourteen years hence.

In the meantime, news had been coming in from Chile to
the American Consul General that every facility was being accorded Yankee commerce in certain ports, and since it had been Poinsett's intention to pass over to Santiago, he determined to set out for that country in November. He had already signed a favorable commercial treaty despite British opposition, and although not at all satisfied with the progress of the revolutionary movement and the procedure of the creole leaders with regard to it, he was convinced that probably more valuable service could be rendered his country both politically and commercially on the other side of the Andes. He began to make plans for his trip.

89 Letter of Poinsett to Department of State, Poinsett Papers; Letter of Poinsett to James Monroe, Poinsett Papers, I, 3

90 Letter of Poinsett to Monroe, Poinsett Papers, I, 119
Letter of Poinsett to Monroe, Poinsett Papers, I, 3
CHAPTER III

ACROSS THE ANDES

News of Poinsett's projected transfer to Santiago preceded him and must have filled the Chilean revolutionaries with great satisfaction, as they believed that his arrival meant American recognition of their sovereignty and also financial help in the prosecution of the movement for independence. Under date of January 8, 1812, Thomas Sumter, American Minister at Rio de Janeiro, wrote to the State Department that he had received word from Buenos Aires stating the Consul General had left for Chile and that he "was expected with anxiety." Our diplomat ingratiated himself deeply with the liberal element wherever he traveled. Five days after he departed from the Plate River region, the Chilean agent to Buenos Aires, wrote his home government that

El Consul de los Estados Unidos, Mr. Joel Roberts Poinsett, está en camino para ese Reino . . . y lleva credenciales de su Gobierno. Es un sujeto de bellísimas cualidades, muy amante a nuestro sistema y por cuya

91 Diego Barros Arana, Historia General de Chile, 16 vols., Santiago de Chile, 1911-1914, VIII, 564-565; Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 680.

92 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 680.
mediación se puede alcanzar cuanto necesitemos.\textsuperscript{93}

Obviously, the South Carolinian had created the impression that his country was backing the liberation movement to the hilt. True or not, he knew that this impression would bolster North American prestige to the detriment of our enemy Great Britain. He did nothing to disabuse the Hispanic Americans of this idea.

Poinsett left for Chile, the "land of the thorny mimosa," November 27, 1811, and, after a long, tedious, and difficult journey through the pampas and up over the high passes of the Andes, he reached his destination on December 29.\textsuperscript{94} As he was wending his way through the land of the gauchos and over the steep mountain trails, word of his approach occasioned a very bitter altercation in the capital.\textsuperscript{95} In general, royalist sympathizers opposed his coming while the liberals leaders were in strong favor of it.\textsuperscript{96} As soon as he arrived, he informed the

\textsuperscript{93} Memoria Histórica sobre la Revolución de Chile, Fray Melchor Martínez, Valparaíso, Chile, 1847, 398, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 23.

\textsuperscript{94} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 28; Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 41. Poinsett wrote a very interesting account of this trip in his \textit{Journal of River Plata}, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress, ac. 1843, 1, cited in Parton, \textit{Diplomatic Career}, 24.

\textsuperscript{95} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 24.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
Junta of his presence, entrusting to them the commission he bore, and asked that an exequatur be granted him as to an agent authorized by a friendly republic. This appears to have been a reasonable request since the Chilean ports had been thrown open to neutral commerce in February, 1811. It seemed to follow, if one ignored completely the mind of the Madrid Government on the matter, that consuls should be established to protect their nation's commerce and citizens residing in those ports. The governing junta, however, not having had sufficient experience to decide such matters consulted the various "corporaciones" and all approved of the residence of an American agent except the powerful Tribunal de Consulado. This organization, composed in large part of peninsular born Spaniards, had jurisdiction over matters commercial and were most jealous of the monopoly that

97 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 28; Miguel and Gregorio Amunátegui, "Los tres primeros años de la revolución de Chile," Revista Chilena de Historia y Geografía, Santiago de Chile, LIX, October-December, 1923, 30.

98 Ibid.; Luis Galdames, A History of Chili, trans., Isaac Joslin Cox, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1901, 199. Henry Clay Evans in his Chile and Its Relations with the United States, Durham, North Carolina, 1927, 12, says that a text of the decree opening Chilean ports to the commerce of friendly foreign nations was sent to the United States Congress along with a manifesto asking for a "cordial alliance."

they heretofore had exercised over Chilean commerce. All intruders were going to be vigorously opposed. They had fought hard against the decree granting freedom of commerce to friendly nations. It was logical, therefore, that they would offer spirited opposition to a Yankee Consul by attempting to deny protection to American trade or the granting of trading licenses. The Tribunal placed its case before the newly formed Congress and based its arguments on the following points:

1. The King of Spain did not recognize the establishment of consulates in the dominions. Recent law and age old custom also forbade it.

2. The American Consul's appointment had been made before his government had cognizance of the legislation opening Chilean ports to foreigners.

3. The appointment was provisional; for, the credentials read that it was valid until the Senate would approve it during its next session opening December 8, but as this adjournment had already taken place, the appointment had expired.

4. The United States Government had failed to observe diplomatic procedure by failing to send beforehand an official notification of the naming of a consul.

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 39.
102 Ibid.
103 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 565.
No one could deny that these arguments were weighty, but the opposition was not going to let them go unchallenged. Immediately, they went into action, with one of their members, Don Agustín Vial Santelices, Secretary of the Junta, attempting to refute them. He won the day, and the Tribunal finally cast an affirmative vote in favor of recognizing Consul General Poinsett.\footnote{104} The Secretary pointed out that once United States was admitted to Chilean ports, the establishment of a consulate was a logical consequence in order to maintain harmonious commercial relations among nations.\footnote{105} Innumerable difficulties arise regarding prices, crews of ships, faulty merchandise, carelessness on the part of ships masters and pursers which demand the presence of a consul for a solution.\footnote{106} This, and this alone, is the duty of a consul, he continued, and no one need fear that such agents intervene in the administrative aspects of the matters in which they are engaged, as many have believed.\footnote{107} Don Agustín, undoubtedly, with his tongue in his cheek, advanced to the first objection that royal law forbade the setting up of consulates. He endeavored to make clear that by the Spanish American treaty

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105 Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 24-25.
106 \textit{Ibid.}, 25.
107 \textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushright}
of 1795 article nineteen stipulated that consuls would be reciprocally exchanged . . . in those ports where they existed or where it was licit to maintain them. He then went on to admit that before freedom of commerce had been granted, consulates in South America were illicit, but, he argued, now that such liberty was allowed, the presence of a commercial agent, such as a consul, obviously followed from such a premise and, if Chile denied this, the American Government could justly claim that the junta was violating her own laws. 108 As to the point regarding the making of the appointment before knowing whether Chile had proclaimed liberty of commerce, Vial very cutely assured his listeners that President Madison, knowing that Buenos Aires had already opened her ports to foreigners, felt that the trans Andean country would soon follow suit and, therefore, had put Poinsett in readiness for such an eventuality by giving him consular powers for Chile even before she decreed freedom of trade. 109 The American Chief Executive, the defendant asserted, felt that by his action he was bestowing an honor on Chile who, he knew, would welcome the commercial benefits that he wished to extend, fruits that Spanish despotism had robbed them for three hundred years. 110 As to

109 Ibid., 27.
110 Ibid.
the last points concerning the expiration of the appointment on December 8, the failure to send an official notification of this act, the pleader agreed that the American Senate had the power to approve it or reject it, but he asked the members of the Tribunal to prove that the Senators had rejected Poinsett. And even if he had been disapproved, Vial continued, surely the present Consul should be allowed to remain until the action of the Yankees became known or until a successor to the present incumbent appeared.\footnote{111} Even when the king dies, he indicated, all his functionaries continue in office until they are either dismissed or approved by the next claimant to the throne. Apply this to our case, he said, and all difficulties vanish.\footnote{112} As to the omission to forward word about the naming of a consul, that is explicable, he concluded, in the fact that the American Government did not know the exact date when Chile would open her ports but was of the opinion that one consul could serve the two countries.\footnote{113}

Despite this earnest if, at times, not too logical defense, the issue was debated for almost two months longer.\footnote{114}
even though Poinsett had been informed, when he presented his credentials in late December, in a letter written by Carrera on December 30, 1811, that the junta would feel honored to receive him any day that suited his convenience after the first of the year.\(^{115}\) The despatch read

> En el primer día hábil después del primero puede US. presentarse a la junta del Reino en su Palacio; ésta tendrá honor de oír a US. a presencia [sic] de sus credenciales; y se lo aviso en contestación a su oficio del 26 que acaba. . . .\(^{116}\)

As mentioned, the Tribunal finally capitulated, and the Consul was notified that his reception would take place on February 24, 1812.\(^{117}\)

A brief glimpse of the political and commercial situation that obtained in Chile at the time of the Yankee agent’s arrival there will be helpful. On September 10, 1810, a governing junta was set up to rule Chile in the name of Ferdinand VII with equal title to jurisdiction, so it claimed, as that of Consejo de Regencia of Cadiz. This action was the work of Chilean patriots who forced the president of the Real Audiencia, Conde de la Conquista, to summon an open cabildo which created a Junta de Gobierno. The patriots, however, soon divided into two camps,

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115 Ibid., 28.
116 Ibid., 28-29.
117 Ibid., 29; Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 565.
the radicals being headed by Juan Martinez de Rosas, and the conservatives by José Miguel Infante. Educational and financial reforms were introduced by this first government, but their most outstanding legislation, apart from their decision to convene a national congress, was the decree of February, 1811, granting freedom of trade to all friendly nations with the ports of Coquimbo, Valparaiso, and Talcahuano. This had been the dream of all patriots who fully realized what profitable returns to their country trade with United States and especially with Great Britain would mean. Preparations for the election of deputies to congress were set on foot and, by July 4, 1812, the first National Congress assembled, assuming all the powers and duties of the now defunct junta. The majority members were of the Conservative party and strongly opposed Rosas and his very liberal political ideas. Regarding the opening of the Congress, Caldames writes

At ten o'clock on the morning of that day (July 4) the troops from the garrison were formed on the plaza and adjacent streets. At the same hour the deputies, the members of the junta, and of the cabildo, the university doctors and residents of high birth left the governmental palace and with great solemnity entered the principal church. A mass was sung there, and from the pulpit Father Camilo Henriquez preached a commemorative sermon in conservative terms. The oath of the representatives was then administered, to the effect that they would protect the Catholic religion, obey Ferdinand VII, and defend the country and its recently founded institutions. After responding in chorus, "Thus we swear to do," they filed two by two before a crucifix surrounded by four lighted
From the very beginning distinct currents of opinion made themselves felt in this assembly. There were the moderates or conservatives who were willing to remain dependent on the mother country provided that certain reforms like freedom of trade and the right to elect deputies to the Cortes in Spain were granted. On the other hand, there were the radicals who wished to set up a republic immediately, among whom was the famous Bernardo O'Higgins. For about a month the radicals were able to hold their position in Congress, but when an executive junta was formed to take charge of public affairs while a national constitution was being formed, not one of the radical group was chosen. This meant a temporary set back for their political policies. The future of the cause looked quite unpromising when on the scene appeared a young Chilean recently returned from Spain, Don José Miguel Carrera. Born in 1785, he was the scion of one of Chile's oldest and richest families. His two brothers, Luis and Juan Jose, had played major roles in the popular uprisings in 1809 and 1810. Don José had gone to Spain to finish his education, but, with Napoleon's invasion of the peninsula, he took up arms on the side of the patriots. On receiving news of the political turmoil in the fatherland, he returned home and became a leading

