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The Paraguayan War and the Platine Balance of Power

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Utilizing both primary and secondary literature, this study attempts to illustrate that the origins of one of Latin America's most significant wars, the Paraguayan War (1864-70), are understandable only when viewed within the context of the historical development of the Río de la Plata as a region. Adopting the framework provided by Robert N. Burr in his pioneering work on the South American continental balance of power system, By Reason or Force: Chile and the Balancing of Power in South America, 1830-1905 (Berkely, 1965), this thesis examines one particular outgrowth of the historical process in the Río de la Plata: The development of a regional
balance of power system in the area. It also illustrates that such systems of international power politics are not necessarily promotive of stability and equanimity in the relations between nations: that balance of power systems are not static but constantly changing, and that such changes are conducive to friction, intrigue, and war.

By tracing the evolution of a regional balance of power system in the Río de la Plata and how the nations of the area interrelated to one another within the context of that system, we can hopefully overcome the shortcomings of a whole host of simple explanations which advance the hypothesis that the Paraguayan War was the result of the personal aberrations and ambitions of a single man—Paraguayan dictator Francisco Solano López. Rather, the Paraguayan War was the product of complex causes, themselves outgrowths of historical processes in the Río de la Plata. These predisposing causes to war, which included protracted boundary disputes, nationalism, and the oftentimes conflicting economic aspirations of the nations of the Río de la Plata, interacted with the functionings and machinations of a regional balance of power system to create an extremely tense international situation by the middle of the nineteenth century.

The above seems a more meaningful framework from which to view the origins of the Paraguayan War and the history of international relations in the Río de la Plata (and might prove fruitful in studying the origins of other South American wars). The nations of the area interrelated with one
another within the context of a Platine balance of power system, each intent upon maintaining its sovereignty and advancing its national interests. Within such systems of power politics group members share the conviction that any significant change in their relative power positions threatens their national interests, and they react to such changes by striving to maintain or recreate a favorable power structure. When the conventional techniques of diplomacy fail to ensure a favorable equilibrium, that is, when the dynamics of change within the structure threaten its maintenance and the national interests of group members, those nations often take recourse to war as an instrument for re-establishing or creating a favorable power equilibrium.

The dynamics of change in the La Plata Basin, where Francisco Solano López had fashioned a "potential Prussia in South America," challenged the Platine equilibrium. The other nations in the regional balance of power system responded by waging war upon the Paraguayan dictator because, in the phraseology of the Treaty of the Triple Alliance, "the peace, safety, and well-being of their respective nations is impossible while the present Government of Paraguay exists."
THE PARAGUAYAN WAR AND THE
PLATINE BALANCE OF POWER

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In memory of my mother, her encouragement and inspiration.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The Paraguayan War (1864-70), "South America's most costly and bloody war,"1 pitted the tiny landlocked nation of Paraguay against the allied powers of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. The Paraguayan War, known also as the War of the Triple Alliance, resulted not only in territorial concessions being granted the victorious allies by the Paraguayan nation, but more significantly, in the near annihilation of the male population of that defeated country. Of a population estimated at slightly over one-half million inhabitants at the outset of the war, only 220,000 survived and, of these, only 28,000 were adult males. For the allies the war, while not nearly as devastating as for Paraguay (one estimate places their combined losses at 190,000 men), represented a drain on manpower and resources that could have been better appropriated elsewhere.2

The history of international relations in South America is marked by innumerable boundary disputes, border clashes, and an occasional international war. The resort to war as an instrument of international politics is usually the last recourse after all other weapons in the arsenal of international
diplomacy have failed. But war is more than just a manifestation of international relations. It is a significant event in the histories of those nations involved, and its effects transcend mere diplomatic questions and immediate concerns, influencing as it does the history of their international relations and domestic development for years afterwards. And because war is a significant phenomenon, it is extremely important to examine and understand the origins of international wars in the South American context—not only because such wars have profoundly affected the course of the domestic and international history of the nations of the area, but also because of the fact that these wars were the product of historical developments and the study of the ante-bellum situation offers insights into the totality of the historical experience of the region.

The present paper is an attempt to explain the origins of one of Latin America's most significant wars, the Paraguayan War. As such, it forsakes dealing with the military history, the events, or even the results of that war. Nor is it meant as a diplomatic history of the Rio de la Plata region although, by necessity, it deals heavily with that topic. Rather, this paper is intended as an examination of the causes of the Paraguayan War within the context of the historical evolution of the Rio de la Plata as a region. It is hoped thereby to shed light not only on the origins of that war, but also upon the process of historical development in the Rio de la Plata. Particular emphasis will be placed upon one
outgrowth of that process, the evolution of a regional balance of power system in the La Plata Basin, and how that system helped produce an extremely tense international situation in the Río de la Plata; a situation characterized by intrigue, suspicion, and animosity, and hence, conducive to, if not promotive of, war.

The student of Latin American history who endeavors to understand the origins of the Paraguayan War is encumbered by the fact that much of the writing concerning that drama displays a serious bias against one of its principal actors, Paraguayan dictator Francisco Solano López. This bias has led to a whole host of simple explanations regarding the war's origins, most of them blaming it on the personal aberrations and ambitions of López.

Typical of this literature is the account of one highly regarded specialist of inter-American affairs who, in discussing the Paraguayan War, says that the "younger López, vain, mentally unstable, and craving glory and military prestige, harbored the ambition of becoming the Napoleon of South America." Another well-known Latin Americanist's treatment of the war refers to the "insane war brought on by the dictator of Paraguay's . . . ambition to build a Platine empire." According to the latter author, the "unbalanced despot" or "mad dictator" (as you choose) "craved imperial glory, nothing less than the creation of a huge Platine state with Paraguay as its core and himself as emperor."
López' contemporaries were, if anything, even less generous in their appraisals of the man. One North American diplomat, stationed in Asunción during this period, called López "a traitor, an assassin, a perjurer, ... and a common enemy of mankind,"6 who had deliberately provoked the war so that he "might make a figure as a military character."7 Another contemporary, an Englishman who served as an engineer in López' army, considered López "a monster without parallel,"8 and while admitting predisposing causes such as the existence of unresolved boundary questions and Brazilian imperialism, states flatly that "The war was begun by López"9 who was "imbibed by a notion of ... playing Napoleon in South America."10

One authority on Paraguay, who later became cognizant of the implications of the bias against López in his own work, is Harris Gaylord Warren. In an early work Warren had called López a "vile monster whom no special pleading can excuse,"11 and claimed that "López precipitated the war and upon him must rest the blame for what happened."12 However, Warren later retreated from this earlier position and wrote what amounts to a major revisionist interpretation of the Paraguayan War. In the latter work the author contends that much of the writing on the war has relied too heavily upon the materials advanced by the publicists of the Triple Alliance and López' detractors:

Many students of Latin American history, including the present writer, have been too
hasty in accepting the anti-López image of the war. We need to pay more attention to what López and his writers insisted were Paraguayan motives in precipitating South America's most terrible war.

The pro-López image of the war was constructed by the Marshal himself, a fact which may well make it suspect—but no more so than the image created by the Marshal's enemies. The central idea, the major thesis, is that the War of the Triple Alliance resulted from an attempt to destroy the political equilibrium in the Plata basin. Brazil was the principal enemy of Platine equilibrium, and Bartolomé Mitre committed a serious blunder in promoting civil war in Uruguay and then joining with Brazil against Paraguay. Closely connected with this equilibrium argument is the thesis that Paraguay was fighting a war for survival. Porteño's still dreamed of bringing the old viceregal area under their control and Brazil's territorial appetite was insatiable.

Warren advances what he labels the "equilibrium-survival" thesis and maintains that López fully believed that Uruguayan independence was indispensable for equilibrium in the Plata region and for Paraguay's own survival; and that this was the "key to every Paraguayan policy."

The most satisfactory and best documented treatment of the origins of the Paraguayan War is that of British historian Pelham Horton Box. In his introduction Box cautions that the war has too often been interpreted in light of a single man's "personality and aberrations." This he attributes to the fact that most of the literature written in the English language concerning the Paraguayan War has relied too heavily upon the testimony of Charles Ames Washburn, the first U. S. Minister accredited to Asunción. Washburn's experience of "diplomacy under difficulties" (a reference to the title of Washburn's book), says Box, probably inclined him to what may
be called a "demonic interpretation of history." Washburn's book is dominated by successive "villains and heroes," the favorite villain being Francisco Solano López. According to Box, "like all purely personal interpretations of history, this one will not bear the test of a close examination." On the contrary, says Box, complex and impersonal forces were at work in producing that conflict:

... the origins of the Paraguayan War ... demonstrate the immense complexity of forces at work. What emerges most clearly is the fact that the war germinated in the political and economic instability of the states of the Río de la Plata at this period ... The national organization of Argentina was at this time incomplete ... The internal situation in Uruguay was even more confused ... 16

The present writer is in concurrence with Box in rejecting the "personal interpretation" of the origins of the Paraguayan War. Certainly López' reactions to events in the Río de la Plata during 1863 and 1864 were important, perhaps even crucial; but those same events and the actions they elicited from López were themselves the product of complex forces and, above all, the result of historical developments in the La Plata basin. Careful examination of the causes of the Paraguayan War suggests that the conflict occurred primarily because of the complex power politics of the region. Deep-seated animosities and international as well as intranational rivalries were complicated by the existence of unresolved boundary questions, nationalism, and economic motivations, all interacting and acting upon one another to produce an extremely tense international
situation which eventually culminated in the outbreak of war in 1864.

The framework utilized in the present study for analyzing the origins of the Paraguayan War is largely adopted from Robert N. Burr. Burr has made a major contribution to the study of intra-continental South American relations by his works on the South American balance of power. Disappointed with the standard accounts of the relations between South American nations, which treat those affairs as a series of unrelated or discrete episodes, Burr set out to correct this misassumption by providing a general framework within which to view intra-continental South American relations. He argues that the "phenomena of relations between and among nations are not discrete but continuous," and that "if we know how and where to look for connections, we will find them." He goes on to assert his conviction that the nations of South America have not interrelated merely in response to "depraved or enlightened leaders, or to conditions that have been created out of a vacuum and subsequently swallowed up by it," but rather in response to "broad trends in both their internal development and the totality of their international relations."17

Burr suggests that "the main developments in the international life of South America may be fruitfully regarded as phases in the evolution of a continental South American system of power politics."18 Within such a framework, says
Burr, the apparently scattered events of South American intra-relations have a meaningful place and relevance to one another; that is, they assume a pattern in which "the history of intra-South American relations . . . becomes the comprehensible continuum that we believe it to be."^19

Burr defines a system of power politics as "a complex of several sovereign states, each intent upon maintaining its independence and upon competing with the others in order to advance national interests." According to him an unsystematized group becomes systematized when the following conditions prevail:

1) group members share the conviction that any significant change in their relative power positions may threaten the interests of individual members, so that each nation simultaneously insists upon the need for maintenance of power equilibrium and strives for a power structure favorable to itself at the expense of others;

2) group members compete with other group members in the effort to increase their power and advance their national interests;

3) the leadership of group members accepts the basic axioms of power politics and is willing to use its techniques, including the various forms of uni- and multilateral coercion and the 'divide et impera' principle;

