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UNIVERSIDAD TORCUATO DI TELLA

WORKING PAPER N° 2
GREAT BRITAIN AND THE RECOGNITION
OF THE RIVER PLATE

By Klaus Gallo

Britain-Argentine relations 1823-26.

Abstract: The recognition of Argentine independence was granted by the British government in early 1825. The Liverpool Ministry, which was in power in Britain at that time, was thus responsible for becoming the first European nation to recognize the independence of this South American Nation. However, this recognition was almost entirely due to the Foreign Minister, George Canning. This Minister, who took Office in 1822, took a more liberal line in foreign affairs which enabled his country to break away from the conservative principles of Metternich's European concert. From this moment onwards Britain adopted a more favourable position towards the the acceptance of emancipation movements in both Europe and Spanish America.

The River Plate Provinces, future Argentine Republic, had been considered as one of the most progressive of the recently emancipated Spanish American Colonies by the British government. This was mainly due to some of the liberal policies adopted by Rivadavia, the most influential minister of the River Plate government since the early 1820's.

However, recognition by Britain of River Plate independence, which seemed imminent once Canning appeared on the scene, took a few more years than expected to materialize. their were complicated technicalities that had to be resolved.

Great Britain and the recognition of the River Plate

In 1812 the Tory Administration of Lord Liverpool, the longest serving government in Britain's history, arrived to power. It was natural that in the midst of the Napoleonic wars European matters should dominate the attention of this ministry. Lord Castlereagh was Foreign Minister, and after the French Emperor's defeat at Waterloo he became a key figure in the Vienna Congress' attempt to reorganize the Continent.

Under Metternich's leadership the leading European nations had created a conservative system designed to restore a peaceful balance of power in Europe. To secure this equilibrium it was essential to avoid the resurgence of revolutionary outbreaks or independence movements both in Europe and in the over-seas colonies of the main powers.

This circumstance, plus Britain's continual alliance with Spain, had jeopardized the slim hopes of the River Plate government of obtaining protection and recognition from Britain. This had been one of the main objectives of the Rioplatenses since they achieved full independence from Spain in 1816. Moreover Castlereagh was suspicious about republicanism and would not even start to consider any type of recognition for any of the new South American states unless some sort of monarchical solution was found.¹

However, towards 1820 Castlereagh had become increasingly irritated with Austrian and Russian designs to intervene in Italy, Greece and Portugal, where insurrections against the local authorities had taken place. His discontent was confirmed when the Congress nations decided that France should intervene in Spain to restore the absolute powers of King Ferdinand, where the leaders of

¹ W.W.Kauffmann, British Policy and the Independence of Latin America, New Haven, 1951, p.146.

the liberal revolution of 1820 had forced this monarch to rule under the 1812 Constitution.²

The situation in Spain induced Castlereagh to become more inclined to start considering the recognition of the independence of the River Plate and the other independent Spanish American states.³ He was to present the case for Spanish American recognition in the forthcoming Congress in Verona in 1822, but committed suicide a few weeks before this meeting. His temporary replacement, the Duke of Wellington, uninclined as he was to independent republican governments in South America, put forward a very weak case for recognition which was completely overlooked by the other European nations.⁴ Britain's position in Europe would, however, drastically change when George Canning was appointed as new Foreign Minister in late 1822. This was evidenced by the new Ministers almost immediate break from the Congress system and his more decisive support for the recognition cause of the Spanish American states.

On 6 April 1823 French troops invaded Spain for the second time in fourteen years in order to restore Ferdinand VII his absolute powers and end the Constitutionalist's rule. This measure had negative repercussions among most of the other members of the Holy Alliance and, naturally, Great Britain. The fact that Austria, Prussia and Russia had reacted negatively against the French occupation of Spain had not impressed Canning. It was clear that these nations were not against France for intervening in Spain, but for not having done so in a way concerted with the other members of the Alliance.⁵ But such concentration was precisely what provoked

² D.A.G.Waddell, "International Politics and the Independence of Latin America", in L.Bethell(Ed.), The Independence of Latin America, Cambridge, 1984, p.211.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ W.W.Kauffmann, British Policy, p.148.