118 Galdames, History of Chile, 163-164.
figure in the radical party. Filled with revolutionary ideas and realizing that his program would make no headway so long as Congress was in the hands of such a conservative majority, Carrera decided on a coup d'état. With the support of his two brothers and the battalions that they were able to muster, the bold, arrogant José Miguel staged a successful revolt on September 4, 1811. After a few hours of fighting, the executive junta was dissolved. Through dismissals of deputies and additions of new ones, the Congress was reorganized, and a new junta was formed with fellow radicals in control. In a short time both assemblies were recognized throughout the country. The newly organized legislative body put through additional administrative, financial, religious and political reforms, broke off relations with the Vice-roy in Lima, and abolished slavery forever in Chile. A special committee was also set up to formulate a constitution. Carrera had, no doubt, brought his country well along the road to independence, and, consequently, he expected to be rewarded with some juicy political plum; but the government made the mistake of not flattering him or his two brothers according to their desires, so once again a new military coup was planned by them on the pretext that all elections prior to 1811 had been invalid since only a limited number of people had been allowed to vote. Promising to establish the "principles of representative government," the discontented Carreras staged a successful revolt on
November 5, 1811 which forced Congress, and the Junta to convene an open cabildo. This meeting, which was constantly under pressure of the troops which had revolted with Don José, appointed a new junta of government with Caspar Marin representing Coquimbo, Martinez de Rosas representing Concepcion and the revolutionary chief himself representing Santiago. Rosas was not at the time in Santiago, so Bernardo O'Higgins acted as a substitute until his arrival. Dissension soon broke up this triumvirate. O'Higgins and Marin acted indifferently towards Carrera, and when a plot was discovered to assassinate the three brothers, Don José Miguel, convinced that Congress was behind the attempt, gathered together another military mob and dissolved that body on December 2, 1811. Setting aside the once loved "principles of representative government," he proclaimed himself dictator and was accepted as such throughout the entire country with the exception of Concepcion where Martinez de Rosas, heading the local Junta there, declared that he could not recognize the usurped authority of the upstart. Carrera marched against this center of opposition, but before hostilities broke out, Martinez opened negotiations with his enemy whereby it was agreed that the troops of each province should return to their quarters. Dissatisfaction with Martinez soon broke out in Concepcion. Disgruntled soldiers, unpaid for some time, deposed the local junta of Concepción, turned over Martinez to Carrera, and then attached themselves to the dic-
tator's troops. Shortly after, the prisoner was exiled to Mendoza where he died in 1813 at the age of fifty-four.119 About three weeks later, Poinsett arrived to take up his post as consul.

From a commercial point of view, Chile and the other ports on the Pacific side were highly desirable, but the royal cedula of 1797 and subsequent orders dealing with trade did not extend to these ports.120 This exception seems to have been made for several reasons. The European wars had brought less disturbance to colonial trade in that region, and, thus, there was less need for neutral commerce.121 Furthermore, the monopoly of the Philippine Company extended over these parts and was not easily to be disturbed, and since the Tupac Amaru rebellion of 1780, Spain was very suspicious of all intruders along her trans-Andean coasts.122

Despite her quite effective coast guard patrol in the Pacific and her prohibitions against trading with foreigners, the Spanish Crown had been unable to suppress the smuggling that

119 Galdames-Cox, History of Chile, 167-176.
120 Whitaker, The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 11.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
Yankee contrabandists were carrying on, since 1788 along the Chilean coast especially.\textsuperscript{123} By the turn of the century, American commerce had grown quite rapidly owing largely to the breakdown in the Spanish administrative system under the stress of war.\textsuperscript{124} In the nine years from 1788-1796 twenty-six ships from the States had entered Chilean ports, but from 1797 to 1809 that number had jumped to two hundred and twenty-six.\textsuperscript{125} Twenty-two of these were charged with illicit trading and twelve condemned, but many others that were never apprehended were certainly guilty of contraband trade.\textsuperscript{126} The majority of these ships were whalers from the New England States who would engage in smuggling activities in secret places along the coast or would, under pretext of ship repairs put in at Chilean ports and carry on their illegitimate dealings under the very noses of venal, gullible, or impotent port officials.\textsuperscript{127} One American frigate the Belle Savage which had been prosecuted was released in 1800 in consideration of the treaty of San Lorenzo, but she stayed on in Chilean waters for two more years, and at the end of that time sailed for Canton.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 11-12.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 11-12.
with $81,000 worth of specie that had been collected by contra-
band.128 Hence, by the time Poinsett reached Santiago, American
merchants were quite well acquainted with the value of commercial
agreements with the governing Junta of Chile.

From the very first, the Yankee diplomat and the Chil-
ean dictator became fast friends.129 Each one discerned in the
other a means which he could use to advance his own interests
since both entertained very similar political viewpoints. Car-
rera saw in Poinsett an instrument, which if used properly, could
secure his family in politics, while, the American recognized in
this radical a person whose dictatorial power could promote the
political prestige and commercial advantage of United States in
Chile. Since the newly arrived representative was the first
non-South American agent from a foreign power to reach the coun-
try, Don José wished to make his presentation of credentials as
impressive as possible; and so he made plans for it that were as
magnificent as though Don Joel were a diplomat of the highest
rank.130 In the presence of the Junta surrounded by the Cabildo,
the military, and the leading citizens of Santiago, the Consul

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129 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 33-34.
130 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 565-566.
General was introduced. Anticipating Poinsett, the Chilean Chief extended a warm welcome assuring the North American that he could rely on the sincere sentiments of good will that all his fellow countrymen felt for the United States and that the American Union could rest assured that her commerce would be attended to. In reply, our fellow citizen pointed out that his commission had been given him with a view to proving the unequivocal spirit of friendship that the Northern Republic had for Chile and the desire to establish mutually advantageous commercial relations. And what is more, he added, the North-Americans, in general, look with the greatest interest to the success of their southern brethren and ardently desire their prosperity and happiness. He concluded by assuring his audience that he would forward to Washington the kind sentiments expressed by their Chief Executive and wished them to know that he felt honored in being chosen to establish friendly relations between the two countries which ought to look on one another as friends and allies. He spoke in Spanish as follows

El Gobierno de los Estados Unidos me encargó esta comisión

133 Ibid., 566.
cerca del Excelentísimo Gobierno de Chile, y para dar una prueba nada equivoca de su amistad y deseos de establecer con este reino unas relaciones comerciales reciprocamente ventajosas.

Los Americanos del Norte miran generalmente con sumo interés los sucesos de estos países, y desean con ardor la prosperidad y felicidad de sus hermanos del Sur. Hare presente al Gobierno de los Estados Unidos los sentimientos amigables de V.E. Y me felicito de haber sido el primero que tuvo el cargo honorífico de establecer relaciones entre dos naciones generosas que deben mirarse como amigas y aliadas naturales. 134

The Aurora de Chile, the first newspaper to be published in this trans-Andean country, commented on this civil function in its edition of March 2, 1812

Este día fue de gran complacencia para los verdaderos amantes del país, por el solemne recibimiento del Señor Coronel Don Joel Roberts Poinsett, Consul General de los Estados Unidos de la America Septentrional, nombrado por Jaime Madison, su actual Presidente, cerca del Gobierno superior de Chile. Asistieron todas las corporaciones, cuyo voto unánime había precedido. 135 The Aurora de Chile, the first journalistic endeavor ever set on foot in this country, published its first edition on February 13, 1812. It was the North American merchant, Mateo Armando Hoavel, who was instrumental in bringing from the United States not only a printing press but also three typesetters. It had scarcely arrived when Carrera bought it up and turned it to his own political uses. Its first editor was the doubtfully orthodox Fray Camilo Henriquez, a great admirer of the United States. News from Boston appeared in every edition; in fact, this was the only section of the Union with which the Chileans were acquainted and, as a result, referred to all Yankees as "Bostonenses." A translation of the Declaration of Inde-

134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
pendence and speeches of Madison, Washington, and Jefferson also appeared. 136

From the very outset of his mission, Poinsett, forgetting the reserve and spirit of neutrality that should characterize a consul regarding the internal affairs of the country in which he is residing, became an ardent enthusiast and propagandist of revolutionary ideas. 137 The interpretation which he put on the instructions which the State Department had given him before his departure from the North was "nothing short of astonishing." 138 He soon became an authorized governmental adviser and left his circle of friends definitely under the impression that his government and fellow countrymen had a very lively interest in the success of the Hispanic American revolution. 139 W. G. D. Worthington, a special agent whom President Monroe had sent to South Amer-


137 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 567.
138 Evans, Chile and Its Relations with the United States, 15.
139 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 567.
ica as a political observer, wrote to the State Department in 1818 stating the fact that the Carrera party was the North American party in Chile, an epithet, we can safely assume, that can be traced back to our first representative's feverish political activities in that region of South America. Worthington commented: "They [the Government of 1818] view almost every citizen of the United States with peculiar jealousy, supposing them to be more or less attached to the party of the Carreras. . . . From what I can hear or see, that was . . . the great republican, the great North American Party here. . . . Bartolome Mitre in his Historia de San Martín asserts that together with the introduction of printing into Chile there came a new element in the person of Mr. Poinsett who, in the eyes of the public, became a vehicle for the propagation of democratic ideas and a moral support to the revolutionary movement. To understand fully the import of the American Consul's first diplomatic blunder, it will be well to place it against the historical background in which it took place. From the beginning, the patriotic movement for self government in Chile had been relatively peaceful. Aside from Figueroa's attempt in April, 1811, to restore the now defunct Audiencia Real and the military uprising sponsored by Disc-

140 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 932.
141 Ibid.
142 Bartolome Mitre, Historia de San Martín, y de la...
tator Carrera, bloodshed had been comparatively scarce. However, Chilean leaders knew that such tranquility was not to last for long because to the north was an enemy in the person of the Vicerey, Fernando Abascal, who looked, naturally enough, with great disfavor on all separatist movements. He was a confirmed royalist, and in Peru he had had considerable success in upholding the cause of the Crown. Although later on, he was to take up arms against Chile, at the commencement of 1812 he was still following a policy of persuasion and prudent endeavors to entice the rebellious Chileans back to their former allegiance. It was obvious, however, that his attempts were futile, but with the passing of time the southern Andeans began to realize and feel the sting of some of the royal representative's reprisals.