4) the international political interests of member states are primarily, but not necessarily exclusively, centered upon intra-system relations;

5) group members possess the capability of shaping the system's power structure without significant or decisive out-group influence.20

Burr contends that such conditions were current in South America during the nineteenth century and that two regional
balance of power systems existed in that area prior to the 1870's when they became integrated in a continental system.21

The nations most intimately involved in these regional balance of power systems were Chile and Peru on the west coast of South America and Argentina and Brazil on the east. The relative political stability of these nations, their greater resources and wealth, and their military and naval strength made them, says Burr, the great powers of South America, rivals for influence over lesser nations and for control of strategic routes and sparsely inhabited territories.22

In the La Plata basin, this rivalry centered on control of that estuary and its confluents as well as hegemony over the two lesser powers within the regional balance of power system, Paraguay and Uruguay. How this rivalry contributed to the outbreak of the Paraguayan War is most conveniently explained by examining its antecedents within the context of the historical development of the region of the Río de la Plata.
CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL RIVALRY IN LA PLATA

The origins of international conflict in the Río de la Plata, and indirectly, the origins of the Paraguayan War, stem from the Treaty of Tordesillas consummated, ironically, between Castile and Portugal in June 1494, for the purpose of averting war. By the terms of the treaty, a line of demarcation separating the empires of the two contracting parties was established 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. Although its exact location remained uncertain for generations, owing to the lack of adequate maps and the inability in those days to measure longitude accurately, the Treaty of Tordesillas established Portuguese presence in the Western Hemisphere on a legal basis and engendered more than four centuries of litigation and conflict.¹

Both the Spanish and the Portuguese claimed the estuary of the Río de la Plata. For years, however, there was no open collision, as the Spaniards in the 16th century were chiefly interested in the Andean mining regions on the Pacific side of the continent, and the Portuguese chiefly in the sugar colonies of Baía and Pernambuco in the north. Not until 1680 was a settlement made on the eastern bank of the estuary, when the Portuguese built the fort of Colônia do Sacramento
directly opposite Buenos Aires. Colônia soon became a source of contention and whenever the two crowns were at war with one another, Spaniards from Buenos Aires crossed over and expelled the Portuguese, and by the terms of the peace in Europe, were as regularly compelled to retire. The cause of this contention, and the intricate diplomatic maneuverings it spawned, was the fact that Colônia was not a colony in the usual sense but rather an entrepot for contraband through which the subjects of other kingdoms, particularly the British, tapped the markets and resources of Spain's New World Empire. The mercantile system of Imperial Spain excluded foreigners from direct participation in the trade of its colonies and so the British, through their commercial treaty of 1654 with the Braganza's, utilized the Portuguese colony of Sacramento as a center for contraband:

By treaty right an important range of British manufactures . . . entered Portugal and Portuguese possessions overseas . . . The Brazil trade was the means by which Britain secured a substantial proportion of the bullion required for trade in the Far East, and was the avenue by which British manufactures found their way to Buenos Aires, Paraguay, and Peru. Though there is much controversy as to the extent of the contraband trade, most authorities admit that it was great and some go so far as to speculate that, despite Spanish prohibitions against it, more silver bullion flowed eastward from Alto Peru to the River Plate than along the official channels westward through Callao.

Whatever the extent of this prohibited trade, it was
sufficient to cause alarm in Spain and to draw from the Crown spirited efforts to halt the encroachments upon its territory. As already mentioned, numerous expeditions set forth from Buenos Aires to expel the Portuguese from Colônia do Sacramento, and occasionally the town was destroyed. In 1729 a Spanish settlement was formally established at Montevideo. In 1750 Spain and Portugal signed the Treaty of Madrid which gave to Brazil approximately the southern and western boundaries she possesses today. However, when Spain entered the "Seven Year's War" in 1761, the treaty was annulled. At the Peace of Paris (1763), Colônia do Sacramento was restored to Portugal at the insistence of the British, whose dependency by that time Portugal had become:

Portugal required British support at home and abroad. She was encouraged and enabled to expand the territory of Brazil. At the Peace of Paris, Colônia do Sacramento was restored to Portugal. She was assisted to defend herself against Spain at home . . . and the channels which Portugal provided for trade with the Spanish Empire remained intact.

Spain's ignominious military defeat in the "Seven Year's War," and the subsequent diplomatic defeat at the peace table in Paris, evoked from her a renewed determination to protect the Spanish commercial system and the Empire itself. This took the form of a defensive overhaul of the Spanish Empire, commonly known as the "Bourbon Reforms." While the measures themselves included economic, administrative, as well as military reforms, the essence of the reform program was the
strengthening of Spain and her Empire so as to be able to withstand the assaults of her aggressive competitor nations. As one historian has noted, the preoccupation of Charles III was with "the security of Spanish America. The survival of Spain as a colonial power and therefore as a power to be reckoned with in Europe was the basis of his policy." He goes on to add that "the creation of more efficient agencies was only a means to an end: To increase the revenues of the crown and to strengthen the defenses of the overseas possessions. This demanded in the first place a break with the antiquated commercial system." Within this broad-ranging program, "Everything was subordinated to the growth of naval and military strength. But this growth was dependent on an increase of royal revenues."7

The facet of the reform program of Charles III which most concerns us, and which was to have far-reaching significance for the later independent states of the Río de la Plata, was the creation of the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata in 1776 (which included the present day republics of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia). Buenos Aires had always been the "soft underbelly" of the Spanish Empire in South America, a potential gap in Spain's economic defenses through which smugglers could undermine her trade monopoly and drain off the wealth of Potosí. As the 18th century progressed, it was not only this economic factor which caused Spain to act, but also her recognition of the strategic
importance of Buenos Aires to the overall strength of the Empire: "In this period Buenos Aires acquired a strategic significance of the first order, in that it was the best base in the South Atlantic, the most effective guard over the route to the Magellan Straits and to the Pacific, and the best point of penetration into the interior of South America."\(^{10}\)

The immediate circumstance which precipitated the birth of the new viceroyalty was the renewal of Portuguese aggressions in 1775 which induced Charles III to take steps to settle the issue once and for all. In 1776 he sent a 10,000 man military and naval expedition to the Río de la Plata, under the command of Pedro de Cevallos, who also bore the title of Viceroy of Río de la Plata: "The dispatch of Pedro de Cevallos as Viceroy in 1776 was a provisional step, inspired by the military needs of the moment. The permanence of the Viceroyalty was assured by the appointment of his successor in 1778."\(^{11}\) Cevallos was proceeding rapidly with the reconquest of the disputed area when word was received that the quarrel had been settled in Europe. Cevallos had driven the Portuguese out of the "Eastern Shore," and Spain made good its claim to the territory, as recognized in the Treaty of San Ildefonso (1777) which virtually renewed the terms of the repudiated agreement of 1750.\(^{12}\) The region of the Banda Oriental was not again to become a source of dispute for nearly forty years. However,
the struggle for control of the Banda Oriental was far from over; it was only delayed, and when it resumed it had taken on a different character as the former administrative units of the Viceroyalty had achieved their independence from Spain in the years after 1810. Moreover, the results of the colonial conflict between Spain and Portugal were to condition the nature of international rivalry in the Río de la Plata for generations to come.

One result of the rivalry between Spain and Portugal in the Banda Oriental was the creation of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. As one historian has noted, "Charles III, who for reasons really unconnected with the internal problems of administration, wanted a bastion in the South Atlantic against the British and Portuguese . . . . found the projected viceroyalty the best form it could take." He goes on to add that the "Emergence of the Río de la Plata as a prime factor in Spanish Colonial policy was due less to a realization of its economic possibilities than to its strategic importance." Indeed, the economic potential of Buenos Aires and its hinterland were not to be realized until the second half of the 19th century when improvements in technology and the demand generated by the expansion of industrialization in Europe combined to make profitable the export of bulk products typical of temperate zone areas. Nonetheless, because of the strategic importance of Buenos Aires, the Viceroyalty had to be maintained and this in
turn depended on its economic viability—its ability to attract settlers and support a defense establishment. One means by which the Spanish Crown provided for this necessity was by attaching the mining region of Alto Peru to the Vice-royalty. Another measure, of greater significance to the origins of international rivalry in the Río de la Plata during the post-Independence period, was the opening of the port of Buenos Aires to trade. Both measures, particularly the latter, had the effect of redirecting the trade of the region through the port of Buenos Aires, a process which had a far-reaching impact on the economies of surrounding regions. The decision made by Charles III, in consideration of the overall strategic imperatives of the Empire, had the consequence of sacrificing "the modest industries of the interior . . . . to cheaper imports through Buenos Aires." It also gave rise to an entrenched group of merchants at Buenos Aires with a vested interest in subordinating the economy of the interior regions to their own needs. Both problems carried over into the national period of Argentine history and were a prime source of the regional conflict—which was in essence an economic conflict—that was to plague that nation throughout much of its independent existence. Not only did the artisans and tradesmen of other regions chafe at their economic subordination to Buenos Aires, but also at their political subordination to that viceregal power center. Thus was established a pattern of localism and regional conflict that
was to plague Argentina throughout most of the 19th century, to contribute greatly to its inability to achieve political stability, and to have an indirect, but nonetheless great, effect on international relations within the La Plata Basin.

Secondly, the creation of the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata brought into being serious problems of territorial delineation that were to frustrate the relations of the soon-to-be independent nations of the region. In essence, the elevation of the former Audiencia of Buenos Aires to the status of Viceroyalty simply superimposed a new administrative unit on top of previously existing ones, and laid the basis for a century and a half of litigation that was often resolved only by the resort to war.17

A third product of the Spanish-Portuguese rivalry was the engendering of hatreds and suspicions between the Spanish and Portuguese colonists. It was inevitable that such a long-standing dispute, which often involved military actions undertaken by the colonials themselves (as in the case of the French and British colonists in North America), would produce animosity between the colonists of Spain and Portugal. In fact, the rivalry, and the hatreds and suspicions it spawned, carried over largely intact to frustrate the relations of the newly independent nations of the region. As one historian has pointed out with regard to Uruguayan-Brazilian relations prior to the Paraguayan War:

The two nations were the inheritors of the historic hatreds of the Spaniards and Portuguese.
--dead rivalries that had become traditions and found their indefinite perpetuation in the realities of the economic struggles of the moment. The international vendetta was reflected in a long series of outrages that form the main theme of the diplomatic correspondence of Brazil and Uruguay for years.18

He might have added that the same was true of Brazil's relations with all of the Spanish American Republics with whom she shared common frontiers.