Canning's criticism towards the Holy Alliance. He was insistent that his government should adopt a more independent stand. He much preferred a policy of every nation for itself.⁶

Spanish America became a crucial issue for Canning, and was from now on to play a prominent role in Britain's policy towards the Alliance and, most especially, towards France.

As in 1808, after the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, fears again arose in England concerning the future policy of France in Spanish America.

The terrifying prospect of French predominance in South America was one of the main reasons why Canning accelerated his policy in favour of Spanish American interests from 1823 onwards. Canning's initial policy requirements in this area during the years he had been out of Office, were commercial and strategic, and fundamentally designed to preserve the balance of power against the United States, whose growing commercial expansion was coming to be regarded as a menace to the interests of Britain and Europe.⁷

The major obstacles Canning had to overcome in England before establishing closer relations with the Spanish American states were the lack of support and the suspicions of members of the government towards favouring a policy in this area. This reluctance was shared by King George IV himself, and not suprisingly, by the Duke of Wellington. The animosity and lack of enthusiasm of the latter had already been seen in Verona, when he failed to put forward to the other European nations a stronger argument in favour of Castlereagh's new approach towards Spanish American recognition.⁸ The Duke's position towards South America was best summed-up by himself some years later, when he expressed that "I always had a horror of revolutionising a country for a political object. I

⁶ J.Lynch, "Great Britain and Spanish American Independence", in J.Lynch(Ed.), Andres Bello. The Londonn Years, London, 1982, p.17.

⁷ Ibid., p.17.

⁸ Ibid., p.17.

always said, if they rise themselves, well and good, but do not stir them up; it is a fearful responsibility."⁹ This line of reasoning also seemed to apply to himself and the Ultra-Tories with respect to the recognition of the Spanish American states.

Canning realized that the most effective way of forwarding his Spanish American policy was a pragmatic approach to the conduct of the foreign relations of his country. He would exploit the situation in Europe, provoked by the French intervention in Spain, in favour of his Spanish American policy.

The most notable example of this line of conduct was manifested on 9 October 1823, when Canning met Prince Polignac, the French Ambassador in London.

By the end of May the French Army had already reached Madrid, and had managed to suppress the Constitutionalist faction. One of the dilemmas now facing the French government was how to deal with the colonies. They were only too aware that Britain had already established commercial connexions with some of the emancipated colonies, and that she was now speculating with the idea of recognizing their independence to enhance and consolidate those relations.

France was also interested in furthering commercial relations with the colonies, and realized the inconveniences which would arise from prior British recognition. On the other hand, France was now clearly in no position to acknowledge Spanish American emancipation, due to new Bourbon connections and close alliance with the Spanish Crown.¹⁰ The French ministry authorized Polignac to seek a secret meeting with Canning to find a possible solution. It was also in Britain's interest to prevent any possible French or Spanish interference in their commercial relations with Spanish America.

⁹ Earl of Stanhope, Notes of Conversations with The Duke of Wellington, Oxford, 1888, p.69.

¹⁰ D.A.G.Waddell, "International Politics", p.211.

The meeting between Canning and Polignac was in fact due to Wellington's initiative, for it was he who first suggested that such a meeting would be the most convenient cause for sorting out the discrepancies between the two nations.¹¹ During the meeting, both men agreed that the restoration of Spanish authority in the Americas was hopeless, and decided to oppose any territorial designs of other nations in the former colonies, or any exclusive commercial privileges there, although this was not to restrict Britain's existing trade with that continent. Thus Britain agreed to delay her recognition of the colonies, but warned that any act of interference or aggression by any other nation would prompt immediate recognition.¹²

This agreement was later to be known as the Polignac Memorandum. It remained secret for a few months and proved to be a masterstroke of diplomacy by Canning, as future events will show. He had achieved, with the completion of the Memorandum, one of his main objectives, which was to destroy any prospects of a French military intervention in any of the Spanish American colonies. This would not only have damaged Britain's commercial relations in that area, but would surely have forced her to take some sort of action against France.