The measure that concerns us took place in February 1812, when a huge shipment of tobacco which had been ordered by the Chilean Government from Havana was sequestered by Governor Elio of Montevideo. To add insult to injury, this official used the above-mentioned cargo's merchandise to pay the treasury of Peru for debts that he had contracted there. Protests on the part of the Chilean Junta to Don Fernando, the Viceroy, were not only ignored but Elio's action was defended and the price of tobacco entering Chile in the future was raised. Furthermore,
His Excellency also declared null and void all laws made by the Chilean government, declared as illegal the freedom of commerce that it had proclaimed, and, to make this last measure even more effective, granted permits to corsairs who wished to come to the southern seas to prey on foreign shipping. Such a measure had an immediate and beneficial effect not only on Chile's commercial interests but also on American shipping.

This entire procedure angered Poinsett considerably. Already he had received reports of the internment of various American whaling vessels by Spanish authorities and of the insults offered by them to the American flag. With the opening of the War of 1812, Peruvian officials feeling that all enemies of England were their enemies also, subjected American commerce on the high seas to even further harassments. Writing to the State Department later about the matter, he asserted

On my arrival in Chile in December, 1811, I was informed that the Lima privateers had, in reported instances, plundered our ships employed in the whale industry, had cut out of the port of Coquimbo two of those ships and sent them to Callao; and that the brig Colt had been attacked on her departure from Coquimbo and only escaped by superior sailing. 143

Then, he goes on to explain how his protests with the Viceroy met with nothing but insult. He continues

No reason could be assigned for these acts of violence or any motive adduced for arming these privateers, at a

143 Letter to State Department, Poinsett Papers, I, 149
moment when Lima was at peace with Chile, other than to
distress the American commerce. To a mild and respectful
remonstrance addressed to the Viceroy, I received no
other answer than being mentioned in a virulent letter
to the Junta of Chile, upbraiding that government with
harbouring a French Spy under the specious title of Con-
sul General of the United States. 144

Regarding the War of 1812, he writes

After the declaration of war against Great Britain, the
depredations upon our commerce were continued in the most
open and scandalous manner; and the new and extraordinary
doctrine advanced to justify them. 'They were the Allies
of Great Britain and therefore had a right to capture
the ships of her Enemies.' 145

Poinsett lost no time in recommending to the Junta that they
close Chilean ports to all shipping from Peru. 146 In March 1812,
he presented his request to the government recommending this
measure, basing his petition on the fact that his fellow country-
men and their flag were suffering insult and robbery on the seas
because of the high handed measure of the king's representative
at Lima. 147 The authorities hesitated to act on so bold a sug-
gestion and sought from the Tribunal del Consulado its expert
opinion. 148 This Court, however, rejected the American's plea
as being highly imprudent for Chile who would have nothing to

144 Ibid., 31-32.
145 Ibid., 32.
146 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 43.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
gain by such an action and so much to lose. The Tribunal further pointed out that the Consul was a bit inconsistent in asking that Chilean ports be closed to all armed vessels coming from Peru when ships from his own country came fully armed. Moreover, it said, these American ships which, according to the Yankee Consulate were being so unjustly treated, were carrying on a contraband trade that was causing grave harm to the Chilean treasury. In short, the evidence presented was too inconclusive to base a judgment upon. And so the matter rested as far as Chile was concerned.

Shortly after this episode, the Junta, relying, undoubtedly, on the full assurances given them by their Yankee counsellor, requested of Poinsett the names of North American munitions manufacturers from whom they could buy military equipment. He immediately furnished them with the names and addresses of gun makers, clothiers, saddlers, musical instrument houses and led them to believe that these purchases could be easily made. Accompanying the order which Don Joel was to

149 Ibid., 44.
150 Ibid., 47.
151 Ibid., 46.
152 Ibid., 45.
153 Ibid., 48.
154 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 567-568.
forward to United States and which had been drawn up by government members was another despatch directed to the various Yankee merchants expressing complete confidence in the brotherly spirit that they entertained for their Andean neighbors who wished to build up a strong army to ward off the attacks of a threatening enemy.155 Upon receiving these documents, the Consul wrote to Carrera informing him that he had received his despatches and was hopeful that owing to the commercial permits that Don Miguel had afforded to American merchants and also to the offer to buy Virginia tobacco, as stated in the order, Chile would be taken under the protection of the United States.156 The letter read as follows

Mi mas apreciable y amado amigo; con grandes muestras de placer he tenido el agra de recibir ayer en la tarde el oficio de la Excm. Junta de V.A. en que se me comunica haberse dirigido a los señores comerciantes de mi patria mister Hullet solicitando envío de armas, mon­turas, vestuario, y otras piezas.

Con mister Hullet conservo excelentes relaciones de amistad y hoy mismo le escribo anticipándole los mejores conceptos de V.E.

Las franquicias comerciales con que V.E. ha querido con­ceder a mis paisanos surtirán efectos inmediatos en el buen desarrollo de las amistades del país de V.E. y del mio, y espero que la oferta de compra de tobacos que se

155 Martínez, Memoria Histórica, 416-417.
156 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 51-52.
ha prometido hacer por parte de este Reino significar la decidida protección de Estados Unidos... Désla a V.E. sus manos, su más decidido amigo. El Diputado Poinsett.157

These efforts were all in vain because war broke out in June, 1812 between United States and Great Britain and the Yankees needed all supplies for their military effort, but, what is more, Chile's financial condition precluded the extension of any credit.158 These difficulties did not prevent Poinsett in the following May to recommend to the Chief of Government that he wrote again for war supplies. It would be a means, he felt, of initiating closer commercial relations.159 Writing on May 24, 1812, he said

Mi más apreciado y amado amigo;
Es opinión general en mi patria, como puedo suponerlo V.E., la especial simpatía con que allí los republicanos de corazón miran a los insurgentes de esta parte del Sur De América.

En esta seguridad como lo anuncio a V.E. creo fácil provocar en mi patria un acercamiento comercial recíproco de acuerdo con las magníficas ideas de V.E. Para el objeto que se persigue hay varios beneficios irreparables [sic] de un libre comercio, aun cuando el no más no sea para la venta de pertrechos y utiles de guerra.

Por medio de libranzas V.E. puede escoger las casas... que son los mejores fabricantes de armas. Previamente me

157 Ibid.
158 Ibid., 52.
159 Ibid., 57.
With such advice as this, it is obvious that the North American diplomat had thrown neutrality to the winds, and the following event strongly confirms this.

In 1810, Don Juan Egana, and in 1811, Doctor Juan Martinez de Rosas had proposed the idea of organizing a great confederation of all the Hispanic American colonies under the authority of the King of Spain. Each member was to draw up its own constitution and adapt laws to fit its needs, but all would be done through the medium of a general Congress. The hope was to form a union similar to that of the United States. In the beginning of 1812, the initiators of the plan, Carrera among them, believed that the making of a coat of arms for the confederation and the announcement of the whole plan to the world would be a sign of a declaration of independence or its equivalent. The project crumbled, however, because of the impos-

160 Ibid.
161 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 568; Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 50-59.
162 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 568.
163 Ibid.
sibility of sounding out the other Spanish American provinces. Nevertheless, it was decided by the governing Junta to create a national flag and a badge which would be indicative of the new Chilean nationality. The military was to wear the insignia on their uniforms and the citizens in their hats as a symbol of their attitude towards severance of ties with Spain. This daring innovation was to go into effect July 4, 1812, and Don Jose Miguel was planning on his own initiative to declare Chile's complete political freedom from the Mother Country. It was only the forceful opposition of the Dictator's older brother, Don Juan Jose, both of whom were at loggerheads one with the other, that prevented the proclamation from being made. By a rare coincidence, the Chilean celebration fell on the same day as the festivities that Poinsett had planned in commemoration of North American independence and for which he had received permission from the Junta to use the palace in which met the Tribunal del Consulado. The Aurora de Chile wrote that the go-

164 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 59.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VII, 596.
ement had done all in its power to make the day an impressive one. Orders had gone out that all should wear the cockade, threatening to withhold the salaries from the "jefes de tribunales, de oficinas, o de corporaciones" who did not comply. Commenting further the newspaper stated that the American flag stood side by side with the Chilean tri-colors; toasts were drunk, and the happiness and good will that reigned over the assembly inspired ideas of liberty, the precise result, say Barros Arana, that the American Consul undoubtedly wished to produce. Stated the writer

El gobierno tomó en la celebridad de este día, todo el interés imaginable. Preparó los ánimos para este grande objeto dando la orden a todos los cuerpos militares y empleados de llevar la escarapela tricolor. El ramillete en que se veía el pabellón de los Estados Unidos con el estandarte tricolor, los brindis, las expresiones y alegría de todas las personas ilustres que asistieron al lucido ambigú, todo inspiraba ideas de libertad.

Of course, Carrera, his fiancee, and many other important personages of Santiago were invited to the reception. In the invitation that the Yankee diplomat sent to the Supreme Executive,

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he mentioned how coincidental it was that the important date of July 4th should have been chosen as the day for the creation of Chile's flag.

Apreciable amigo; para el día 4 de los corrientes queda Ud. invitado al Palacio del Consulado para festejar la memorable emancipación de los Estados Unidos de la Bretaña. Cumpló en esta ocasión mi deber de invitar también al con-vite a la misa Merceditas y personas que Ud. crea de interesante significación.

La especial coincidencia de que en la misma fecha de la separación de mi patria de la Bretaña, se vaya a juntar con la creación de la Bandera Nacional, pone una curiosa significación al sarao de mañana en el que se verán entrelazados símbolos de las dos patrias hermanas. . . .

Samuel Johnston, one of the typesetters that came to Chile from the United States to operate the printing press that was set up in February 1812, tells us in his Diary a bit more of the events that took place on that memorable Fourth of July. He noted that in many public places the American and Chilean flags were flown side by side; in the afternoon all Santiagans of distinction attended the reception given by the American Consul, and that in the evening the entire Junta and about three hundred persons took part in the dance that was held. Johnston observed

A la salida del sol las estrellas y listas de la bandera

175 Ibid., 60.

Quite noteworthy and impressive was the article written by the liberal Fray Camilo Henríquez for the *Aurora de Chile* in anticipation of this great day. It breathed a very revolutionary spirit and called for a declaration of independence and the immediate formation of a constitution. Among other remarks, he editorialized:

Sea nuestro primer paso una constitución que nos una. Este es el momento de formarla. . . . Comencemos declarando nuestra independencia. Ella sola puede borrar el título de rebeldes que nos da la tiranía. Ella sola puede elevarnos a la dignidad que nos pertenece, darnos aliados entre las potencias, e imprimir respeto a nuestros enemigos. . . . Demos en fin este paso ya indispensable.

This journalistic exhortation found immediate response among many of the patriots. They felt that the time had come

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177 Ibid.