A fourth result, closely related to the last point, was the phenomenon of Brazilian imperialism. As one historian has suggested, "The concept of an expanding frontier was inherent in the Brazilian historical tradition."19 It might be posited that such traditions are themselves a product of history; that is, that the experience of expansionism in Portuguese America was so imbedded that it was a part of the heritage of independent Brazil. Such an argument has been advanced with regard to the political heritage of Spanish America.20 Whatever the case, independent Brazil exhibited strong strains of a South American variant of "Manifest Destiny", an expansionism that was to complicate South American international relations for more than a century:

The Braganza dream of rounding out their Brazilian frontiers and establishing control over both of the continent's two main river systems . . . was made easier by the failure of the Spanish to delineate the boundaries prior to the wars of independence and led to a century of litigation and resulted in the Spanish American Republics losing much of their . . . national patrimony.21

Moreover, Brazilian imperialism and territorial aggrandize-
ment created suspicion and distrust of that nation among all of its neighbors. Such sentiments are, needless to say, a breeding ground for international conflict, since suspicion of another's motives influences the way in which one interprets his actions and approaches relations with him. Furthermore, Brazilian imperialism was, to some degree, indirectly responsible for wars in South America in which that party was not formally involved—in the case of the Chaco War, both Bolivia and Paraguay had lost territory to Brazil and were unwilling to further relinquish what they considered their national patrimony. In the case of the Paraguayan War, Brazilian imperialism manifested itself directly in her protracted boundary dispute with the Republic of Paraguay and in Brazil's constant intermeddling in, and sometimes control over, the Banda Oriental of Uruguay.

Thus it would seem that the conflict between Spain and Portugal in South America established the preconditions for, and in many ways, the parameters of, international rivalry in the Río de la Plata once the region had become emancipated from the mother countries of Spain and Portugal. The nature of that rivalry and its influence upon international relations in the Río de la Plata contributed directly to the Paraguayan War and is the subject of the following sections.

Argentine independence from Spain was formally proclaimed by the Congress of Tucumán in 1816, but "de facto"
autonomy for most of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata had been effectively established six years earlier by the famous "Revolution of May." The ambition of the creole intellectual and commercial elites of Buenos Aires, who had initiated and led that movement, was "to perpetuate the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata as a unit under their control." In fact, what occurred was a process of fragmentation of the former territories of the viceroyalty which threatened, momentarily, to be the harbinger to the Balkanization of southern South America.

Before that Balkanization occurred, however, the porteño elites undertook several measures to assert the hegemony of Buenos Aires in the region. They sought to secure the allegiance of the Banda Oriental by dispatching a force to dislodge the royal officers at Montevideo. They sent a column of troops northward toward Asunción to win that area for Buenos Aires. Another force took the inland route of Cordoba, Tucumán, and Salta to confrontroyalist armies sent from the Viceroyalty of Peru.

These measures were only partially successful as the porteño ambitions to assert their authority over the former territories of the viceroyalty soon met resistance from the outlying areas of that former administrative unit. Because of their isolation, the difficulties of transportation, and the consequent limitations on inter-regional intercourse, the towns in this portion of the Spanish Empire had, by
necessity, developed considerable self-reliance and independence. As a result, each town and surrounding rural district
was essentially an autonomous unit, with its own local interests and leadership. While these local leaders accepted
allegiance to the remote and frequently ineffectual Spanish Crown, they were less inclined to transfer that allegiance
to the upstart creoles of Buenos Aires.23

At Montevideo and Asunción porteño hopes were completely frustrated. Shortly after winning independence from
Spain, the left bank of the estuary passed under Brazilian control. A renewed campaign of liberation, launched from
Buenos Aires in 1825, involved the porteños in a war with Brazil. In 1828, under British pressure, Uruguay was estab-
lished as a buffer state between Argentina and Brazil. To the north, Paraguay proclaimed its independence of both
porteño and Spanish control in 1811, and for half a century successfully isolated herself from the turmoil of Río de la
Plata politics.

The desire for local autonomy was as strong in the inland towns of latter-day Argentina as it was in Paraguay
and Uruguay. For the moment, however, the royalist armies from Upper Peru presented a far greater threat to local
autonomy than did porteño ambitions, and the common struggle against Spain imposed a degree of unity on the scattered
towns:

The outline . . . of Argentina thus took shape during a decade of struggle for independence from Spain. Eastward the areas surrounding
Asunción and Montevideo went their separate ways, while prolonged Spanish occupation of Alto Peru provided the basis of a separate Bolivia. The threat of Spanish reconquest, however, forced the remaining towns of the Viceroyalty to co-operate for their common defense. The first faltering step toward nationhood had been taken.24

This was a short-lived unity, however, and began to break down once the Spanish threat disappeared. Before the process of national organization was completed, Argentina was forced to endure a half-century of regional conflict and civil turmoil.

The basis of that conflict, the details of which do not concern us, was the insistence by provincial elites on the principle of local autonomy; they consistently resisted all attempts by the porteños to implement a centralist regime controlled and dominated by the city of Buenos Aires. In essence, the problem revolved around the question of national organization—what form it would take and how it would be achieved—but it also had important economic undertones. While the provincial leaders were not irreconcilably opposed to the formation of a national government, they were resistant to the imposition of a centralist government that would dictate policy without an appreciation for the needs and desires of the provinces:

The conflict between those who advocated a strong central government and those who desired to safeguard local autonomy was not an academic problem to be resolved solely by persuasion and by reference to recognized authorities. On the
The character of Argentina at this time was such as to create a fundamental conflict of economic interests between the Province of Buenos Aires, more particularly the major city of that Province, and the remaining provinces of the embryonic nation. The porteños desired to maintain their hegemony over the former Viceroyalty, especially the economic control their city had exercised over the trade of the region since the creation of the Viceroyalty in 1776. The interests of the provinces—whose economies were comparatively more rudimentary, self-sufficient, and therefore less dependent on international trade than the economy of Buenos Aires—caused them to resist that control as well as the porteño's importunings of "free trade," both of which, in effect, would destroy incipient local industries and subjugate their local economies to the needs of Buenos Aires: "Buenos Aires was an integral part of the Republic, but its economic interests did not always coincide with those of the nation" and it "seldom hesitated to utilize its economic supremacy to further its own interests." Given this collision of interests, provincial leaders opposed the efforts by porteños to fashion a centralized regime; they clung to local autonomy and with it, the tariffs, import restrictions, transit duties, and taxes, which were the only means open to them of protecting their
interests until a form of national organization could be agreed upon that would allow them a voice in determining their destinies.28

Thus the Argentine Republic became embroiled in a controversy between Federalists (preponderantly provincials) and centralists (porteños) that was to forestall its national organization and to contribute to the political instability that characterized its first fifty years of national existence: "Thus the economic issue became a political issue in which state's rights were pitted against centralization. Around this issue centered the political and social struggles of the first four decades."29 In turn, this political instability helped produce the international complications that form part of the background of the Paraguayan War.
CHAPTER III

PARAGUAY AND THE PLATINE BALANCE OF POWER

Spain and Portugal's historic rivalry in the Río de la Plata carried over largely intact to frustrate the relations of the newly independent nations in the region. The most significant conflict, that between Brazil and Argentina for control over the Banda Oriental del Uruguay, was complicated by the dissolution of the former Viceroyalty following its independence from Spain (into the present-day Republics of Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Bolivia). As will be seen, Brazil utilized the divisions among the former segments of the Viceroyalty to advance her policy in the Río de la Plata.

Brazil had many motives impelling her towards involvement in Platine affairs. The desire to control the rich cattle-producing region of the Banda Oriental was but part of a grand design by the Empire to dominate the La Plata Basin and its tributaries. That river network served as the life-line in Brazil's communications with her landlocked and isolated interior provinces—if direct control over those waterways should prove unattainable, then Brazil would defend at all costs her rights to their free and open use.1

A second element of the grand design was Brazil's determination to prevent the reconstruction of the Viceroyalty of
the Río de la Plata as an integrated political unit. This element involved two considerations. The first was simply "realpolitik": Brazil did not want to see the emergence of a strong republic on its southern flank. Second, and closely related, was the fact that such a power could impose its will with regard to the use of the river system, a possibility to which Brazil could not remain indifferent.

Thus Brazil meddled in the affairs of all the Platine republics, exploited the divisions which had emerged following independence, and, above all, attempted to prevent the rise of a strong nation capable of doing her harm. In other words, Brazil endeavored to maintain a balance of power in the region favorable to herself. To this was added a liberal measure of plain old-fashioned imperialism. The Empire's involvement with Paraguay is illustrative of the workings of Brazilian policy in the Río de la Plata.

Long and bitter tariff wars during the colonial period had created among Paraguayans an instinctive hatred for the porteños of Buenos Aires who, prior to independence, had controlled the trade of the La Plata Basin. When the Vice-royalty of the Río de la Plata achieved its independence from Spain, Paraguay went its own way. Buenos Aires, unwilling to let go so easily, followed up an invitation for the Paraguayans to join in the military struggle against Spain by dispatching a military expedition to subdue the fledgling republic and return it to the orbit of Buenos Aires. The porteño army, led
by Manuel Belgrano, was defeated at the Battle of Tacuari (1811) and thereafter Paraguay maintained its independence. But Buenos Aires was not content to let the matter rest; and, as will be seen, one of the major themes of Argentine diplomacy has been the re-establishment of the hegemony of Buenos Aires over the territories of the former Viceroyalty.

José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, first in a long succession of Paraguayan dictators, dreamed of developing Paraguay's overseas trade, "but the covert hostility of Buenos Aires, against whose opposition he was never able to vindicate his claim that Paraguayan produce should be permitted to pass free of all intermediate duties and tolls, defeated his efforts." Unable to establish his claim to freedom of navigation of the Río de la Plata and its tributaries, disturbed by the anarchic conditions convulsing the other states of the Río de la Plata, and aware of the conspiracies being plotted against the independence of Paraguay from outside its borders, during the 1820's Francia shifted his policy to one of non-involvement in Platine affairs. In later years, defending his policy, Francia asserted that he

... recognized the advantage the country would obtain by the exportation of such products as are surplus, but not yet [has] the germ of anarchy in the neighboring states been extinguished; on the contrary, it [is] every day gathering greater energy through the purely personal struggles of the factions seeking power and continuing one and all to conspire against the independence of Paraguay which must be preserved at all costs ... 4

Francia's policy of non-intercourse with the other nations of
the Río de la Plata proved a wise course. By the time of his death in 1840, Paraguay had achieved a degree of stability and growth that compared quite favorably with that of her neighbors who had become involved in both internal and external political fratricide.

Carlos Antonio López, Francia's successor, attempted to change Paraguay's by-then traditional policy of isolation and to open up his country to trade and intercourse with other nations. López' decision proved fateful for his small nation as Paraguay soon became embroiled in bitter and protracted conflicts with her neighbors.

One of López' first acts as President was to request recognition of Paraguayan independence from the Argentine Confederation, a request which Argentine dictator Juan Manuel Rosas refused to grant. Following a second refusal from Rosas to recognize his nation's independence, López resorted to desperate measures. As one historian explains it, "He was genuinely alarmed at the unexpected attitude of Rosas which he construed as another threat to Paraguayan independence from the hated porteños." On December 2, 1844, López signed a treaty of commerce and navigation with Joaquín Madriaga, Governor of the Argentine Province of Corrientes, whose province had for some time been in revolt against Rosas.

Rosas was enraged at López' action and the following month he issued a decree denying passage of vessels to or
from the ports of the Confederation and Paraguay. The Argentine dictator completed the embargo on April 16, 1845, prohibiting the introduction of Paraguayan goods into the Confederation by either land or water. López reacted to Rosas' embargo, which effectively strangled the commerce of his nation, by concluding an offensive and defensive alliance with Corrientes against the Argentine Confederation in November of that year.