The Memorandum would also help to deter any possible designs in South America on the part of other European nations, and it therefore enabled Canning to remain in a more easy isolation from Metternich and the Holy Alliance, from which he would detach himself completely during the course of the following year.¹³

In the months before his meeting with Polignac, Canning had been frequently in touch with the United States Minister Richard

¹¹ Sir C. Webster, Britain and the Independence of Latin America, 2 Vols., London, 1938, Vol. I, p. 20.

¹² D. A. G. Waddell, "International Politics.", p. 212.

¹³ W. W. Kauffmann, British Policy, p. 157.

Rush, aiming at an Anglo-American understanding to balance the hegemony of the Holy Alliance nations and their possible intentions towards the South American continent.

The American Minister, in conjunction with his government, seemed eager to consolidate this agreement with Britain, but when he suggested to Canning that this should imply a joint recognition of the Spanish American colonies, the British Foreign Minister responded negatively, and put clearly in evidence his nation's reluctance towards recognition at that time. According to Kauffmann, Canning was delaying recognition while he waited to see whether any of the Alliance nations would try to intervene in Latin America. He considered that if recognition by his nation were to be followed by armed intervention from one of their European allies, this would not only prove embarrassing but would also put in jeopardy his whole intercontinental strategy.¹⁴

After completing the Polignac Memorandum, Canning saw no urgency in negotiating an alliance with the United States. The assurances implicit in the Memorandum, preventing any possible European interference in the South American continent, allowed Britain to proceed more slowly towards the recognition of the emancipated states.

Rush approached Canning once more in late November, and was somewhat surprised at the manner in which Canning had suddenly lost interest in an Anglo-American treaty and with the way in which he continually avoided any mention of the Spanish American topic. He reported on Canning's attitude to his government and, on receiving his despatches, President James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State, decided to propose Spanish American recognition to Congress.¹⁵ Throughout November, heated debates on this topic took place in Washington. Some members of the government feared that recognition might be too defiant an attitude towards Great

¹⁴ H. Peterson. Argentina and the United States 1810-1960, New York, 1964, pp.83-91.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 183-191.

Britain; notables such as Thomas Jefferson held this view, but others, led by Adams, were convinced that this was the right moment to recognize Spanish American emancipation. Adams gained Monroe's approval, and on 2 December 1823 the "Monroe Doctrine" came into existence.

The United States of America not only recognized Spanish American emancipation, but also declared that any attempt made by European powers to interfere with territories in the Western Hemisphere would be met with North American resistance. This included any such attempt by Great Britain.¹⁶

The declaration of this Doctrine further emphasized the United States growing influence in world politics, and at the same time it marked the end of any possible strategic designs by any European nation, except Spain, in the American Continent.

The news of Monroe's declaration was received with a certain uneasiness by Canning, who feared that the South Americans might now turn towards the United States as their main protector and commercial ally. For this reason, Canning immediately made the Polignac Memorandum public, and presented it as the forerunner of the North American declaration. He also distributed copies of the Memorandum in Parliament and made sure that they reached the emancipated states of South America. It is worth mentioning at this point, that in Buenos Aires, in spite of the news of Monroe's declaration, recognition of their emancipation from Great Britain was still more anxiously awaited and regarded as much more significant.¹⁷

Another precedent Canning was able to show in his favour as further evidence of Great Britain's good-will towards the Spanish American colonies, was that he had already designated Consuls to those areas where the process of emancipation was more advanced. The states chosen where the River Plate, Colombia and Mexico.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.183-191.

¹⁷ Annonymous, A Five Years Residence In Buenos Aires During The Years 1820 To 1825. By An Englishman, Buenos Aires, 1968, p.61.

The man chosen in October by Canning to act as Consul-General in the United Provinces of the River Plate government was Woodbine Parish, who thus became the first British diplomatic representative in Buenos Aires.