179 Ibid., 68-69.

180 Collier and Cruz, *La Primera Mision*, 70.
when they should legalize the gains that the separatist elements had gained.\textsuperscript{181} The project was set on foot to draw up such a document, and shortly after, Carrera sought his American friend's aid in an advisory capacity.\textsuperscript{182} Poinsett immediately gathered together the commission which had been appointed for this task at his house.\textsuperscript{183} To their amazement, the Consul presented them with a draft of a constitution that he himself had drawn up for their country.\textsuperscript{184} It was modeled largely on our own American Constitution but modified to meet certain conditions prevalent in Chile.\textsuperscript{185} It advocated a legislative body and a clear division of powers and also asserted a type of ecclesiastical patronage.\textsuperscript{186} Attention should also be called to the fact that in the oath to be taken by the President and members of Congress explicit mention is made regarding the defense, conservation, and protection of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Religion.\textsuperscript{187}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{183} Don Jose Miguel Carrera, Diario Militar, to be found in Colección de Historiadores y Documentos relativos a la Independencia de Chile, ed., Mariano Picon-Salas and Guillermo Feliu Cruz, 45 vols., 1861-1923, I.
  \item \textsuperscript{184} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 71.
  \item \textsuperscript{185} Rippy, \textit{Joel R. Poinsett}, 45.
  \item \textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{187} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 82.
\end{itemize}
The South Carolinian was most hopeful that his model would meet with approval since he felt that it would meet with the assent of many who feared the innovations that Don José Miguel was making in all ramifications of the government and that it would act as a check on him. However, the copy was rejected as too advanced in its ideas. The commission that examined it believed that its own redaction would meet Chile's need more fully. This vexed Poinsett. He was becoming impatient with his friends' timidity in proclaiming independence. It was precisely to bolster up their flagging spirits that he had drawn up a fundamental code with the hope that the accomplished task would remove all obstacles to such a declaration. In writing to the Chilean political agent at Buenos Aires who had complained about his countrymen's dilatoriness in producing a written constitution, he informed him that he had submitted to Carrera and the Junta such a document for their consideration. He pointed out that its merit lay in the fact that it was based on republican principles but had a monarchical facade, for, a country that had been

188 Ibid., 88.
189 Ibid., 88-90.
190 Ibid.
191 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 47-48.
192 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 89.
193 Ibid.
ruled for three hundred years by despotism was not yet ready for full blown republicanism.\textsuperscript{194} He goes on to say that Senor Salas had read the draft, had made several very useful suggestions, but felt that the ideas propounded in it were too advanced for Chile and, for that reason, unacceptable. The Consul went on to say that he wished his Chilean friend at Buenos Aires to read and meditate over the copy of the constitution which would be sent him so that he could inform the Junta in the Rio de la Plata area, who had criticized Santiago for its lack of a constitutional code, that this defect would be remedied.\textsuperscript{195}

Nothing daunted by his failure, Poinsett continued in his advisory capacity to the constitution framers and was instrumental in having a good number of the basic principals which he had proposed in his own draft incorporated into the document that was in the making.\textsuperscript{196} This reglamento, more commonly known as the Constitution of 1812 provides for a Secretary of the Interior and one of the Exterior, and, hence, as Alberto Cumming remarks, what more logical explanation could there be than that Poinsett had close at hand a copy of the Constitution of the United States.\textsuperscript{197} But we must not think that the Charlestonian alone

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 90.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 89.

\textsuperscript{197} Cumming, "El Reglamento de 1812," Revista Chilena
had influence. As the above mentioned writer asserts:

... la Constitución del año 1812 no fue la obra de una persona determinada, sino de varias y entre las expresadas por los hermanos Carrera, creemos que Camilo Henríquez, Don Salom Salas, Irisarri, y el Consul Poinsett...

... tuvieron parte principal en su redacción.

Finally, on October 22, 1812, the group of redactors presented its magnum opus to Congress for approval. The Supreme Director himself tells us that "Después de algunas noches que nos reunimos en casa de Poinsett, presentaron la Constitución provisória que debía al gobierno." After making several amendments and modifications, the constitution was presented to the public for a vote. Many were forced to sign under pressure, and many others affixed their signature or its equivalent without knowing anything of its contents.

When the finally approved draft of the Constitution was presented to the Chilean Hierarchy for their signatures, serious

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198 Ibid., 219.
199 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 88-89.
200 Carrera, Diario Militar, 126.
201 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 593-594.
202 Ibid., 597.
203 Ibid., 597-601.
difficulties arose over two articles which vitally affected that status of the Church in Chile. As was to be expected, even apart from this constitutional difficulty, the growing revolutionary spirit among the Chilean separatists did not have the blessing of the Church. Many feared what they felt were abuses of liberty and freedom advocated by the radicals. These had in some instances caught the anti-clerical spirit, which had seized the rebellious elements of Europe and there were those, like Carrera, who were determined to at least severely limit the religious influence and power of the Church in their country. The revolutionary movement had created somewhat of a division among the Chilean clergy, but since many of them were Spaniards by birth, the royalist cause had the stronger defense. However, no priest, whatever his political affiliation, could in conscience defend the above mentioned articles, the first of which forbade giving recognition to any law or decision emanating from a source outside of Chile.

The second provision which was so objectionable stated that "la religión católica, apostólica es y será siempre la de Chile," but this reading omitted that word "romana" which had appeared in the original draft. Unfortunately, the tension created was due

204 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misió, 109-114.
205 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 602.
206 Ibid.
207 Ibid.
in large measure to the evil advice of Poinsett who, played on Don José Miguel's erroneous conviction that the Church was a huge obstacle to progress in Chile, suggested that the debated word be left out of the final copy.\footnote{Barros Arana, \textit{La Historia de Chile}, VIII, 602; Domingo Amunátegui Solar, \textit{La Dictadura de O'Higgins}, Madrid, Spain, 1917, 81.} The opposition found an energetic voice in the Bishop of Concepción, Don Diego Martín de Villodres, who refused his signature and pointed out that such a law gave no assurance that the spiritual authority of the Roman See would not be interfered with.\footnote{Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 110-111.} The worthy prelate refused to comply, despite political pressure, until he was informed that no interference with papal documents was intended.\footnote{Ibid., 111.} Monseñor affixed his name, but he did it reluctantly, not fully convinced of the integrity of the constitution makers.\footnote{Ibid.}

Equally spirited in hostility was the Bishop-elect of Santiago de Chile, Don José Santiago Rodríguez Zorilla, who also raised protests and refused adhesion to the constitution.\footnote{Ibid; Barros Arana, \textit{Historia de Chile}, VIII, 597-601.} Many of the clergy, of course, followed the example of the Bishops, and their reaction so enraged young Carrera that he decided, falling
back on the rights of the *Patronato*, to place some one in the Episcopal See of the Chilean capital who would be more in accord with the revolutionary cause. 213 His choice fell upon the Bishop of Quillota who gave himself wholeheartedly to the separatist ideals. 214 Commenting in his diary on the incident, Don Jose Carrera wrote

Crey de primera necesidad poner a la cabeza de la iglesia un pastor de nuestras ideas; la mitra estaba vacante, y el vicario capitular era un enemigo acérrimo del sistema, lo mismo eran todo el coro y todas las corporaciones. No había otro arbitrio que traer a la silla al obispo auxiliar don Rafael Andrade y Guerrero, que estaba en Quillota; consulté esto con don Manuel de Salas, don Francisco Antonio Perez, don Antonio José de Irizarri, fray Camilo Henríquez y otros muchos que lo conocían. Todos convinieron en que era él el más a propósito, y me instaron con frecuencia para que lo efectuase. Accompañado del Consul Poinsett fui a Quillota; lo hice ocupar su silla, después de muchas contestaciones, como gobernador del obispado. El provisor Rodríguez recibió despachos de Fernando para el obispado, y aunque hizo muchas tentativas no recibió más que desaires. 215

In order to impress upon the people that not all priests and Bishops were in agreement with the government opponents, the Chief of government brought the Provincial of the Dominican Fathers in Chile to issue an edict which appeared in the government newspaper *La Aurora* threatening spiritual penalties against

213 Collier and Cruz, *La Primera Misión*, 111-112.
all his subjects who preached against the new political order. The enthusiastic Bishop Andreu published a pastoral condemning clerics who spoke against the new regime. He ordered all under his jurisdiction to assure "las consciencias timoratas, manifestándoles la armonía y concordía que reina entre la sacrosanta religión de Jesu-Cristo y el nuevo sistema americano. There is no direct evidence that Poinsett had anything to do with the article that caused the first outbreak between the Church and the government, although one can be sure that he was in complete sympathy with his republican friends, but there is reliable testimony regarding the part he had in the suppression of the word "romana."

Remonstrances against the deletion of the former word also had their origin in Concepcion where the faithful Bishop Villodres noticed the change in the wording of the first and second drafts of the constitution. He called the difference to the notice of the Intendent of the Province suggesting that it might have been a typographical error but felt that such mistakes were of capital importance and should be attended to immediately. He stated in his letter.

216 Aurora de Chile, December 10, 1812, cited in Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 112.
217 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 113.
218 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 113.
219 Ibid.
Habiendo reconocido el impreso, hallo en el primer artículo una novedad que me ha llenado de consternación, y por la que no pasará por ningún respeto del mundo. En el ejemplar manuscrito que se nos presentó por el comisionado...estaba el primer artículo concebido en estos términos: 'La religión católica, apostólica y romana es y será siempre la de Chile.' Coteje Us. este artículo primero del impreso y vera suprimida en él la expresión "romana." Será casualidad? Yo así lo creo, y lo atribuyo a falta de la imprenta; pero en materia de esta importancia, los yerros son capitales y no admiten el menor disimulo. La religión católica, apostólica, romana es la que hemos profesado y hemos de profesar hasta dar la última gota de nuestra sangre.220

Commenting on the Bishop's attitude, Alberto Cumming says that it was not a question of a printer's error but a deliberate and purposeful omission made, "according to some by Poinsett.... This is most probable even though some also lay blame on Don Antonio Irizarri." Barros Arana writes that the entire issue appeared to the clergy and Bishops as an attempt to break the tie of dependence on pontifical authority. The same author goes on to say that Carrera's anti-clerical convictions were strengthened by Poinsett who pointed out to him the superiority of the English colonies as a result of a religious settlement less reactionary than that of the entire Hispanic American

220 Diego Barros Arana, Historia de la Independencia de Chile, Santiago de Chile, 10 vols., 2nd. edition, 1914, X, 565


222 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 602
Undoubtedly, both Poinsett, Carrera, and their followers had in mind a national Catholic Church.

In order not to allow the Church-State dispute to infiltrate down among the people, the Supreme Director of State forbade the circulation of the protests raised by the clergy and Bishops and forbade that any preaching be done on the matter. What is more, with the connivance of several religious superiors, he allowed members of various religious to go out and preach in the small villages and towns exhorting the people to uphold the new form of government. Writing to the Junta at Buenos Aires, Don Bernardo de Vera y Pintado stated:

_Hoy (10 de Diciembre) salen para la campaña veinticuatro misioneros (recolectados en los diversos conventos) de acendrado patriotismo, que generecen la opinión de la libertad; y se trata de remover algunos curas enemigos de la santa causa._

As for the protesters, Carrera threatened them with exile if they continued in their opposition to the government and its activities. Here the matter rested. The upholders of papal authority went into passive opposition. However, the royalist triumph of arms in 1815 did away with the Constitution of 1812.