It was at this point in the deterioration of Argentine-Paraguayan relations that the designs of the Brazilian Empire --which the previous year had attempted unsuccessfully to form an alliance with the Paraguayans against Rosas-- were to make themselves felt. As Box describes it:

In the course of the negotiations López, on the covert suggestion of the Brazilian Minister, Pimenta Bueno, proposed as a condition of the alliance that Entre Ríos and Corrientes should declare themselves independent of the Argentine Confederation and constitute themselves as an independent state. Here quite clearly López was acting as the tool of Brazil. The plan for a further segregation of the former viceroyalty was an old favorite with the Brazilian Chancellery haunted by a prophetic vision of a great Argentina.

The Brazilian Minister's proposal was part of a larger scheme by the Empire to undermine Rosas and to keep the Argentine Confederation from reasserting its hegemony over the former Viceroyalty. In this effort López was a pawn, an instrument to be used in achieving the overall purposes of Brazilian policy: "What Brazil wanted was to compromise Paraguay with Rosas, and that López proceeded rapidly and effectively to
do." As the British Minister at Rio de Janeiro described it, Brazilian policy in the Rio de la Plata was a classic example of divide et impera:

The policy of Brazil in the River Plate has hitherto served her own objects: by holding out hopes to all parties in turn she has for a long time maintained an influence over all without binding herself completely to any. 'Divide et impera' is her motto, and it has certainly placed all these republicans at her feet.9

On December 4, 1845, López declared war on Rosas and the following month a 5,000 man Paraguayan force commanded by the President's son, Colonel Francisco Solano López, invaded Corrientes. However, before the Paraguayan army could get into action, the rebellion was crushed by Federalist troops under General Justo José Urquiza, and the Paraguayan army was forced to retire from Argentine territory.

Rosas was prevented from following up his victory over Corrientes with an invasion of Paraguay because of international complications with France and England. So he contented himself "with making Carlos Antonio López' flesh creep from time to time" with statements threatening to Paraguayan independence.10 Such was his message to the Congress of the Argentine Confederation in late 1847 in which he observed that "The Government of the Province of Paraguay still cherishes the senseless design of separating itself from the Confederation."11 Three years later he secured the following decree from his obedient legislature:
The most Excellent Governor and Captain General of the Province, Don Juan Manuel de Rosas, is authorized to dispose without any restriction of all the funds, revenue and resources of the Province until the reincorporation of the Province of Paraguay in the Argentine Confederation has been effected.12

It is difficult to determine Rosas' intent in making these statements. He never seriously attempted an invasion of the "Province of Paraguay," and a safe bet is that while he never entirely accepted its independence, he was prevented from subduing the tiny Paraguayan nation because of the internal rebellions he constantly faced within the Argentine Confederation itself. Perhaps he hoped that someday his nation would achieve the internal unity that would be requisite for such an adventure as reincorporating the former segments of the old Viceroyalty. Illuminating in this respect, and again this is conjecture, was the position maintained by Rosas in his diplomatic dealings with other nations. In February of 1845 he protested Brazil's recognition of Paraguayan independence granted in September of the previous year. Three years later, on learning that the Austrian Empire had granted recognition to Paraguay, Rosas had his Foreign Minister, Felipe Arana, address a long note of protest to the Court of Vienna in which he maintained that Paraguay was merely a rebellious province of the Confederation and asserted that the Argentine Confederation had "always preserved its rights over the territory of Paraguay and regards it as one of the Argentine provinces."13

Whatever the case, Rosas continued to make statements
threatening the continued sovereignty of Paraguay, and López construed those threats, rightfully or not, as a potential menace to the independence and well-being of his nation. The Argentine dictator also tightened his blockade of the Parana River, thus frustrating López' efforts to increase the commerce and prosperity of his tiny landlocked nation. As one historian speculates, Rosas was utilizing his control over the river system "as a means of attracting, or forcing, Paraguay to join the Argentine family."¹⁴

Given this state of relations between Paraguay and the Argentine Confederation, it is not surprising that Carlos Antonio López found himself drifting into alliance with the enemies of Rosas. In 1851 Paraguay aligned herself with Brazil, Uruguay, and the Argentine enemies of Rosas; a coalition which ultimately succeeded in destroying Rosas' army at the Battle of Caseros in February of 1852.

With Rosas ousted and López' former allies in power at Buenos Aires, the independence of Paraguay was recognized by the Argentine Confederation on July 17, 1852. Matters looked auspicious for the future welfare and prosperity of the tiny Paraguayan nation, but the situation soon soured as Paraguay became embroiled in boundary disputes with both her large neighbors. The source of those disputes is well illustrated in the lengthy quotation which follows:
Imperial Spain bequeathed to the emancipated Spanish-American nations not only her own frontier disputes with Portuguese Brazil, but problems which had not disturbed her, relating to the exact boundaries of her own viceroyalties, captaincies general, audiencias, and provinces. The frontier regions were generally wild and populated, if at all, by savage Indian tribes. Only the continual sapping and mining of Portugal's subtle policy of expansion into just such undefined regions roused Spain to the need for exact surveys. Possible overlappings of authority among her own loosely defined administrative divisions could not be important, since there was no discussion about jurisdictions in the populated districts. Just such questions, however, are elevated into matters of 'life and death,' 'vital interest,' 'national honor,' by the insatiable appetites and monstrous superstitions of the modern nation-state; and such questions have, in fact, been the nightmare of international relations in Latin America since the emancipation of that continent from Spain and Portugal.15

The preceding quote well summarizes the situation with which Paraguay found herself faced upon attaining her independence from Spain. She had inherited from that colonial power territorial disputes with both her large neighbors, and numerous attempts at settlement of these disputes had all ended in failure.16 Those failures in turn had bred ill-will and suspicion among the contending parties, and the antagonisms thus fostered were partially responsible for the highly charged atmosphere of Platine international relations. Such an environment was conducive to war and, as experience proved, it was through war that the territorial questions achieved their final resolution.

Paraguay's territorial dispute with the Argentine Confederation concerned ownership of the Misiones region and
the boundary between the two nations in the Chaco. Two days prior to the signing of the treaty whereby Argentina recognized the independence of Paraguay, a treaty of navigation and boundaries had been negotiated between the two governments. In return for definite ownership of the disputed Chaco territories, López had been willing to concede ownership of the Misiones region to Argentina. Apparently, the Paraguayan dictator had a premonition of his future problems with Brazil, for he had been willing to grant title to the more valuable and strategically important Misiones—which would give his landlocked nation access to the Río de la Plata through the Río Uruguay—for the relatively worthless Chaco and Argentine support in his boundary dispute with Brazil. The ultimate rejection of that treaty by the Congress of the Confederation, due to its clauses relating to the frontier in the Chaco, could only have increased López' already great suspicions of Argentine intentions.17

That López' suspicions of Argentine designs were essentially well-founded is also illustrated by the fact that a certain segment of Argentine opinion, and a fairly high-placed segment at that, had never given up the hope of re-incorporating Paraguay within an administrative unit encompassing the former Viceroyalty. On April 24, 1865, more than half a century after Paraguay had established her sovereignty, the British Minister at Buenos Aires, Edward Thorton, reported to his Government a conversation
with Argentine Foreign Minister Rufino de Elizalde in which the latter expressed himself as hoping that he "should live to see Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Argentine Republic united in one Confederation, and forming a powerful Republic in South America." 18

López was aware of this sentiment in the Argentine Confederation and it influenced the conduct of his diplomacy with that nation. That diplomacy was characterized by suspicion and covert hostility on the part of López towards Argentina. But Argentine-Paraguayan relations never attained the degree of antipathy that marked the latter nation's relations with its other large neighbor, Brazil. Nor did the boundary dispute with Argentina ever attain the acrimony, nor the violence, of Paraguay's territorial dispute with the Imperial Government.

Following Caseros, López attempted to reach agreement on his outstanding problems with the Empire of Brazil. In 1852 the Paraguayan dictator conferred powers on his Consul at Rio de Janeiro to seek renewal of the alliance with Brazil and settlement of the territorial question. López' overtures were rebuffed:

The objectives of the Empire in constructing the alliance of 1850 and forcing the recognition of Paraguayan independence upon her allies was two-fold. First, to prevent at all costs her nightmare of a reconstructed viceroyalty of Buenos Aires, then to achieve the freedom of the River Plate. Both objectives were won at Caseros . . . . Brazilian influence was in the
ascendant in the lands of the Río de la Plata.

... López was no longer a serious factor in the calculations of Brazilian diplomats.19

The Brazilians no longer needed to court López and once again they claimed the Río Apa as the boundary between the two nations. Paraguay claimed, rightfully,20 that the boundary lay farther north at the Río Branco, and López was resolved not to accept Brazilian pretensions. As Box caustically comments:

Brazil has had a boundary discussion with every state in South America except Chile. . . . Since she has conducted so many acrimonious controversies with her neighbors, Brazil has developed a very high and recondite technique in these matters. One seeks in vain for any guiding principle in Brazilian diplomacy. . . . At the risk of cynicism one may say that perhaps there is a principle at work in these interminable discussions—by any means and by the application of any 'principle' or sophistry to win more territory.21

For Brazil the territorial question was bound up with her long-range goal of developing the economies of her interior provinces. She was anxious to establish a definitive boundary for her interior Province of Mato Grosso, but was even more determined to guarantee her transit rights along the Río Paraguay as it was almost impossible to maintain overland communications with that province: "The crux of the matter was the maintenance of river communications with Mato Grosso" which without the advantage of free and open use of the Río Paraguay "was virtually amputated from the trunk of the nation."22 López utilized the question of transit rights as a quid pro quo for gaining a favorable settlement on the boundary question.23 But Brazil was un-
willing to compromise on the frontier issue as a means of achieving its larger objectives, and from 1852 forward, relations between the two nations became increasingly acrimonious, setting the stage for Paraguay being drawn into the Uruguayan vortex:

By refusing to accept the Apa as a northern boundary . . . Paraguay had incurred Brazil's enmity. Twice, in 1850 and again in 1855, Carlos Antonio López had ejected Brazilian garrisons from territory claimed by Paraguay, and war was narrowly averted in the latter year. Brazil had forced Paraguay to grant free navigation of its rivers in 1858. These matters alone would have been enough to cause war. Add to them Paraguay's loss of the missions south of the Parana to Argentina and Brazil, and the Uruguayan imbroglio, and one wonders why war had not come sooner.24

Thus has one historian summarized relations between Brazil and Paraguay during the 1850's and 1860's. The details do not concern us, and it suffices to say that the long-standing boundary dispute was largely responsible for the increasingly bitter relations of the two nations, and this antagonism came to bear upon their relations with the other states of the Río de la Plata after Caseros (1852).
CHAPTER IV

URUGUAY: POWDER KEG OF LA PLATA

If, during the decade ending with the Battle of Caseros (1852), Paraguay had come to be used as a tool in the Brazilian intrigues against the restoration of a strong Argentina, Uruguay had always been used as such. The contest between Brazil and Argentina for control of the Banda Oriental had its roots in the colonial rivalry between Spain and Portugal for control over the eastern bank of the La Plata Basin. For the Brazilian Empire, control over the Banda Oriental was both a means of preventing the restoration of Buenos Aires' hegemony over the former viceroyalty, and part of a constant effort to establish control of the La Plata Basin and thereby safeguard communications with her interior provinces.