Born in England in 1796, Woodbine Parish was the son of a Lincolnshire clergyman and had received his education at Eton. He had entered the diplomatic service, where he was an assistant of Joseph Planta, private secretary to Castlereagh. He was related to John Parish of Bath, a businessman who had commercial relations with the River Plate, and also to the Robertson brothers who were still living in Buenos Aires at the time of his arrival in March 1824. It is most likely that he was chosen as Consul precisely because of these family ties.¹⁸ He was twenty-seven when he arrived in the River Plate. He described it as a "diseagreeable and disheartening place", although he was to reside there for nine years.¹⁹

Canning had taken the necessary precautions of instructing his Consuls to point out to the South American authorities in these three different States, that they should not take their appointments as an indication of an imminent recognition by His Majesty's Government.

For this reason, Parish warned Bernardino Rivadavia, the most important Minister of the River Plate Government, in one of their first meetings that it was his government's desire that recognition should first be sought from Spain. The impossibility of such recognition was surely obvious at the time, but given the friendly relations of Great Britain with Spain, it was a formality that could not be avoided. Rivadavia explained to Parish that the Liberals in Spain had sent commissioners to the River Plate in 1823. The Spanish commissioners, however, had demanded too many privileges

¹⁸ H.S.Ferns, Great Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford, 1960, p.114; W.Hinde, George Canning, London, 1973, p.349.

¹⁹ H.S.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, p.114.

and powers in return for recognizing River Plate independence. Furthermore, now that the Liberals had been overthrown by the French, which meant the restoration of the Royal Powers of Ferdinand VII, Rivadavia considered that any such effort would be completely fruitless.²⁰

Rivadavia was still the most influential minister in the River Plate Government at the time of Parish's arrival. His position at this stage, however, was not as solid as it had been during the first two years. At home, he had to confront the animosity of some of the interior provinces, who accused him of trying to impose policies on them as if Buenos Aires were still the capital, and also of some of the political factions in Buenos Aires itself, which made the prospects for the re-election of the Rodríguez ministry in the forthcoming elections look slim.²¹

The continuing presence of the Portuguese in Uruguay still represented a menace. Brazilian independence had been declared in 1822, but Rivadavia had no luck when he sent commissioners to Rio de Janeiro with the mission of asking the new authorities to abandon all attempts to take possession of Uruguay.

In spite of these difficulties, Parish rapidly showed his sympathy for Rivadavia. It was reflected in the reports and dispatches he sent to Canning. The reports were extensive, and generally contained more optimistic views on the River Plate situation than the dispatches, as was the case with one of the first lengthy reports sent by Parish to England:

.... Such is a summary of the formation and progress of the present free government of Buenos Ayres. The first years, indeed, of the revolution were marked with those scenes of bloodshed and disorder over which it might be merciful to cast the veil of oblivion; but where is the people who have established their liberty without similar attendant circumstances; and what are the horrors which have marked the former struggles for freedom not only

²⁰ Ibid., p.116.

²¹ L.A.Romero, La feliz experiencia, Buenos Aires, 1976, p.244.

in this hemisphere, but in our own, in England, in France, Italy, and lastly in unhappy Spain ?

Experience dearly bought is of the greater value. In this country, indeed, the lessons which have been learnt from the course of events are inappreciable. The errors of the past will be shunned for the future; and the benefits of a good government, which has been at last established, are now quite sufficiently known and understood to ensure the support of all classes of the people.²²

The dispatches, on the other hand, revealed the crude realities and complexities of incipient political life in the River Plate that did not come out in the reports. Such details about the local situation were communicated by Parish to Canning very shortly after his arrival to Buenos Aires, on the occasion of Rivadavia's leaving office when the Rodríguez Administration was ousted from the government of the Province of Buenos Aires after the elections of April 1824:

"... He [Rivadavia] had done more for the general amelioration of this state in the last three years, than all his predecessors in power, but in carrying his plans into effect Mr. Rivadavia has necessarily created many personal enemies especially amongst the military and the clergy. The numbers of the first he has very considerably reduced; and of the numerous convents and monasteries which formerly possessed controlling influence in Buenos Aires, few only now exist.