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223 Ibid.
224 Barros Arana, _Historia de Chile_, VIII, 603.
225 Collier and Cruz, _La Primera Visión_, 114.
226 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

TO THE BATTLEFRONT

By 1813, Viceroy Fernando Abascal had come to a definite decision to reduce to submission the two autonomous Juntas of Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile. His efforts at suasion and reasonable argument had been in vain, and he knew there still was a very large majority in both these countries strongly in favor of the Crown. His plan was to invade both territories simultaneously, sending one army through Upper Peru towards the Plata area, and the other, formed in Chiloé, towards the Chilean capital from the south. General Antonio Pareja, leaving Callao, disembarked on the island of Chiloé with a group of officers who were to organize and form an invading army. Valdivia, Talcahuano, Concepcion and all of the principal towns of the later province up to its boundary at the Maule river were soon in the hands of the royalist army owing to the widespread sympathy among the inhabitants for the King.

Santiago was in complete ignorance of what had been happening in the south, and when word finally reached the capital in the beginning of April, the sensation was enormous. All sol-
soldiers and provincial militia were called into action and sent forward to preserve the line at the Maule. José Miguel Carrera was named general in chief of the campaign, and on April 1, 1813 set out with the Consul Poinsett for Talca to direct the armies assembling there against the invaders.²²⁷ Don Jose had written: "A las seis de la tarde salí para Rancagua con Mr. Poinsett, el Capitan don Diego José Benavente, algunos oficiales y una escolta de 14 Nacionales."²²⁸ The American envoy was beginning a completely unjustifiable task of acting as military adviser to Carrera during the next several months. He had identified himself so closely with the dictator that the overthrow of Carrera would mean Poinsett's downfall also.²²⁹ Barros Arana tells us that "Poinsett, el consul de los Estados Unidos que había tomado tanta ingerezia en los últimos sucesos de la revolución chilena, acompañaba tambien a Carrera deseo de ayudarlo con sus consejos y con sus conocimientos puramente teóricos en materias militares."²³⁰ The American had studied, as already mentioned, military science in Europe, had met several of Europe's great generals, and, no doubt, felt that he had considerable knowledge to offer

²²⁷ Carrera, Diario Militar, 73.
²²⁸ Ibid.
²³⁰ Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 43.
to Chilean revolutionists who were probably amateurs at war. He became, in reality, Chief of Staff of Chilean forces.\textsuperscript{231} If his own country refused his application for a military post, Quarter Master General, to be exact, he now had an opportunity to give vent to his ardent martial ambitions.\textsuperscript{232} At Rancagua, the first stop in their journey south, Poinsett set to work immediately by recruiting soldiers, by making suggestions to Carrera regarding the substitution of authorities lukewarm to the revolutionary cause with others more devoted, and seeing to the gathering of military provisions.\textsuperscript{233}

On April 5, the group reached Talca, their destination,\textsuperscript{234} and here it was that Bernardo O'Higgins, at great risk to himself, joined Carrera's forces. Both men agreed to forget their past differences and to fight for the cause of their country.\textsuperscript{235} Don Bernardo had brought with him valuable information regarding troop movements which indicated that an advanced guard, sent out in search of the treasurer of the province of Concepción, Jimenez Tendillo, who had escaped with funds to the enemy lines,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{231} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 127.
\item \textsuperscript{232} Rippy, \textit{Joel R. Poinsett}, 49.
\item \textsuperscript{233} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 127.
\item \textsuperscript{234} \textit{Ibid.}, 128.
\item \textsuperscript{235} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
was rather close by. O'Higgins wished to ambush them with thirty or forty soldiers, but it was not until Poinsett approved the plan, which Carrera had at first rejected, that it was successfully carried through, and with guns loaded with ammunition, by Carrera and Poinsett themselves.

The river Maule became the dividing line between the enemy bodies, and after the patriot forces took possession of the port of Nueva Bilbao, thus making the enemy advanced guard withdraw, Poinsett advised Carrera to establish the vanguard of his troops in the central valley just south of the river. Don José Miguel fell right in with his Yankee friend's suggestion and began preparing the defenses, but during the "digging in" process Juan Mackenna, another Chilean patriot not on too friendly terms with Carrera, arrived on the scene having been appointed by the Junta in Santiago as Chief of the General Staff. He immediately set out on a tour of inspection but considered that the location of troops urged by Poinsett south of the river would be fatal and pressed Carrera to withdraw them to the northern

236 Ibid.
237 Ibid., 128-129.
238 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, IX, 69.
239 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 129.
240 Ibid., 130.
shore with the rest of the army. This was done, orders having been sent to the Consul General to abandon his position which he did "con sumo despacho." Commenting on the matter Mackenna later wrote

El ejército a mi llegada a Talca estaba acuartelado en esta ciudad (talca) a excepción de 200 o 300 hombres que por disposición de Consul Poinsett se habían situado al otro lado del Maule, en los cerros de Bébadillas, en donde por lucar sus conocimientos superficiales de fortificación, había hecho una especie de reducto.243

Obviously, Don Juan was not at all impressed by the Yankee's military science.

The initial battles of the campaign were favorable for the patriotic forces, although the first one fought at Yerbas Buenas was not a decisive victory for either side. Poinsett was with the vanguard of the army and received a constant stream of letters from his friend Carrera who remained behind the lines. The second encounter took place near San Carlos in which both sides suffered heavy losses and had to retire,

241 Ibid.
242 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, IX, 69; Collier and Cruz, La Primera Mision, 130
243 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, IX, 69
244 Galdames-Cox, History of Chile, 179
245 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Mision, 130-140
246 Galdames-Cox, History of Chile, 179
but before General Pareja, leader of the royalist forces, withdrew, Poinsett took it upon himself, seeing the sad plight of the enemy, to send an aide-de-camp to the enemy leader demanding surrender. The aide's mission was in vain; for, he went with only the American Consul's verbal appointment and with no credentials or letters signed by General Carrera. Even after these were obtained, Pareja refused all terms and retired to a stronger position at Chillán, a move that Carrera unfortunately allowed and for which he would soon go down in humiliation.

As soon as the Chief of Staff, Juan Mackenna, realized that the royalist forces had withdrawn to Chillán, he strongly urged his Commander-in-Chief to launch an immediate attack against them before they had a chance to fortify themselves and gather strength. Fortunately for the enemy, however, Carrera, completely under the influence of Poinsett, adopted the counter-proposal of his American counsellor to take Concepción and Talcahuano, thus allowing the troops from Lima to dig in and entrench themselves. The Yankee Consul had mixed motives in wishing to attack first Talcahuano and Concepción because he had received news that in the former city a group of his compatriots

247 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, IX, 96.
248 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 140
249 Ibid.
250 Ibid.
taken from whaling ships captured by Peruvian privateers were in jail waiting to be sent to Lima. He wished to set them free and thus turned Carrera's attention to those still enemy held cities. These two cities surrendered with relatively little fighting, and the surprise of the American seamen was tremendous when they found out who their liberator was. Dorothy Parton, citing an unpublished sketch of Poinsett's life written by the Charlestonian's cousin, Joseph Johnson, and contained in the Poinsett Papers in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania tells us that

Poinsett was given the rank of general in the army of Carrera; he led a charge at the head of the Chilean cavalry in the battle of San Carlos and secured a victory for Chile. After the victory he went with a battery of flying artillery to the Bay of Concepcion. He arrived after dark at a position commanding the seaport, Talcahuano, and set his cannon for action. At dawn he sent a flag to demand the surrender of the Bay to the Junta of Chile. The Peruvian Royalists finding themselves surprised, surrendered on easy terms on May 29, 1813.

All that Carrera wrote in his famous Diario about the event was that

Fue a Talcahuano el Consul Poinsett protegido de 40 fusileros a las ordenes del capitán Prieto. El enemigo presentó sobre las alturas de la izquierda 60 hombres que

251 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 50.
252 Ibid.
253 Joseph Johnson, A Sketch of Mr. Poinsett's Life, Poinsett Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, XXI, 71.
hicieron fuego con una pieza de a dos. Además, el Consul se encargó de dirigir la reparación de las baterías que los realistas habían quemado antes de retirarse y ordenó mantener izada la bandera española para no infundir recelo a los buques realistas que allí llegasen.

One enemy stronghold still remained to be taken. That was Chillán, and, in the middle of June, Carrera began in earnest his offensive against that city. Poinsett made his way to the point of attack with the army of Don Luis Carrera, and on July 8, 1813, in company with the three Carrera brothers and Juan Mackenna made a very dangerous reconnoitering of the neighborhood of Chillán. On the basis of the Consul General’s advice, Carrera deployed his troops, but before opening hostilities, one last offer to surrender was made to the besieged in Chillán. The advances were spurned by Coronel Sánchez, and with the messenger that he sent to deliver his answer, Sanchez sent a very scathing letter to be delivered to Poinsett himself. It

254 Carrera, Diario Militar, 124
255 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 146
256 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 147
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid.
read as follows

Your conduct is notorious in separating yourself from the Duties incumbent on the Character of an American Consul. You have fomented in the Capital of Chile the Discords which have produced the present war against the legitimate Rights of Ferdinand the Seventh (whom may God preserve) and the Authorities which in his name govern the Nation. Various are the documents which I preserve in my office to prove that you direct the Marches, positions, and all the offensive operations of the Enemy's troops and that at present you are found in their camp fascinating that portion of men who no doubt would be less wicked without that influence. I wish to know whether it proceeds from some authority which might have been given you by your Nation that I may in this case give an account to the Council of Regency; for which purpose I leave a certified copy of this Express, an answer to which I expect to receive by the Bearer here-of.

Sanchez was a Chilean, and hence, this letter, undoubtedly, reflects the opinion of many other creoles of Chile many of whom were fighting with the royalist troops, and this to such an extent that Galdames-Cox says: "Up to a certain point . . . the struggle was a civil war because the army of the king had been formed of Chileans from Chiloé, Valdivia, and Concepción." Be that as it may, the above letter, even granted that it is slightly exaggerated, does give us an excellent idea of the influence that Poinsett was wielding in Chilean internal affairs and how his name was anathema among so many grieles for his un-

261 Juan Francis Sánchez to J. R. Poinsett, July 29, 1813, Poinsett Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, I, 156.