The Empire desired to break the bonds of her colonial economy, and one of the means of achieving this was through the development of the rich resources of her interior provinces. She also hungered to augment her control of lands capable of producing staple food for the Empire, for at that time she was an importer of such products as grains and beef. In all these plans, the Banda Oriental was a key:

If non-tropical Brazil was to have a center dominating the web of rivers serving as her
nervous system, that center was Montevideo, which would enable the Empire to control the Rio Uruguay, and dominate the Rio de la Plata and the mouth of its other great tributary, the Parana. In order to cease to be a colonial country, in order to possess a capital that would exploit her tropical Empire as a true metropolis, Brazil had to seek a political center on the estuary of the Rio de la Plata.¹

These Brazilian aspirations naturally collided with the Argentine desire to reconstitute its hegemony over the former viceroyalty. This conflict of interests kept Platine affairs stirred up for several decades, and contributed directly to the advent of the Paraguayan War.

Portugal took advantage of the instability following the independence of the former Spanish colonies to pursue its desire to control the Banda Oriental. In 1816 the Portuguese marched into the Banda Oriental on the pretext of assisting in the restoration of the authority of Ferdinand VII. When Brazil became an independent state during the early 1820's, the Banda Oriental was incorporated in the Empire as the Cisplatine Province. The Government at Buenos Aires protested this action, refusing to receive a Brazilian envoy unless he renounced the Brazilian claims to the territory. In 1823 Buenos Aires dispatched an agent to Rio de Janeiro to see what might be accomplished through negotiations. The result was nothing; and there matters rested until April 19, 1825, when a band of refugees from the Banda Oriental, the "Immortal Thirty
Three", led by General Juan Lavalleja, crossed the river from Buenos Aires and launched a revolution against the Imperial Government at Montevideo.2

Events soon conspired to draw Argentina into the fray, and by the end of the year Argentina and Brazil were at war. Following initial successes by the revolutionaries and their Argentine allies, the military campaign soon bogged down. A prolonged stalemate ensued and England, whose commercial interests were adversely affected by the feud, forced a settlement upon the belligerents.

The creation of the Republic of Uruguay in 1828 as a buffer state between Brazil and Argentina was a solution imposed upon the belligerents from the outside and proved acceptable to neither of them. Although both nations were bound by the treaty of 1828 to respect and guarantee the sovereignty of the new nation, they continued to interfere in the affairs of that country for the next forty years. The attitude of the Brazilian Foreign Office with regard to that solution is illustrated in the instructions of the Marquiz of Santo Amaro, sent to Europe by the Empire on a diplomatic mission in 1830:

In regard to the new Uruguayan State, it is not a part of Argentine territory, has once been incorporated in Brazil, and cannot exist independently of another state. Your excellency will endeavor opportunely and with frankness to prove the necessity of incorporating it within the Empire. It is the sole vulnerable flank of
Brazil and . . . the natural boundary of the Empire and finally, the effective means of removing and preventing further cause of discord between Brazil and the states of the south . . .

The Argentine attitude closely paralleled that of Brazil. Juan Manuel Rosas, Argentine dictator from 1829 to 1852, never entirely accepted the establishment of Uruguay as an independent nation, continued to meddle in the affairs of that Republic, and made numerous attempts to draw it back into the orbit of Buenos Aires.

General Fructuoso Rivera, one of Lavalleja's lieutenants in the revolution against Brazil, became the first President of Uruguay under the Constitution of 1830. During the debates over the Constitution, Rivera and Lavalleja had a falling-out; the latter twice revolted against the President, was beaten on both occasions, and compelled to take refuge in Brazil.  

Rivera was peacefully succeeded in 1834 by General Manuel Oribe, another hero of the War of Independence. Oribe proceeded to antagonize Rivera by allowing the exiled Lavalleja to return to Uruguay. Rivera rose against Oribe and was decisively routed at the Battle of Carpintería (1836) by a force that included, interestingly enough, troops sent by Argentine dictator Juan Manuel Rosas. At the Battle of Carpintería, Oribe's men carried white pennants, Rivera's red, and thus appeared the names of the two parties that
were to divide the allegiances of Uruguayans from 1836 forward.5

In 1838 Rivera again revolted, this time successfully, and Oribe fled to Buenos Aires and the protection of General Rosas. Rivera was re-elected President, and on March 10, 1839, declared war on the Argentine dictator for the help he had afforded Oribe. With aid and encouragement from Rivera, a force of anti-Rosista exiles assembled in Montevideo and launched an invasion of Argentina. Also assisting in this attempt to topple Rosas was France, who was then quarrelling with the Argentine dictator over commercial privileges and the treatment received by its nationals in his country.

Thus began the famous "Guerra Grande", the main highlights of which were the French blockade of Buenos Aires from 1838 to 1840, the joint Anglo-French blockade of the same port (1845-48), Rosas' prolonged siege of Montevideo (1843-51), and, ultimately, Rosas' downfall in 1852. A significant by-product of the "Guerra Grande" was the entanglement of Argentine-Uruguayan politics it engendered. As one historian notes:

Here we see the origins of the extraordinary confusion of party relationships in Argentina and Uruguay. Oribe by calling in Rosas had brought a veritable Trojan horse into Uruguay. The struggle between the Federals and Unitarians in Argentina was transferred to Montevideo—the Blancos of Oribe and the Federals of Rosas.
outside the walls of the devoted city, the Colorados of Rivera and the Argentine Unitarians... within. National boundaries were transcended in the titanic party strife of these great spirits."6

Thus was established a pattern which was to complicate Platine affairs for several decades and to contribute to the international tensions responsible for the Paraguayan War.

An indirect by-product of the "Guerra Grande" was the overthrow of Rosas by General Justo José Urquiza at the Battle of Caseróes in February of 1852. Rosas' siege of Montevideo interrupted international commerce in the Río de la Plata and the British and French responded by instituting a blockade of the ports of the Argentine Confederation which lasted from 1845 to 1848. As one student of Argentine history describes it:

The inequity of the economic system instituted and defended by Buenos Aires became especially oppressive during the blockade, for the incidence of trade disruption was uniformly severe in the provinces... 7

Urquiza, Governor of the Argentine Province of Entre Ríos, had, like many other Federalist caudillos, cooperated with Rosas for many years in his battles against the Unitarians. But Urquiza now began to question whether the price of that cooperation was not too great. The nation had been at war for decades and its economy was in shambles. There was a generalized longing for peace and prosperity abroad in the
nation, but Rosas persisted in the course of war. The men who had supported Rosas began to doubt that "an unstable currency, a depletion of scarce supplies of labor, and an atmosphere of insecurity unfavorable to investment were justified in the interest of incorporating Paraguay in the Argentine Confederation and of installing a President in Montevideo agreeable to Rosas." Urquiza was also aware of the fundamental conflict of economic interests between Buenos Aires and the other Argentine Provinces, a conflict which had become more clear-cut during the long reign of Rosas:

Not the least motive leading Rosas' greatest lieutenant to declare against his chief was the economic rivalry of Buenos Aires and the rest of the Argentine provinces. Rosas to consolidate his power had persistently pampered the great city which held a monopoly of the international trade of the whole Confederation. In a sense the war was the struggle of Entre Ríos followed by other provinces . . . for the economic emancipation of the Confederation from the yoke of Buenos Aires, which should be followed by a national reorganization that would put the porteños and their city in their places. Rosas' policies—his refusal to accept the independence of the former appendages of the viceroyalty, his interference with riverine commerce, and his extended siege of Montevideo—had made him many enemies in the Río de la Plata, both within and without the Argentine Confederation. When General Urquiza pronounced against Rosas on May 1, 1851, he was joined not only by other provincial caudillos and the anti-Rosista Unitarians, but Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil lent their aid in the movement which led to Rosas' downfall in February 1852.
The fall of Rosas did not bring peace to the Río de la Plata. Partisan conflicts soon re-emerged in both Argentina and Paraguay; and once again they became entangled in the complex milieu of Platanese international relations.

Allied with Urquiza in his victory over Rosas had been the Argentine Unitarians. As Box points out, this was a mariage de convenance, for the Unitarians and Federalists shared fundamental political, ideological, and cultural differences. In part, this was a typical case of urban-rural conflict, a sort of Main Street versus Wall Street; but it was also something more than that. The Unitarians had by this time come under the influence of their second generation, the famous "Generation of 1837," and, significantly, had changed their party label to that of Liberal. This group was animated by and were protagonists of the liberal doctrines then current in Europe. Their movement, allowing for differences in the Latin American socio-economic structure, was part of the nearly universal challenge by bourgeois groups of the remnants of the ancien régime. As such, the values they expounded, their disdain for traditional values and traditional society, and their belief in the superiority of urban civilization, all conflicted with the value system and mores then existing in the rest of Argentina. For the Unitarians, Urquiza was the symbol of that provincial particularism and traditionalism which stood in the way of their plans to remake Argentina.
They wanted to destroy that traditional society and build upon its ruins a modern Argentina in the image of the Liberal postulates then current—and, it should be added, under their benevolent guidance.

Shortly after Rosas' overthrow, the Unitarians rebelled against Urquiza and succeeded in driving the Federalist forces from the city in September 1852. Following a brief and ill-fated attempt to subdue the rebellious province, Urquiza decided to let Buenos Aires go its own way and for the time being to concentrate on establishing the Confederation of Argentina in the interior. But neither group accepted this as a final solution to the problem of who would control Argentina and along what lines it would be organized; nor could they. Buenos Aires was the natural entrepot from which to exploit the wealth of the nation and neither could survive indefinitely without the other. The title of James Scobie's highly regarded work, *Argentina: A City and A Nation*, neatly capsulizes the essence of the conflict which has plagued Argentina throughout its history: the preponderant influence which one city has exercised over the affairs of an entire nation.

This is what led Urquiza to rise against Rosas, and he remained determined that porteño aspirations to control the destiny of the nation should never be realized. He set about establishing the Argentine Confederation on a sound basis. He created a port at Rosario, encouraged the immigration of
foreigners and their capital, and made public investments designed to foster the economic development of the interior and littoral provinces. In an effort to encourage commerce at Rosario, as well as to augment the revenues at his disposal for developmental investments, Urquiza initiated a deferential tariff that favored products shipped directly to Rosario. This led to trade wars with the porteños which further heightened the antagonism between the two groups.