The persons who have suffered by these measures, have since the election of the new governor, been actively employed to raise a feeling against Rivadavia, and I am sorry to add apparently not without some success.²³

This last sentence clearly emphasizes the degree to which Parish considered Rivadavia an indispensable figure in the development of a peaceful and progressive state. He had impressed Parish favourably the few times they had met, and the daunting prospect of a new government, many of whose members were supposedly

²² Parish to Canning, Public Record Office F.O.6/4. Also in R.A.Humphreys. British Consular reports on the Trade and Politics of Latin America, London, 1952, pp.1-26.

²³ Parish to Canning, 27 April 1824, AGN Sala 7, 17-6-2.

enemies of Rivadavia, no doubt produced a certain amount of fear in both Parish and the British commercial community. After all Rivadavia's liberalism, reflected in many of his reforms whilst in office, had helped to create a government which was acceptable to most of the British merchants, and to many of the politicians in England who believed that if such progressive intentions could be maintained it would help to accelerate recognition from Great Britain, indispensable for the commercial intercourse of the two countries.

Their was, however, a fair amount of hasty optimism in Parish's early reports to his government with regard to the degree of stability achieved in the River Plate since Rivadavia had been in office. As Ferns correctly points out, these reports contrasted with those sent at around the same time from the British mercantile community in Buenos Aires. These correspondents revealed that, however fond they were of Rivadavia, stability had yet to be restored, and that only when this was achieved could the River Plate become a reliable and permanent partner in commerce with England.²⁴

The question of British recognition had been in Rivadavia's mind ever since he arrived in office. As soon as he heard that Canning was sending a Consul to the River Plate, he decided in turn to designate someone from the River Plate to act in the same capacity in London. He chose John Hullett, from Hullett Brothers & Company, one of the most important British firms in Buenos Aires. This choice did not please Canning at all. He thought it would have been much more convenient for both nations if Rivadavia had chosen a native.²⁵ Indeed, as if he foresaw that Rivadavia's choice of Hullett would not please the British government, Parish had sought to convince him to designate San Martín, who was now back in Buenos Aires, and who had expressed his desire to emigrate to Europe.

²⁴ H.S.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, p.119.

²⁵ Canning to Parish, 19 November 1824, PRO F.O. 6/3; Also in H.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, p.117.

Rivadavia, who had never been on good terms with San Martín, astutely explained to Parish that this nomination would not be entirely suitable as the Liberator was in favour of the installation of a European Monarch in the River Plate, and was still eager to negotiate this solution. Rivadavia even claimed that it was the main reason why San Martín wished to leave for Europe.²⁶

More significantly, in November 1823, a few months before the British Consul's arrival in Buenos Aires, Rivadavia had arranged to send a mission to Great Britain, which was to be secret and unofficial, and also one to the United States, which was official and which included a River Plate Minister to Washington.

Ever since the appearance of a publication in the River Plate which announced that the Holy Alliance, after the Verona Congress, held in 1822, threatened to intervene in the revolutionary states, Rivadavia had felt the need to gain British and American support against any Alliance expedition to South America. Fears later increased when news was received in Buenos Aires of the French occupation of Spain the following year, and they motivated the immediate preparation of the mission.²⁷

The man chosen by Rivadavia to head this mission, and to be Minister in the United States, was Carlos María de Alvear, who had been Director Supremo when Rivadavia had been sent to Europe on a similar mission in 1815.

After his tumultuous experience in power, Alvear had been forced to live in exile in Rio de Janeiro and later in Montevideo. Here he joined the Chilean Jose Antonio Carreras, with whom in 1819 he entered the Federalist cause in an attempt to oust the Pueyrredon administration by joining forces with Estanislao Lopez's Army in Santa Fe, which was then preparing to attack Buenos Aires.

²⁶ Parish to Canning, 12 April 1824, PRO F.O. 6/3. Also in Sir C. Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol. I, pp. 110-114.

²⁷ T. Davis, Carlos Alvear. Man of Revolution, New Haven, 1955, p. 31.