262 Galdames-Cox, History of Chile, 181.
justifiable and undiplomatic conduct. The Consul made no attempt to answer the accusations.\textsuperscript{263} The attack against Chillan got under way in late July but had ill-success.\textsuperscript{264} Thebesiegers, debilitated by cold weather, rain, and compelled to fight in impassable swamps were unable to reduce the well-fortified enemy (as Mackenna had prophesied) and had to retire in defeat to positions on the Itata river.\textsuperscript{265} News of the rout trickled back to Santiago, and the Junta, in a very worried state, sent Bartolome Araos to the Itata river headquarters to gather a full report on Carrera's plight.\textsuperscript{266} The latter's situation was quite precarious, and his failure to gain victory convinced his enemies that the opportune time had come to put an end to the domination that the Carrera family had exercised so despotically over Chile.\textsuperscript{267} To counteract the rising opposition against him in the capital, the Commander-in-Chief decided to send his brother, Don Luis, and Poinsett to Santiago to explain to the government the state of his army, the cause of his misfortune, and his military needs for

\textsuperscript{263} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 148.
\textsuperscript{264} Galdames-Cox, \textit{History of Chile}, 179.
\textsuperscript{265} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{266} Barros Arana, \textit{Historia de Chile}, IX, 162.
\textsuperscript{267} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 153-154.
a renewed assault on Chillán in October. The mission, however, was in vain. Resentment ran high against Don José Miguel. Writing to him at the end of August, the Consul stated: "No es posible esperar nada de este pueblo ni del gobierno en su favor. Hay un atmósfera que no sé como diablos espantar porque nadie quiere oir ni nadie quiere pensar." The South Carolinian could not help but realize that his prestige and influence were to decline with the Carrera's, and he soon discovered this on his return to Santiago. His former friends treated him with noticeable coldness, all wishing to sever their past ties of friendship. His participation in the siege of Chillán was well known in the capital, and many had always resented the unbecoming conduct that he had shown in daring to interfere in the internal affairs of their country. With the relations between Carrera and the Junta becoming more strained every day, the Yankee diplomat decided that the only honorable course to take was to withdraw from political discussion completely. Giving

268 Ibid.
269 Ibid., 156
270 Ibid.
271 Ibid.
272 Ibid.
273 Ibid., 159
his shattered health as a reason, he asked permission from the Junta to retire to the country for a complete rest, and, as a place of repose, he chose the "hacienda" of Don Ignacio de la Carrera, the father of his friends, who had left the capital in 1812 owing to the behavior of his sons. The move must have been a welcome relief for Poinsett. Hostility in the capital had reached such a point that one speaker at a meeting in Santiago in October, 1813, demanded that the American Consul be ordered to leave the country. Others, apparently with some justification, attributed to him losses on the battlefield. However, in these dark hours, it was Bernardo O'Higgins, surprisingly enough, who consoled Poinsett. In a letter of October 28, 1813, he expressed his gratitude to the disconsolate American for all he had done for Chile. He wrote

I should indeed be guilty of ingratitude were I not to correspond with so generous a soul as yours, whose valuable friendship I contracted on the field of honour where I was astonished at observing you encountering the greatest perils and hardships in order to promote the freedom of the oppressed Chilean. Yes, my friend, I shall be etern-
nally thankful as well as every man who loves Chilli. Full of shame and indignation do I perceive in your esteemed letter of the 18th Instant that there are men wicked enough in the Capital to attempt tarnishing your Virtues and the Heroism of Don Luis. Those vile creatures ought to have been present in the dangers and fatigues of the liberating Army, in order to thank you for your Services rather than asperse your Credit. I am disheartened whenever you tell me that you intend to retire at the moment we are about to conclude the work which we have so fortunately undertaken and for which Posterity will be grateful to you. If you, contempting the wicked intriguers, will help us with your presence so necessary for the conservation and freedom of this nascent state, do it for the good of your fellowmen; then iniquity and conspiracy will go into hiding at the presence of your virtues. I do not doubt that you will accede to my prayer and that you will come in company with Don Luis who according to report is already on his way. 277

This communication whos us something of the division that Poinsett had caused among the Chileans, and, for a diplomat from a neutral country, we must admit that it was quite amazing.

In a very depressed state of mind, he stayed on at the Carrera country home carrying on a rather extensive correspondence with Don José Miguel still waging war against Spain. The Consul, as his letters home show, longed to be back in his native land.

By the middle of October, 1813, preparations were well under way for a fresh attack on Chillan which never took place because on October 17, the royalist forces made a surprise at-

277 Ibid.
278 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 159-173
279 Parton, Diplomatic Career, 30
tack on their enemy and produced an almost complete rout had it not been for the cool headedness and sang froid of Bernardo O'Higgins who united the scattered ranks and threw back the foe's attack. Carrera barely escaped with his life having been forced to swim the Itata river to safety. On November 17, the blow finally fell when the Junta notified Don José Miguel that he was to resign from his position as Commander-in-Chief. Ten days later Bernardo O'Higgins was named in his place, and, in the decree appointing the new Chief, the three Carrera brothers were completely separated from the army. These last two mentioned decisions on the part of the government caused its members not a few days of anxiety and worry because they feared a rebellion on the part of the outgoing General rather than hand over his command; however, although he flirted with the idea of revolt, he did conform to government orders, at least, for a few months. Carrera's letters to Poinsett show his resentment at what the government had done, his sorrow at seeing the army in such wretched condition, his fierce opposition to the Junta's

280 Damaso, Historia Americana, 288.
281 Ibid.
282 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 166.
283 Ibid.
284 Ibid., 162.
plan of coming to terms with the Viceroy, and his plans to join Poinsett at his father's "hacienda" where they could make arrangements to leave Chile now that they were no longer wanted.²⁶⁵ Although the Consul General's answer to his friends letters are not extant, one can gather from Don José Miguel's correspondence that Poinsett was constantly giving him advice.

Negotiations between Chile and Peru of a sudden broke down when reinforcements from Lima arrived under a new commander, General Gavino Gainza.²⁶⁶ The new Chief, O'Higgins, aided by Juan Mackenna took the field against him, and, although the Chileans were at first successful, Gainza threw them back and occupied Talca with a view to marching on towards Santiago.²⁶⁷ It was during these hostilities that Don José Miguel and his brother Don Luis Carrera were taken captive by the royalists and sent to prison in Chillan to await trial for treason.²⁶⁸ When this news reached Poinsett in early March, 1814, he immediately returned to Santiago and besought the government to take measures to effect the release of the two unfortunates.²⁶⁹ The new administration, which had succeeded the discredited Junta after the fall

²⁶⁵ Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 167-173.
²⁶⁶ Galdames-Cox, History of Chile, 180.
²⁶⁷ Ibid.
²⁶⁸ Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 173-174.
²⁶⁹ Ibid., 174.
of Talca, with Francisco de la Lastra as Supreme Director turned a deaf ear to all his pleas; so, Poinsett, nothing daunted, persuaded the Carrera family and their friends to pressure the Cabildo to insist with the Supreme Director that he arrange for an exchange of prisoners. Lastra promised action, but at this juncture an event took place which constrained the Consul to set aside his heroic attempts to free his friends and to look after a matter that involved the welfare of his country. To understand fully its import we must return to March of 1813. In that month, there arrived at Valparaiso the North American frigate Essex under the command of Captain David Porter who had been sent by his government to protect American shipping in the Pacific against the British, with whom we were at war, and also against Peruvian privateers and the royal navy, who, with much reason, looked upon the Yankee whale boats as contrabandists. The putting in of the Essex at Valparaiso caused exultant joy among the revolutionary element, many of whom thought that the United States was going to support the Chilean cause against the Viceroy and to enter into an alliance with their government. Poinsett in the early months of 1813, was at the height of his prestige.

290 Ibid.

and power, and, hence, the welcome given to his fellow countrymen was tremendous. 292 Bonfires, the illumination of the capital, a round of parties and receptions, a welcome by Carrera and the Junta at a distance from the city when Porter and his officers were invited, at Poinsett’s suggestion, to Santiago, and complete liberty to sell all their prizes of war wherever they wished and to take on whatever provisions they needed were granted and showered on the American seamen. 293 The visit was of outstanding political importance to the Dictator Carrera, and he intended to capitalize on it to the utmost of his ability. Poinsett and Porter, for their own country’s political and commercial benefit, intended to do the same. 294 The Essex remained at Valparaiso for eight days, raising Yankee prestige to new heights, and then sailed away to prey on more British commerce. 295 This vessel cruised the Pacific for almost a year inflicting severe losses on the English. 296 However, Captain Porter, who had brought Poinsett his first news about the outbreak of the War of 1812, promised to return to Valparaiso on his return home to pick up the American

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292 Ibid., 106-110.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid., 106.
295 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 124.
296 Porter, Journal, II, 150.
Consul who wished to return to take part in the hostilities. This he did, arriving in the Chilean port in January, 1814.

In the meantime, however, a series of events had taken place in Buenos Aires which was to spell the doom of the Essex. His Britannic Majesty's naval officers stationed in the Rio de Plata area had become quite alarmed at their losses in the Pacific owing to Yankee depredations and also deeply perturbed by the political activity of the American envoy and the anti-British propaganda that he was spreading. British preoccupations regarding this matter reached such a point that one officer, Captain Heywood, remarked that apart from sending British ships into the Pacific to protect their commerce it would be worth while "if it were only to counteract the very unfavorable impressions which Mr. Poinsett the American agent of Consul or whatever else he is doing his utmost at this moment to make against the English." The same gentleman accused Poinsett of "contaminating the whole population" on the Andean side with false hopes, and William Bowles, another Britisher, remarked that the Carrera brothers

297 Parton, Diplomatic Career, 37.
298 Ibid.
299 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 176.
300 Edward Tagart, Memoir of the Late Peter Heywood, London, 1832, 255.
were "entirely guided by Poinsett" who was serving the interests of France as well as those of his own country.301 At the suggestion of the Rio Plata British Naval Officers, the English Admiralty despatched two ships to the Pacific, the Phoebe and the Cherub under command of Captain Hillyar.302 Rounding Cape Horn, the English officer headed north for Callao where he was received with every attention by the Viceroy, Abascal, and, in return for this kind treatment, Hillyar offered his services to negotiate a treaty between the rebellious Chileans and the royal forces.303 Carrying away with him the offer of peace to the southern revolutionaries who were still fighting the King's soldiers with no sign of victory in sight, Hillyar arrived at Valparaiso February 8, 1814 and found the recently returned Essex riding at anchor in the bay.304 Since the American ship was in neutral waters, the British did not dare open fire but set up a watch and a blockade and determined to wait until the Yankee frigate should put out to sea.305 Porter did not dare risk a battle; for, his

301 Tagart, Memoir, 256; William Bowles to the Lords of the Admiralty, November 9, 1813, Public Records Office, Admiralty, I, 1556.

302 Ibid.

303 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 176.