Compounding an already tense situation in Argentina was the unsettled state of affairs in Uruguay. There, a brief rapprochement following Caseros had broken down, and the Blancos and Colorados were once again at each others' throats. As a result of that civil war, in which the Brazilian "army of occupation held the scales of power,"11 the Blancos had ascended to power in Montevideo. Inevitably, Buenos Aires became the asylum of the extreme Colorados, and "the course of events led fatally to the cooperation of the exiled Colorados with their old allies the Liberals of Buenos Aires, opposed by the more or less close alliance of the Blancos with Urquiza and the Argentine Federals."12 Continued raids were organized from Montevideo and Buenos Aires by exiles in both capitals against their enemies. These expeditions, winked at by authorities in both cities, led to a further estrangement of relations. The raids were notoriously unsuccessful in achieving their purposes, usually resulting in the defeat, capture, and brutal execution of the invading forces. These atrocities
further inflamed partisan passions and drove the contending parties to greater extremes:

... Blancos and Colorados were in the habit of transferring their immense hatreds to the larger stage of the distracted Argentine Confederation, and of contributing at each crisis between Buenos Aires and the Confederation their individual quota of venom to the embittered struggle of Federalists and Unitarians. After a battle between the Argentine parties their Uruguayan allies would seek each other out for purposes of massacre and outrage. The interaction of four furious parties involving two states directly in their faction fights ... is as difficult or even impossible to describe as the similar problem of three or more forces in dynamics.13

The internationalization of conflicts between the parties of these two nations culminated in the Federalist's defeat by a Unitarian army under General Bartolome Mitre at Pavon in 1861. Urquiza announced his retirement from politics and Mitre ascended to the Presidency of Argentina in 1862. Having finally resolved the factional issue of who was to direct that nation's destiny, the Argentines settled down to deal with the problems of political integration and economic development. Matters looked auspicious for the Argentine Republic after nearly five decades of internal political strife and, indeed, probably would have been had not the Uruguayan situation flared up once again to complicate the international relations of the Río de la Plata.

Among those present with Mitre and his victorious Unitarian Army at Pavon had been his close friend, the
Uruguayan Colorado, Venancio Flores. On April 16, 1863, Flores launched an invasion of his homeland from Buenos Aires to unseat his Blanco enemies then in control at Montevideo. The Flore's revolution in Uruguay was, above all, the immediate cause of the situation which culminated in the outbreak of the Paraguayan War. Charles Kolinski describes Uruguay as the "powder keg of La Plata" and states that Flore's departure from Buenos Aires during April of 1863 was "the match."

As Kolinski describes the situation, "During the remainder of 1863 and the first six months of 1864, the Uruguayan situation grew all out of proportion, inexorably drawing Argentina and Brazil, as well as Paraguay, into its vortex."

Flores began preparing his revolution against the Blanco régime soon after the Battle of Pavon. During November of 1862 Dr. Octavio Lapido was sent by the Blanco Government on a special mission to Buenos Aires to bring to the attention of the Government of Argentina that Flores was organizing a revolution against the Constitutional Government of Uruguay from within their boundaries. President Mitre requested unequivocal proof that Flores and his companions were conspiring against the Uruguayan Government, but when that proof was later presented, no action was taken against the conspirators by the Argentine Government. Not receiving satisfaction with regard to his protests, other than professions by the Argentine Government of its neutrality, Lapido terminated his mission, "leaving the Uruguayan
Government more convinced than ever that no friendly cooperation was possible with the subtly hostile Government of General Bartolome Mitre." 

The Blancos were essentially correct in their assessment of the activities and attitude of the Argentine Government, an assessment they shared with more disinterested observers. Four months after Flores had invaded Uruguay, the British Charge at Buenos Aires reported to his Government that "All dispassionate persons concur in the belief that clandestine assistance has been afforded to Venancio Flores by this Government while one of its members has taken little pains to conceal his sympathies and hopes for the success of the revolution." The following month, on August 27, 1863, British Charge d'Affaires Doria again reported to his government on the revolution in Uruguay:

I am informed by a person who is in the confidence of a member of this Government, that the hope and intention has been entertained by this Government since Flores left Buenos Aires to annex the Republic of Uruguay to the Confederation. The newspapers now write of it and it is spoken of openly.

That Mitre was biased in his attitude towards the contending factions in Uruguay there is little doubt. Flores was a close friend and Mitre was indebted to him for the services he had performed at Pavon. Moreover, the Blancos were his old enemies in the international party game of the Río de la Plata. Flore's invasion was prepared and launched from Argentine
soil under the noses of the authorities at Buenos Aires, and Mitre was rightfully suspected of aiding his friend in that invasion. 19

Following the termination of Lapido's mission at Buenos Aires, and while Flore's invasion was still in the preparatory stages, the Blancos began looking around for allies to ward off the threat presented their Government by Flore's impending invasion and the covert hostility of the Argentine Government. The Blancos were also experiencing difficulties in their relations with the Brazilian Government over the alleged harassment visited upon that nation's citizens by Uruguayan authorities. They therefore turned to Paraguay and played upon the suspicions of Argentine motives harbored by the leader of that nation.

During March of 1863, Lapido was given instructions for a new mission he was to undertake, this time at Asunción. He was to point out the similarity of the political positions of the two countries, both menaced by two unscrupulous neighbors. The policies of Paraguay and Uruguay should be "directed to the establishment of a balance of power . . . . The system of a balance of power preserves peace because it inspires the fear of war." 20 If Paraguay and Uruguay cooperated, they might be able to play a considerable part in the future of the Río de la Plata, and perhaps some of the provinces of the Argentine Confederation would join them in establishing an equilibrium favorable to their continued
sovereignty and the advancement of their common interests:
"The danger was common, and in common should be the efforts
made to meet it."21

Lapido arrived at Asunción in early July of 1863, and
on the 18th of that month proposed to President Francisco
Solano López, who had ascended to that office following the
death of his father the previous year, the formation of an
offensive and defensive alliance. López was cautious,
however, and seemed to be waiting until events made clearer
the intentions of the Argentine Government. Moreover, he
was also disturbed by reports that Uruguay was negotiating
an alliance with Brazil and simultaneously arranging with
Urquiza for a pronunciamiento against Buenos Aires in
Entre Ríos. López was rightfully suspicious of the intrigues
of the Blanco politicians and their attempts to draw his
nation into the complex web of relationships they were attempt-
ing to weave. Moreover, he wanted no truck with the Brazilian
Empire with whom Paraguay had sustained a long and bitter dis-
pute over the northern boundary between the two nations and
the right of transit along those portions of the international
waterways within Paraguayan jurisdiction.

Although López was unwilling to commit his nation to an
alliance with the Uruguayan Blancos, there is little doubt
that he was apprehensive about the clandestine assistance
Flores was receiving from the Argentine Government and the
implications such action held for the welfare of his nation.
As Warren says, "López believed that the peace and liberty of the Plata area were based on an equilibrium of force between Brazil and Argentina and the maintenance of that equilibrium was the basic objective and the key to every Paraguayan policy." In other words, López predicated his policy upon the maintenance of the existing balance of power; Argentine actions were threatening that equilibrium, and López responded by demanding explanations from that Power of its activities with regard to the Uruguayan revolution.

On September 6, 1863, López directed that a note be sent the Argentine Government requesting explanations of the actions alleged to it in the confidential notes he had received from the Blanco Government. In that note Paraguayan Foreign Minister José Bergeș detailed the Blanco's complaints to his Government, asked for explanations of the alleged actions from the Argentine Government, and referred to the "disastrous effects" those actions "may have on the general interests of the Republic of Paraguay." Two months later López, not having received a satisfactory reply from the Argentine Government to his request for explanations, circulated a note to the Diplomatic Corps at Asunción in which he warned that Paraguay regarded the independence of Uruguay as a requisite condition to the "political balance of power of the States of the Río de la Plata, and that she would exert all her influence to end the serious situation that had arisen." The correspondence between the two Governments continued
throughout the year with López reiterating his demands for explanations, supporting those demands with documentary proof of Argentine complicity in the Uruguayan revolution, and Argentina evading the specific charges. On February 6, 1864, López, exasperated by the failure of the Argentine Government to give a detailed account of its policy in the Uruguayan situation, directed Berges to address a note to the Argentine Foreign Minister. In his note, the Paraguayan Foreign Minister warned that his Government, confronted as it was with the necessity of doing without the friendly explanations it had requested of the Argentine Government, would "be guided by its own appreciations on the significance of the events that may compromise the sovereignty and independence of Uruguay, to whose fate it cannot remain indifferent both from considerations of national dignity and from the point of view of its own interests in the Río de la Plata."25

While López was suspicious of Argentine motives in its relations with the Republic of Uruguay, he still resisted the request of the Blancos for an offensive and defensive alliance. He did, however, undertake measures to put his nation on a war-footing: he increased the size of his army by broadening the conscription, and he stepped up purchases of war materials from abroad.

Here matters rested for the time being with López, deeply suspicious of Argentine motives, perceiving that nation's actions in the Uruguayan revolution as a direct
threat to the well-being of Paraguay, and mobilizing his nation for the eventuality of a war with Argentina. Then the situation was revolutionized when the Brazilian Empire was drawn into the Uruguayan imbroglio.

The Empire of Brazil initially attempted to remain neutral in the affairs which were afflicting the Uruguayan Republic. Brazil, disturbed by reports that Flores was receiving covert aid from the Argentine Government, sounded that Government out with regard to the Mitre-Flores relationship, and was apparently satisfied with the assurances given it by Mitre that he harbored no ambitions in Uruguay that would adversely affect the interests of Brazil. In October, 1863, the Brazilian Minister at Montevideo was sent on a special mission to Buenos Aires to offer his good offices in reconciling Argentina and Uruguay. This effort met temporary success with the signing of the Elizalde-Lamas Protocol of October 20, 1863, between the two governments; but was soon undermined by the insistence of the Blanco Government that Francisco Solano López serve as co-arbitrator with the Emperor in its dispute with Mitre.26

The fiasco of the Protocol revealed to Rio de Janeiro that the Uruguayan appeal of June 15, 1863, requesting that Brazil interpose herself and protect Uruguay against the designs of Buenos Aires, was not sincere; that simultaneously the Montevidean Government had initiated diplomatic overtures
at Asunción with a Government whose relations with the Empire verged on the hostile. The Blanco's wrecking of the Protocol offended Brazil who had offered her good offices in the best of faith, and illustrated the duplicity of the Blanco Government and what could be expected from them in the future. Moreover, events unfolding in Uruguay, as well as domestic political considerations, soon made it necessary for Brazil to interject herself into the disturbed affairs of Uruguay.

The root of Brazil's problem was its southern Province of Rio Grande do Sul which borders on Uruguay. For years the cattle barons of that Province had been keenly interested in the affairs of the Uruguayan Republic, since many of them owned land and grazed their herds across the border. The cattlemen had run afoul the Uruguayan authorities who were attempting to tax and in other ways control the export of cattle in the northern region of their nation, and armed clashes between cattlemen and local authorities were not uncommon.27 To this immediate economic consideration was added the traditional enmity between Portuguese Americans and Spanish Americans:

The two nations were the inheritors of the historic hatreds of Spaniards and Portuguese—dead rivalries that had become traditions and found their indefinite perpetuation in the realities of the economic struggles of the moment. The international vendetta was reflected in a long series of outrages that form the main theme of the diplomatic correspondence of Brazil and Uruguay for years.28
The list of atrocities committed by the citizens of both
countries against the citizens of the other is too long to
detail. Both parties were guilty of such acts, but over the
years the Rio Grandenenses came to believe that they were
the victims of the Government at Montevideo and continually
appealed to Rio de Janeiro for aid in reaching a settlement
of their demands for reparations.