304 Ibid.

305 Ibid., 177.
ship with her inferior gun power was no match for the English.\textsuperscript{306}

His only hope was a favorable wind that would enable him to slip out past his enemies. Meanwhile, Poinsett came down to Valparaíso and exerted every effort to persuade the governor of that city to turn his shore batteries on the hostile vessels if they should attack the \textit{Essex} within Chilean waters.\textsuperscript{307} Finally, on March 28, 1814, Captain Porter decided that his chance had come; and so with the Consul General on board, a wind in his favor, and the British on the other side of the bay, he hoisted sail and headed west.\textsuperscript{308} Unfortunately, just as he rounded the last point before reaching the open sea, a squall hit his ship and severely damaged the rigging.\textsuperscript{309} Porter turned back and dropped anchor very close to the shore but in neutral waters and then turned to defend his ship against the foe speedily closing in.\textsuperscript{310} The battle lasted for nearly three hours until the Americans had to capitulate.\textsuperscript{311} Before the engagement occurred, however, Poinsett was put ashore in hopes that he might persuade the Chilean governor to fire on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{306} Rippy, Joel R. \textit{Poinsett}, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 54.
\item \textsuperscript{308} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{310} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{311} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the British or to allow American volunteers to do so since Hillyar had attacked in neutral area, but the authorities refused to interfere.\footnote{312} Porter tells us

During the action our Consul General called on the governor of Valparaiso and requested that the batteries might protect the \textit{Essex}. This request was refused but he promised that if she should succeed in fighting her way to the common anchorage he would send an officer to the British commander and request him to cease firing, but he declined using force under any circumstances; and there is no doubt a perfect understanding existed between them; this conduct, added to the assistance given to the British, and their friendly reception after the action, and the strong bias of the faction which govern Chile in favor of the English, as well as their hostility to the Americans, induced Mr. Poinsett to leave the country.\footnote{313}

The victorious enemy captain, to his credit, allowed Porter and the survivors of the \textit{Essex} to proceed under patrol to the United States, but when asked by Poinsett if he might accompany them, Hillyar peremptorily replied that he would not permit the \textit{arch-enemy of England} to return to America while the two countries were at war.\footnote{314} The American defeat, among other things, added largely to loss of Yankee prestige in Chile and contributed to definite British ascendancy especially after Hillyar was instru-

mental in bringing the belligerents to sign the treaty of Lircay on May 3, 1814, which brought peace to a people sick and tired of war.\textsuperscript{315} In a final communication to Poinsett, Porter stated that only through a superior naval force could American prestige be established and Chile awed into friendship, and he urged him to leave the country at once taking heed from the fate that had befallen the Carreras.\textsuperscript{316}

On March 30, 1814, Poinsett was back in Santiago and discovered that Supreme Director Lastra had done nothing to rescue the Carrera brothers, giving as an excuse the war activities and the negotiations with Captain Hillyar.\textsuperscript{317} This negligence infuriated the Consul who saw in it an attempt to humiliate the entire Carrera family.\textsuperscript{318} Moreover, the new government was showing itself too favorable towards the English and an indication of it, in Poinsett's mind, was the declaration of neutrality during the Essex incident by the governor of Valparaiso.\textsuperscript{319} Against Director Lastra, our envoy could no longer hide his deep resentment, and it broke out in an active campaign among his friends against

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\item \textsuperscript{315} Galdames-Cox, \textit{History of Chile}, 181.
\item \textsuperscript{316} Johnson, \textit{Sketch}.
\item \textsuperscript{317} Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 180.
\item \textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 181.
\item \textsuperscript{319} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the provisions of the treaty that Hillyar had brought down from Lima. 320 This attempt at creating dissension brought him into sharp conflict with the government, and it was not long before he applied for his passport which the authorities only too gladly issued to him. 321 According to Parton, the Chilean government had come to a decision in June, 1813 to request Poinsett to leave the country as soon as possible, but it seems that nothing was done about it. 322 Writing to Monroe from Buenos Aires in June, 1814 about the matter, Poinsett said that "the government of Chile fearful of opposition, and instigated by a violent letter from Lord Strangford, and by the British Commander, insisted upon my making immediate use of the passport which I had solicited a few days before." 323 Before departing for Buenos Aires, where he decided to go to pick up a ship for home, the Consul wrote a last letter to Bernardo O'Higgins, now so influential in government circles, begging him to do all he could to win the release of the Carrera brothers and remarked that, despite the promises of Lastra being made to exchange prisoners, nothing had been done for some

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320 Ibid.
321 Parton, Diplomatic Career, 39.
322 Ibid.
323 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 335.
unknown reason. He closed his not saying that if the authorities feared these two young men, he would upon his word of honor, see to it that they immediately left Chile upon their being freed.\footnote{Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 182.}

Realizing shortly after that Don Bernardo was ignoring his petition, the Consul General left for the Rio de la Plata in a very dejected mood on April 28, 1814 accompanied by Don Juan José Carrera as far as Mendoza.\footnote{Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 183; Rippy, \textit{Joel R. Poinsett}, 55.}

About two months after his arrival in Buenos Aires, Poinsett received news of the escape of his two imprisoned friends from Chillan, of their returning to Santiago where Don José Miguel staged another \textit{coup d'État} overthrowing his enemy Lastra, and once again assumed command of the government.\footnote{Collier and Cruz, \textit{La Primera Misión}, 183.} The new dictatorship ran into vehement opposition headed by O'Higgins who knew that Carrera planned to scuttle the Treaty of Lircay and to continue the revolution with himself at the helm and his brothers in close co-operation.\footnote{Galdames-Cox, \textit{History of Chile}, 182-183.} On August 1, 1814, Carrera wrote a pleading letter to Poinsett asking him to use his influence to obtain arms and munitions from the Buenos Aires Junta for Chile's
revolutionary cause. The letter praised him for the lively interest he had always taken in the cause of Chile and for the generosity he had shown which went far beyond what his office as Consul called for. With this in mind, the newly established Junta besought him to intercede with their neighbors for a "consignment of two thousand muskets and a thousand quintals of powder," as their only hope lay in the "generosity of . . . friends." Under the same date another despatch accompanied the above which is worth quoting in full:

Los recomendables servicios con que V.E. quiso distinguirse en la campaña de Chile contra sus invasores, le han merecido la justa gratitud del pueblo que se lisonjea de poderle ofrecer por medio del nuevo gobierno la mayor consideración y respetos. Así como esta variación de circunstancias debe ser satisfactoria a V.E. lo es para nosotros el momento de corresponder su generosidad con el alto aprecio d que siempre fue digno. Sería para nosotros un día feliz aquel en que V.E. resolviere regresar al país que jamás borrará de su memoria las obligaciones que le debe, y que desea con ansia manifestar la que le impone el interés de un ciudadano benemérito en la gran lucha con los rivales de la América del Sud.

Poinsett bent all his efforts to interest the Buenos Aires government in the recent revolt, but it was all in vain. To the

328 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 183.
329 Ibid.
330 Ibid., 183-184.
331 Ibid., 184.
332 Ibid., 185.
very end, however, our emissary continued in his position as adviser to Carrera urging him on to energetic resistance against the Spaniards and recommending that, in case of disaster, he should withdraw to Coquimbo where he could continue his opposition. 333

Since Great Britain had swept the Atlantic clean of American ships now that both countries were at war, Poinsett had to wait until September before he could make arrangements for passage to the United States, and even then he had to slip past the British very clandestinely, embarking on a Portuguese ship bound for Bahia and then transferring to another bound for the Madeira Islands. 334 While waiting for a ship to take him home, he wrote an interesting account of the island and its people with special stress on their grape culture which he hoped to introduce into South Carolina. 335 He reached Charleston on May 28, 1815. 336

Before we leave Poinsett it is only fair that we mention several incidents that redound to his credit. During the early period of the framing of the constitution, or "reglamento de 1812," a feud broke out between Don José Miguel, then Dictator

333 Ibid.
334 Parton, Diplomatic Career, 42.
335 Letter of Poinsett to Monroe, March 6, 1815, Poinsett Papers, Vol. I.
336 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 56.
of the country, and his brother, Don Juan José, which, but for our representative, might have developed into a very sanguinary fratricidal war. Political friction between the two brothers over management of government reached very explosive proportions during the early months of 1812. Juan José, jealous of his brother's supreme power which he had taken unto himself, accused the Dictator of extravagance and inefficiency and charged that he took advice and direction from the American Consul. Many of Don Miguel's enemies joined the opposition party, chief among whom were the Larrain family, supporters of Bernardo O'Higgins, who feared the radical, republican, and pro-American policies of their opponent to say nothing of their resentment of being excluded from governing circles. The situation reached such a dangerous pass that the government appealed to Poinsett to use his influence with Juan José. At first, all endeavors were useless, but by patience and tact the Consul finally brought him to a calmer state of mind and eventually to complete reconcili-

337 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 95-107; Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 46-47.
338 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 45.
339 Ibid., 45.
340 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 585; Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 46.
341 Ibid.
Don José Miguel tells us in his diary:

Nos juntamos en casa de Poinsett, el Padre Camilo Henríquez . . . Juan José y yo. Apenas nos vimos, volvimos a amistarnos, y no se trató de otra cosa que de acordar los pasos que debían darse para reformar el gobierno y dar un nuevo ser a nuestra revolución.

The American envoy did Chile an excellent turn by preventing bloodshed which the dispute would inevitably have led to, but it also indicated the measure of influence Poinsett had gained in government circles and in the Carrera family.

Other favors which the Charlestonian did for Chile were the help he offered in the organization of the Chilean police, his advice regarding the establishing of a bank, his encouragement of cotton planting, and the suggested experiment advanced for the cultivation of tobacco, beets and flax. His interest in the country's welfare brought him an invitation to become a member of the "Society of the Friends of the Country," a sort of Chamber of Commerce. In accepting the invitation he wrote: "I am ready to associate myself with your society, above all,

342 Ibid.
343 Carrera, Diario Militar, 63. We will recall that it was because of this feud that Don José Miguel out of fear of his brother did not declare the independence of Chile on July 4, 1812, the day of Poinsett's patriotic celebration.
344 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 56, 90, 115.
345 Ibid., 117.
on account of its concern with the development of industry and agriculture of the country." In another letter to the same group, he explained, at the request of one of the members, the operation of the tariff system of the United States, and on one occasion recommended the immigration of Yankee workers to Chile who could aid the country in developing its cotton and agricultural program. Undoubtedly, Poinsett felt that this would be a means of establishing American influence along the Andes to counteract British ascendency.

From Charleston, South Carolina, Poinsett forwarded to the State Department the terms of a commercial treaty he had drawn up with the Buenos Aires government while awaiting passage home the preceding year and informed the President that he would be in Washington in early June. On July 15, 1815, the Secretary of State, James Monroe, acknowledged Poinsett's letter with the following expressions of praise:

In acknowledging this communication which terminates your agency in a trust of much delicacy and importance, I have the honor to state that the ability and zeal with which you have discharged its duties, the success with which you have conciliated the good disposition of the local authorities and people where you have resided, in

346 Ibid.
347 Ibid., 119
348 Ibid., 116
349 Letter to James Monroe, Poinsett Papers, 171
conformity with the amicable relations existing between the United States and Spain, and the information which you have communicated, have obtained the approbation of the President. 350

Although the available files of the South Carolinian's despatches are incomplete, those that we have indicate that he was not entirely frank with the President. A lengthy communication to the State Department written in September, 1814, several months after his departure from Chile, is an attempt to justify his undiplomatic military activity in the capture of Talcahuano only. Enraged by the capture of American whaling ships and the confinement of their crews in chains by Spanish authorities, [a perfectly justifiable action since the Yankees were carrying on extensive contraband trade], and receiving no satisfactory answer from the Viceroy to whom protests were made, and learning of the invasion of Concepción [in January 1813] and of the seizure of the American ship in Talcahuano, Poinsett stated:

I could not sit tamely, and see our flag insulted, our ships seized and our citizens loaded with irons. My influence in Chile enabled me to act as I thought my duty imperiously called upon me to do, for I could not longer consider these as the acts of a neutral; but as the wanton aggressions of a man, who in the arbitrary exercise of uncontrolled power knows no right, and who as an ally of Great Britain looks forward to a war with the United States as a necessary consequence of that alliance, and as a justification of his violent proceedings. These, Sir, were the motives which determined

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350 James Monroe to J. R. Poinsett, July 16, 1815, Poinsett Papers, I, 172.
my conduct, and which will I trust justify it.