When Flores invaded Uruguay in April 1863, many Rio
Grandenenses openly sided with him, some going so far as to
join his gaucho army. They also brought increasing pressure
upon Brazilian authorities at Rio de Janeiro. In the winter
of 1863-64 the cattle barons dispatched a spokesman to Rio,
General Felipe Netto, to convince the Government that their
claims were just and deserved attention. Netto was success-
ful in convincing the politicians of the Brazilian Liberal
Party to champion his cause. This group was on the rise and
Netto's propaganda served as a casus belli for their challenge
to the predominant Conservatives: "the Liberals . . . con-
fronted the little Conservative rump . . . and . . . were
ready for a grand gesture . . . . It was in this excitable
atmosphere that General Netto began his raging, tearing
propaganda for a final reckoning with Uruguay."29 The
pressure the Liberals brought to bear, combined with the
fear of the possible secession of Rio Grande do Sul, which
had a history of separatism, was too great for the govern-
ment to withstand.
On April 20, 1864, the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zacharias de Vasconcellos, dispatched José Antonio Saraiva as Envoy Extraordinary to Montevideo. Saraiva's arrival in Uruguay in early May of 1864 was synchronized with the movement to Uruguayan waters of a powerful Imperial squadron. The Envoy's instructions were to reach a peaceful settlement of the Brazilian claims if possible, but he was empowered to use force if that were deemed necessary.

Saraiva soon realized the gravity of the situation in the Banda Oriental and the fact that the internal pacification of Uruguay was a necessary prerequisite if international warfare was to be averted. During June he cooperated with the representatives of Argentina and Britain in a joint representation designed to pressure the Blanco Government into reaching a settlement with Flores.30

On June 23, 1864, a tentative agreement was reached between Flores and the Blanco Government of Antanasio Aguirre who had succeeded to the presidency the previous March. The agreement fashioned by the Representatives of Brazil, Britain, and Argentina, also provided for an armistice.

The tentative agreement of late June 1863, which appeared so promising as a means of resolving the internal conflict in Uruguay and thus averting the international complications coincident to it, ran aground the shoals of Blanco intransigence early the following month: "Saraiva
almost averted the catastrophe . . . but . . . was baffled by the incredible obstinacy of the Blanco Government."31

In essence, the peace negotiations had floundered because of the unwillingness of an extreme faction of the Blanco Party, the "exaltees", to put the national interest of Uruguay above partisan consideration: they threatened President Aguirre with a coup d'etat if he complied with the terms of the peace proposal providing for the formation of a new cabinet allowing the Colorados some representation in the Government of Uruguay. As the internal situation in Uruguay deteriorated and the civil war was renewed, the international situation in the Rio de la Plata also deteriorated as Brazil was drawn into intervention in Uruguay and war with Paraguay.

Following the failure of his diplomatic efforts to resolve the internal strife in Uruguay, Saraiva retired to Buenos Aires. Since pacific measures had failed to achieve his purposes, the next best option open to the Brazilian Envoy was a joint Argentine-Brazilian intervention against the Blanco Government which had refused the terms of a just pacification. This is what Saraiva proposed to Mitre and his cabinet on July 13, 1863.

Mitre refused to accede to the proposal for joint intervention in the Republic of Uruguay, fearing that such an action would initiate civil strife in his own nation. The pacification of Argentina was far from complete, and
such an action would provoke the Federalists to rise against the Unitarian Government at Buenos Aires. The Federalists still identified themselves with the Blancos and, moreover, had an inherent distrust of the Brazilian Empire. A joint intervention would be just the measure calculated to defeat Mitre's efforts to integrate and pacify his own nation. The Argentine President did agree, however, to allow the Brazilian Government to act unilaterally against the Blancos. 32

Having secured Argentine consent for unilateral measures against the Uruguayan Government, and receiving instructions from his own Government to return to Montevideo and present an ultimatum to the Government there, Saraiva recrossed the estuary early in August. On August 4, 1864, Saraiva presented his famous ultimatum to Blanco Foreign Minister Juan José Herrera, granting six days to comply and threatening reprisals if his demands were not met.

Even before Saraiva had presented his ultimatum to the Uruguayan Government, the Blanco Foreign Minister had renewed his diplomatic overtures to Asunción. Following the breakdown of the Argentine-Brazilian-British mediation effort early in July, on the question of admitting Colorados to the Blanco Cabinet, Herrera appealed once more to López. In fact, the refusal by the Blancos to accede to the terms of that mediation were largely conditioned by
the hopes they reposed in the active assistance of Paraguay. They did not want to share power with the Colorados; this meant the continuation of the civil war in Uruguay with the resulting international complications. If the Paraguayan dictator made clear his determination to prevent intervention in Uruguay, perhaps it would grant them the time necessary to destroy Flores and thus resolve the whole problem. In other words, the Blancos were counting on López to pull their chestnuts from the fire:

Their enemies were entrenched at Buenos Aires, and they profoundly distrusted Brazil. If they were going to face up to both their great neighbors, inevitably they must seek support in the only region where they could find it. Thus Berro's 'national policy of independence' was insensibly perverted into one of antagonism to Brazil and Buenos Aires and alliance with Paraguay and the dissident parts of Argentina. The Blanco politicians, in other words, were still playing the international party game.

Herrera dispatched Dr. Antonio de las Carreras on a special mission to Asunción in July of 1864. There Carreras played upon the deep suspicions of both Brazil and Argentina harbored by the Paraguayan dictator. He pointed out reports then current in the porteño press about the desirability of reconstituting the old viceroyalty under the new name of the United States of the Río de la Plata. He went on to assert that the present cooperation of Brazil and Argentina proved an intention to partition Uruguay. He noted that the danger that overhung Uruguay also threatened Paraguay and would continue to do so as long as Buenos Aires dominated the rest
of the Argentine provinces. The only way to eliminate that menace was to "secure the isolation of the malevolent power by the secession of the remaining Argentine provinces."34 He therefore proposed that Paraguay ally itself with his nation and the Argentine Provinces of Entre Ríos and Corrientes as a means of achieving their common defense and promoting their common interests in the Río de la Plata. In essence, this was the Lapido mission of 1863 renewed; only now it was directed against both Brazil and Argentina. Carreras requested that López notify both those powers that he would take part in any conflict that might arise with Uruguay, and that López pledge his aid to Uruguay once the foreseen attack took place.35

Francisco Solano López did not require much prompting to make him concerned with the course of developments in Uruguay. He had inherited his father's intense distrust of both Argentine and Brazilian designs in La Plata. This was a consuming fear, one that caused him to worry for the continued independence of his nation. What one historian has labeled "Paraguayan Paranoia" was in large part responsible for López's reaction to the events unfolding in Uruguay.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: AND THEN CAME WAR

López responded to Saraiva's ultimatum to the Blanco Government by issuing one of his own twenty-six days later. López's note to the Brazilian Government, dated August 30, 1864, illustrates his concern that the balance of power in the Río de la Plata was threatened by the events unfolding in Uruguay and López's conviction that the maintenance of that equilibrium was essential to the continued welfare of his own nation. Issued under the signature of Paraguayan Foreign Minister José Bergeé, the note refers to the interest of the Paraguayan Government in the settlement of the difficulties in Uruguay, "to the fate of which state it cannot be indifferent." Bergeé's note goes on to state that while appreciating the right of governments to arrange for the satisfaction of their differences and reclamations, that the Paraguayan Government must not "lose sight of its right to appreciate the mode of effecting the satisfaction of the claims of your Excellency's Government, because the results may influence the legitimate interests of Paraguay." Bergeé's note also includes a veiled threat that the President of Paraguay:

... will consider as infringing on the equilibrium of the States of the Plata any occupation, by the Imperial forces, of
Montevidean territory, for the motives named in the ultimatum of the fourth instant ... as that equilibrium interests Paraguay as a guarantee of her safety, peace and prosperity; and that he protests in a most solemn manner, against such an act, relieving himself of all responsibility as to the results of this declaration.¹

The following day the Brazilian Minister to Asunción, Vianna de Lima, replied to Berges' note, asserting that "no consideration shall detain the Imperial Government in carrying out the sacred mission which has devolved upon it of protecting the life, honor, and property of the subjects of His Excellency the Emperor."² The true interests of Brazil cautioned against its involvement in the Uruguayan situation, but with the refusal of the Blanco Government to meet Brazilian demands, "national honor" became an issue. Furthermore, because of the internal political situation in Brazil, the Imperial Government could not afford to seem hesitant in pushing the demands of its nationals, even if such a course should involve Brazil in a war from which she stood to gain little. Later that month the Brazilian Foreign Office approved Vianna de Lima's response to Berges' note.³

Thus, domestic politics and the national honor of Brazil contributed to a situation which made the resolution of the original problem, short of war, impossible. Similar considerations motivated Francisco Solano López in the course he pursued. According to Box, López's actions did not hinge solely upon his fears for the territorial integrity of his
nation, but also on the fact that the course of events might block the development of his own policy in the Río de la Plata: "It was in a word, a policy of adventure, as all such claims to a 'place in the sun,' and a right to make one's voice heard and 'national dignity' must always be."4 López, says Kolinski, interjected himself in the dispute between Brazil and Uruguay not only because he feared changes in the existing equilibrium, but also because he was "seeking greater prestige for himself and his nation in La Plata affairs."5

Brazil, secure in the knowledge that Argentina would allow her a free hand in Uruguay, believing that the Blanco Government would quickly succumb, and not suspecting that López would dare challenge her moves, ignored the Paraguayan ultimatum and proceeded with the invasion of Uruguay during October of 1864. López, upon hearing of the Brazilian invasion, responded by seizing the Marqués de Olinda, on November 12, 1864, a Brazilian steamer in Paraguayan waters at the time. The following month Paraguayan forces invaded the Brazilian Province of Mato Grosso. After successfully completing the operations against that Province, López turned eastward toward Brazil. On February 6, 1865, he requested permission to cross the Argentine Province of Corrientes so as to wage war on Brazil. Three days later Mitre denied that request, claiming he desired to remain neutral and could not allow the territory of the Argentine Republic to be violated
by permitting Paraguay to conduct men and materials of war across it. López interpreted Mitre's refusal as an admission of an Argentine alliance with Brazil, and on April 13, 1865, he invaded Corrientes, simultaneously declaring war on the Argentine Confederation. On May 1, 1865, Flores, who owed his ascension to power in Uruguay to Brazilian interference in that nation's civil war, signed the Treaty of the Triple Alliance with Argentine and Brazil, dedicated to the removal of López as a threat to their security. The events of the long and sanguineous war that followed do not concern us although, needless to say, they were as complex and confused as those leading to it.

As the preceding narrative illustrates, extremely complex forces were involved in producing the situation which culminated in the outbreak of war in 1864. In attempting to determine the factors responsible for breeding this situation, it seems obvious that protracted boundary disputes played a large role in frustrating the relations between the nations involved, and contributed to the suspicions and animosities which characterized those relations. Paraguay sustained long-enduring, and oftentimes bitter, territorial disputes with both her large neighbors, and these frequently led to strained relations and, occasionally, to violent reprisals. Moreover, in Paraguay's efforts to safeguard her territorial integrity, the tiny nation came to utilize the techniques of balance of power politics.
in the hope of thereby achieving a favorable resolution of the territorial questions.