As far as is known, Poinsett revealed nothing to the Administration about his further part in the military campaigns after Talcahuano, to say nothing of his unjustifiable interference in Chilean internal affairs. Just how much information the Secretary of State and the President had about their agent's political and military adventures in Chile is undetermined, but there is evidence which seems to prove that Poinsett sailed for South America under the impression that his country was going to use him in a military capacity on the side of the revolting Creoles on the assumption that the United States was on the verge of recognizing the independence of the rising Spanish American states and of extending to them material assistance. The evidence is as follows.

On April 27, 1817, President Monroe wrote to the Charlestonian asking him to undertake another mission to South America for the purpose of gathering information regarding the progress of the revolution. Poinsett refused the offer on the grounds that he had already entered politics and was unwilling

351 Letter to State Department, Poinsett Papers, I, 149
352 Letter to James Monroe, Poinsett Papers, II, 5
353 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 39-40
to withdraw without "some more important motive than this com-
mmission presents." In his answer to President Monroe he
states:

Should the result of these enquiries determine the govern-
ment to acknowledge the independence of the Colonies and
to afford them effectual assistance, I hope that you will
give me an opportunity of serving my country in the field
and will redeem the pledge given me by Mr. Madison when I
embarked for South America and which was my chief induc-
ment to accept that commission. 354a

If such was the attitude of the Administration, one could hardly
expect the State Department to reprehend its envoy for the ac-
tivities he actually undertook.

354 Letter to James Monroe, Poinsett Papers, II, 5
354a Ibid.
CONCLUSION

Before drawing our own conclusions on the basis of the material presented, let us review briefly what the authorities have concluded about Poinsett.

Dorothy Parton in her *Diplomatic Career of Joel Roberts Poinsett* asks whether one could term his mission a success in view of the objectives he had, namely, to ascertain political condition, to promote Yankee commercial interests, and to protect the rights of American citizens. She answers that in its "broadest aspects" an affirmative response must be given; for, she says, "his letters and reports on the state of society and government in those new countries are even today valuable sources of information, and from them it was possible for the Department of State to formulate a suitable policy of recognition and trade." If that is what she understands by "broadest aspects" I think that we can agree. However, regarding the techniques that he employed she is in disagreement. She adds that they "did not correspond to the dignity, the aloofness, or the balance expected of a

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355 Parton, *Diplomatic Career*, 44.
diplomat,"356 and in his defense she remarks that the "conditions which confronted Poinsett in South America demanded more than the usual measure of tact, discretion, and resourcefulness."357

Doctor Rippy in his book Joel R. Poinsett, A Versatile American shows a definite admiration for his subject. He feels that the Charlestonian was a great democrat who let his enthusiasm for democracy motivate certain indiscretions which for a political agent were unbecoming. He mentions that Poinsett did not seem to have made a full revelation of all his activities to President Monroe who praised the former on the basis of incomplete knowledge. He writes: "His enthusiasm for democracy and military activity had led him to transcend his instructions, but returning prudence prevented him from making a full revelation to a chief scarcely less liberal. With his knowledge of Poinsett's activities thus incomplete, Monroe expressed full approval of 'the ability and zeal with which' the agent had 'discharged' the duties of his post."358 Rippy gives the reader the impression that he feels that Poinsett's mistakes were on "the side of the angels."

William Miller Collier and Guillermo Feliu Cruz in

356 Ibid.
357 Ibid.
358 Rippy, Joel R. Poinsett, 56-57.
their La Primera Mision de Los Estados Unidos de America en Chile show a great admiration for Poinsett although they freely admit that he went beyond the bounds of discretion. They feel that he was a true friend of republican Chile, and that Chile owes him a debt of gratitude. He is described as "un carácter franco que sabía reservar lo que convenía, un profundo conocimiento de los hombres, un espíritu amplio, liberal y emprendedor, y principios republicanos y democráticos bien probados. Su carácter insinuante y persuasivo, su alma ardiente y arderosa, garantizaban también el éxito de la empresa que Madison deseaba realizar."359 In another place they speak of him in very flattering tones as

Alma aventurera, espíritu liberal amplísimo, lleno de armazones generosos y muy impulsivos, cuando la revolución apenas nace, intenta un golpe al Virrey del Peru, proponiendo la clausura de los puertos chilenos al comercio peruano; se hace, enseguida, propagandista de las ideas revolucionarias, consejero oficioso del gobierno, comentarista de las ideas de éste, compenador de las rivalidades entre los Carrera y, por último, legislador escribiendo un proyecto de código constitucional para Chile. Terminada esa labor doctrinaria, toma las armas y hace toda la primera campaña de 1813, como consejero o maestro de campo de su amigo, el General Carrera. El ideólogo político se transforma así en un valiente soldado.360

Barros Arana in his Historia de Chile looking at Poin-

359 Collier and Cruz, La Primera Misión, 19.
360 Ibid., VI.
sett through nationalistic eyes describes him as "activo i animoso, profundamente demócrata y liberal por sus ideas i además dotado de una inteligencia clara." Speaking of his military services, he writes:

Como poseía conocimientos muy superiores a los de casi todos los oficiales del ejército patriota, se ocupaba de ordinario en hacer reconocimientos sobre las posiciones enemigas y en levantar croquis topográficos del terreno como lo hizo con grave peligro de su vida en los alrededores de Talcahuano y de Chillán cuando los realistas defendían a estas plazas. Durante el penosísimo sitio de Chillán cuando los patriotas sufrían todas las molestias de un invierno horroroso pasado a campo abierto, Poinsett no sustraía a ninguna comisión por muy comprometente y peligrosa que fuera.

Doctor Arthur Whitaker is of the opinion that Poinsett's "conduct may perhaps be excused on the ground of hypothetical verbal instructions or advice from the authorities at Washington before his departure; but he made the worse mistake of taking part in the factional strife among the patriots with the result that his mission ended in failure and left a heritage of widespread dislike of the United States in that part of Latin America. Ill-considered though his action was, it illustrated the difficulties that lay in the way of an American agent in that remote region, where it was difficult to obtain advice and almost

361 Barros Arana, Historia de Chile, VIII, 564.
362 Diego Barros Arana, Obras Completas, Santiago de Chile, 1908, XI, 419.
impossible to obtain support from the home government." 363

On the basis of studies made and of the evidence presented, I think it can be justly said that by 1810 it was becoming quite obvious that the Spanish American colonies were in the process of a drastic change or soon would be. If total independence, which the radical separatist group was demanding, was not to result, at least, a much greater measure of political and commercial autonomy, which the more moderate element stood for, would be granted to the colonies. Change, political and commercial, was hovering over many lands, and its appearance south of the Rio Grande to the Straits of Magellan brought the United States and Great Britain wheeling, like two vultures, over Spain's New World possessions, as Henry Adams puts it, swooping down when the opportunity presented itself on their prey to gobble up whatever commercial privileges they could. Both powers wished to guide the revolutionaries along political paths that would serve British or American interests, the former wishing to see the governing Juntas maintain their dependence on Spain until Napoleon was crushed, the latter desiring to see them strike out for independence and establish republican institutions which would more naturally tend to bring them under Yankee tutelage.

363 Whitaker, United States and the Independence of Latin America, 71-72.
Prudence demanded, however, that the United States observe an official neutrality towards the struggle between Spain and her colonies. Any other course might cause open hostility with European powers, and, as yet, it was too early to discern just what form the Hispanic American upheaval would take. Washington did not care to be caught in the lurch.

The instructions given to Poinsett by the Department of State, although admitting that political separation from Spain on the part of the creoles would be quite pleasing to the United States, protested neutrality and eschewed any form of interference no matter what form of government was chosen by the criollos or what relations they might choose to maintain with the European powers. To have said anything else at the time would have been political suicide. The bearer of these precepts, though, was a product of his age and knew well the "unofficial mind" of his country's leaders which was to give full moral support to the revolutionary movement and to look the other way when private individuals were forwarding material assistance. Such tactics to the politicians of the early nineteenth century were the means at hand to wean the former colonies away from Europe and to attract them into the Yankee sphere of influence. Sheer expediency was the guiding philosophy in all our Hispanic American policy making of those times and in many instances the same is true even to the present day.
When Poinsett embarked for his new post, it is not misinterpreting the evidence in the least to say that his purpose was to bend all his efforts to promote total independence, to secure equal commercial rights with Great Britain, and to make American influence predominant in the council chambers. He was out to supplant England. The preceding pages show how our envoy set about attaining his objectives. He felt that he should "fight fire with fire." In Buenos Aires there is solid reason to believe that he earnestly promoted revolution and dislike for our competitors. In Chile he so injected himself into her political and internal strife that he and his country's prestige fell with the Carrera clique which attempted to rule Chile so dictatorially. For a democrat as ardent as Poinsett, it is a bit difficult to comprehend the friends he chose. They ruled through coups d'état and military force. He found the Carrera party more in harmony with his views. The noble democratic principles that he supposedly stood for always had to "take a back seat" when expediency demanded it. Hence, the incredible audacity of the man brought his whole mission to naught and left a deep heritage of dislike for the United States. He reaped what he sowed, and any attempt to defend his actions on the score that Britain was endeavoring, mutatis mutandis, to establish herself by similar processes does not make Poinsett's serious indiscretions any the less culpable or justified. They help explain his actions, but
they do not excuse them.

The meddlesome diplomat sooner or later finds that his undiplomatic procedure brings him nothing but grief, and in the case of Poinsett this was only too true. Had he followed the objectives as outlined in his instruction, namely, to promote Yankee commercial interests, to convey the neighborly sentiments felt towards the creoles by the North Americans, non-existent as they were, and to protect American citizens residing in those parts, his mission and his country in the long run would have been looked upon as true friends. Instead, he sacrificed all for a policy that disregarded legitimate means and made the United States an object of suspicion ever since. A situation into which Poinsett was sent demanded a diplomat of foresight, with unusual tact and discretion who could look into the future and see that, although immediate gains might have to be passed, it was of the utmost importance for future generations to lay a foundation upon which could be reared amicable relations that inspired mutual trust and friendship. Chile should have been made to feel that she was being treated as an equal with full right to her way of life and not subordinated to the political and commercial interests of stronger powers. Probably, no such diplomat existed in the United States in the early nineteenth century who could have instilled such an impression, for the distress of the European powers, especially Spain, presented such overpowering temp-
tations to the greedy North American republic that it succumbed. While our neighbor was lying prostrate and helpless, Yankee politicians and adventurers attempted to grab everything in reach. Poinsett was a perfect example of such mentality.
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Daniel Brent complied, forwarding not only the dispatches in question but also a manuscript journal. These papers are now in the possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Manuscript Journal is in the Library of Congress. Many of Poinsett's letters from Chile are still undeciphered.

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C. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

The thesis submitted by Charles Edward Ronan has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Dec. 26, 1953

Signature of Adviser