Closely tied to the question of boundaries were significant economic motivations regarding the freedom of navigation and control of the Plate and its tributaries: Brazil's desire to assure its transit rights in the region so as to be able to pursue her aspirations for the development of the Empire's interior provinces; the desire of landlocked Paraguay to assure egress for its commerce through the Parana-Plata system; the desire of Buenos Aires to dominate and control the region and its trade. Furthermore, both Argentine and Brazil hoped, somehow, to link the rich pastoral economy of the Banda Oriental to their own economies.

Adding fuel to the fires breeding this war was the phenomenon of nationalism: López' desire to gain respect and, so to speak, "a place in the sun" for his nation; the Blanco's intransigence before the demands made upon them by the Empire of Brazil which was motivated by a combination of political considerations and a desire to protect the national integrity of their country; Mitre's unwillingness to compromise Argentina's integrity by permitting López to cross through that nation's territory on his way to the theater of war, an action which provoked López and thus drew the Argentines into the fray; and Brazil's concern with the honor and integrity of both the nation and its citizens, a concern which led her to make demands upon the Uruguayan nation and provoke war in the Río de la Plata.
Transcending these factors and interacting with them was the existence of a balance of power system in the La Plata Basin. All four nations were vitally concerned with the maintenance of their sovereignty and the advancement of their national interests, and displayed a willingness to utilize the techniques of balance of power politics to achieve their objectives. The conflicting goals of Brazil and Argentina, both attempting to extend their control over the river system and contiguous areas, conspired to keep international relations in the area stirred up. The lesser powers, Uruguay and Paraguay, were vitally concerned with their positions in this "historic tug-of-war" between their two large neighbors—as witnessed by López' note of August 30, 1864, in which he expressed his concern over the "equilibrium" of the states of the Río de la Plata. Also illustrative of the functionings of the Platine balance of power were the Blanco's efforts to find allies to offset the menace of an increasingly threatening Brazil.

Despite its tragic consequences, there was an element of irony surrounding the origins of the Paraguayan War. That irony lies in the fact that, notwithstanding Francisco Solano López' proclamations expressing his concern with the maintenance of the Platine balance of power, it was his aggressive pursuit of that object which provoked the war. The decision by Carlos Antonio López to break with Paraguay's traditional policy of isolation had shaken the equilibrium of
Platine system's power structure by interjecting a new element. As one historian has noted in this respect, "The interference of landlocked Paraguay in Platine affairs radically affected the region's power politics."\(^6\)

López' policy prepared the way for Paraguay being drawn into the morass of Platine politics. His subsequent experiences in the international relations of the Río de la Plata only deepened his already great suspicions of Brazil and Argentina and caused him to begin militarizing the tiny nation of Paraguay. But it was his son who completed the process of militarization. The second López was "convinced that Paraguay's best defense lay in an offensive capacity which would command respect,"\(^7\) and ensure the nation's welfare in case of future complications with her large neighbors.

On the eve of the war, Paraguay had the largest standing, and probably best equipped, army in South America. As one historian has pointed out, "for a brief period a potential Prussia had appeared in South America."\(^8\) That Paraguay ultimately lost the war is understandable—the potential manpower and resources of the allied nations in a protracted war such as the Paraguayan War were just too great for Paraguay to overcome. Nonetheless, the long duration of that conflict illustrates the character of the war machine López had fashioned out of his tiny nation; and that such a power was a threat to the equilibrium and security of the nations of the Río de la Plata. The allies were essentially correct in their estimation of the mutual danger that was
presented by a strong and aggressive Paraguay. In the phraseology of the Treaty of the Triple Alliance, "the peace, safety, and well being of their respective nations is impossible while the present Government of Paraguay exists."  

But then again, the allies were not innocents, and López' actions were largely a response to, and conditioned upon, the suspicions he harbored of Brazilian and Argentine designs in the Río de la Plata. In turn, those suspicions, as well as the designs themselves, extended back many generations and were a product of the historical development of the Río de la Plata. Another part of that process was the evolution of a Platine balance of power system. The workings of that system, and the intrigues, suspicions, and animosities it spawned, created an atmosphere conducive to war. It also produced an outlook among the leaders of these nations which viewed warfare as a legitimate means of securing a favorable balance of power and thereby advancing the "national interests" of their respective countries.
NOTES

1 Charles J. Kolinski, Independence or Death: The Story of the Paraguayan War (Gainesville: 1965), viii.

2 For a discussion of the results of the war for all of the involved nations, see Kolinski, 192-200, from which the above information was taken. Similar figures are cited by other authors. For example, see John Edwin Fagg, Latin America: A General History (New York: 1963), 586.


4 Fagg, 598.

5 Ibid., 585-586; For a similar view see Philip Raine, Paraguay (New Brunswick: 1956), 159, 172.


7 Ibid., Vol. I, 475; For a dissenting view and one highly critical of Washburn by his replacement as United States Minister at Asunción, see M. T. McMahon, "Paraguay and Her Enemies," Harpers New Monthly Magazine, XL (1870), 421-429.

8 George Thompson, The War in Paraguay (London: 1869), v.

9 Ibid., 16.

10 Ibid., 13; For a similar view by another foreigner who served López, see George F. Masterman, Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay (London: 1870), esp. 90-91; For an interpretation of the war and López' character by a Brazilian historian who is obviously biased, see João Pandia Calógeras, A History of Brazil (Chapel Hill: 1939), 200-220; A similar treatment by an Argentine historian is that of Ricardo Levene, A History of Argentina (Chapel Hill: 1937), 468-475; A highly romantic portrayal of López and his consort, what the author calls a "historical narrative," is William E. Barrett, Woman on Horseback: The Biography of Francisco Solano López and Eliza Lynch (New York: 1938).

12 Ibid., 216.

13 Harris Gaylord Warren, "The Paraguayan Image of the War of the Triple Alliance," The Americas, XIX (July, 1962), 3-4; Also see McMahon's articles for a similar viewpoint.

14 Ibid., 4.


16 Ibid., 276.

17 Robert N. Burr, By Reason or Force: Chile and the Balancing of Power in South America, 1830-1905 (Berkeley: 1965), 2.

18 Ibid., 3.

19 Ibid., 3-4.

20 Ibid., 3.

21 Ibid., 3-4.


CHAPTER II


4 Ibid., 63.
Haring, 92.
Ferns, 8.
Lynch, 4.
Ibid., 7.
Ibid., 15.
Ibid., 32.
Haring, 92.
Ibid.
Lynch, 41; also see Moses, 153.
Lynch, 32.
Ibid., 286; Also see Moses, 282 ff.

On this point see Miron Burgin's fine work, The Economic Aspects of Argentine Federalism, 1820-52 (New York: 1946); James R. Scobie, Argentina: A City and A Nation (New York: 1964) takes the problem beyond the early history of Argentina and argues the case for a fundamental conflict of interest between the "two Argentinas" that has lasted up to the present; Burr, Reason or Force, also refers to this phenomenon in his introductory chapter.

On the nature of this problem see Box, 54-69; also see Burr, Reason or Force, 4.
Box, 110.

Lewis Tambs, "Brazil's Expanding Frontiers," The Americas, XXIII, 165; Also see Box, 108-110.


22 Scobie, 89; Also see Burr, Reason or Force, 4.

23 Scobie, 89-90; Burgin, 16.

24 Scobie, 91.

25 Burgin, ix.

26 On the nature of this problem, see Burgin, passim, but especially 14-16, 76-78, 283; Also see Scobie, 94.

27 Burgin, 18.

28 This is the essence of Burgin's thesis and his interpretation of Argentine Federalism as a political phenomenon. For example, see Burgin, 16-17, 139.

29 Burgin, 16-17.

CHAPTER III

1 On these matters, see Box, 108-110.

2 Box, 10; also see Burr, Reason or Force, 4.

3 Box, 13; also see Kolinski, 7.

4 Box, 15.

5 Ibid., 18.

6 On the nature of this unsuccessful alliance and on the larger question of Brazilian policy, see Box, 19-20.

7 Ibid., 21.

8 Ibid., 20.


10 This is how Box interprets Rosas' actions; see Box, 22.
11 As cited in Box, 22.

12 As cited in Box, 24.

13 As cited in Box, 23.

14 Ferns, 253.

15 Box, 54; on this problem also see Burr, Reason or Force, 4.

16 For a technical discussion of the boundary disputes and the negotiations regarding them see Gordon Ireland, Boundaries, Possessions and Conflicts in South America (Cambridge: 1938), 27-34 for the dispute with Argentina, 117-123 for the dispute with Brazil.

17 For details of these boundary discussions see Box, 60-61.

18 Thornton to Russell, Buenos Aires, April 24, 1865 (Correspondence Respecting Hostilities in the River Plate, Part III, No. 19), as cited in Box, 271; Kolinski, 92, also cites this dispatch in his discussion of the war.

19 Box, 26.

20 Ibid., 29-53, for the nature of the boundary dispute and Paraguay’s ownership of the disputed territories.

21 Ibid., 29.

22 Kolinski, 29; For the nature of Brazil’s long-term plans see Box, 108-109.

23 Box, 74.

24 Warren, Paraguay, 208; Also see Burr, The Stillborn Panama Congress, 11-12.

CHAPTER IV

1 Box, 110.
The above analysis is derived from Ferns, 146-156; Also see Calógeras, 99, for some of the details.

Box, 107.

For further details see Ferns, 248; Also Box, 70.

This account is taken from Box, 70-71.

Box, 71.

Burgin, 284.

Ferns, 282.

Box, 74.

Ibid.

This is taken from Box, 78, but that author does not explain the matter any further. Needless to say it would be interesting to have further information of Brazil's role in Uruguay during this crucial period following Caseros. It is mentioned in the present context only to show the continued involvement of Brazil in the domestic affairs of Uruguay.

Box, 78.

Ibid., 82.

Kolinski, 70.

Ibid.

Box, 86.

Doria to Russell, Buenos Aires, July 28, 1863, as cited in Box, 96.

Doria to Russell, Buenos Aires, August 27, 1863, as cited in Box, 98.

Both Kolinski and Box maintain that Flores received covert aid from Mitre. See Kolinski, 31; Box, 200.
The following account of Lapido's mission to Asunción is taken from Box, 158-68. The specific quote is Box, 158.

Box, 158.


Berges to Elizalde, Asunción, September 6, 1863. See Box, 192.

This is Box's summarization of the note. See Box, 168.

Berges to Elizalde, Asunción, February 6, 1864. See Box, 206.

For details of this mission and its results, see Box, 98.

On this matter, see Cañógeras, 201; Box, 110.

Box, 110.

Ibid, 121.

On this see Box, 122-135.

Box, 152.

Ibid., 145-146.

Ibid., 152-153.

This account is taken from Box, 174-175; citation is Box, 175.

Ibid., 174-175.

CHAPTER V

Thompson, 337-339; Also see Box, 213, who also cites this diplomatic note.
2 As cited in Kolinski, 72.

3 Ibid.

4 Box, 211.

5 Kolinski, 32.

6 Burr, Reason or Force, 100.

7 Kolinski, 22, 37.

8 Box, 289.

9 As cited in Kolinski, 219; also see Box, 283-284, who also vaguely makes this point.
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