After a misunderstanding with López, Alvear was soon forced back into exile.²⁸

When the Rodríguez government announced an amnesty in November 1821, Alvear decided to return. He was on good terms with Rivadavia, which was further shown when Rivadavia appointed him for this mission.²⁹

Rivadavia's confidence in its successful outcome was enhanced by the encouragement he received from Parish, who insinuated that Alvear should find no difficulties in approaching Canning, whom he had already informed about Alvear's visit.³⁰

Alvear finally received instructions from Rivadavia in February 1824. He was to seek an interview with Canning and explain to him that the unofficial nature of his mission was due to the fact that the River Plate government had no doubts about Britain's favourable disposition in favour of their cause. He also had to explain to Canning that the main aim of his journey was to report to the British government on the situation in the River Plate and to receive a ratification of British support. He was told to find out as much as possible about the disposition of the British government and of British public opinion towards the recognition of the Spanish American states.

Alvear was to put forward much the same arguments in his visit to the United States, as well as to thank Monroe for the declaration of the previous year.³¹

Alvear arrived at Liverpool on 5 June 1824 after an eighty-four day journey. There he was enthusiastically greeted by a delegation of local merchants who were interested in hearing about

²⁸ Ibid., pp.23-26.

²⁹ Ibid., pp.23-26.

³⁰ Ibid., p.37.

Parish to Canning, 25 April 1824, PRO F.O.6/3; Also published in Sir C.Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol.I, pp.110-112.

³¹ C.Davis, Man of Revolution, pp.33-34.

the situation in South America. Six days later, on arriving at Birmingham, he was invited to a meeting of merchants and manufacturers who were also anxious to inquire about the same subject.³² During his stay in England a petition for the recognition of the emancipated South American states was made to the government by some of the largest firms of Liverpool and London, as shall be seen later on.³³

When he arrived in London, Alvear made sure that the favourable remarks he had expressed about Rivadavia in these meetings were published in the newspapers, a means of predisposing public opinion in favour of the cause of the independent South American states, and of promoting the case for recognition.³⁴

On June 29 Alvear wrote to Rivadavia with an account of what he had been able to find out about the disposition in England towards South America, and enclosed a copy of the Polignac Memorandum. It had only recently been made public, and was a complete novelty to Alvear.

With respect to the British government's position on the recognition of the South American states, Alvear transcribed the speech made by Lord Liverpool in Parliament, and his answer to a question from the Whig opposition, in the person of the Marquess of Lansdowne, on the current state of relations with the new states of Spanish America:

....En la sesión tenida en la Cámara de los Lores el 24 del corriente, un miembro de ella, el Marques de Landsdown, habiendo preguntado al primer ministro Lord Liverpool cuales eran las relaciones y disposiciones del Gobierno respecto de los nuevos estados de Sud América, respondió éste que el gobierno no tenía ningún compromiso directo ni indirecto con potencia alguna para reconocer o no la independencia de aquellos estados y que estaba enteramente libre para determinar sobre este punto, según los

³² H.S.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, p.123.

³³ Alvear to Rivadavia, 15 June 1824. In G.Rodríguez, Contribución histórica y documental, Buenos Aires, 1921, pp.14-17.

³⁴ T.Davis, Man of Revolution, p.36.

intereses de la nación inglesa; que habiendo dado el paso de proponer al Gobierno Español fuese el primero en hacer el reconocimiento de aquellas sus antiguas colonias, haciéndole ver la necesidad y conveniencia que le resultaría de tal procedimiento, el gabinete de Madrid había rehusado decididamente acceder a tal propuesta, razón porque el Gobierno Inglés quedaba ya libre aún con respecto a España, para hacer (a su debido tiempo) el reconocimiento de aquellos nuevos estados, y para contraer con ellos obligaciones tanto morales como de cualquiera otra especie y añadió: el Gobierno ha enviado comisionados a varios de aquellos estados para que formando una idea exacta de la situación respectiva de ellos, se pueda proceder a su reconocimiento; como el informe de los comisionados no ha llegado aún, se suspende todo procedimiento, bien entendido; que estando salvo el Gobierno Inglés, como se ha dicho anteriormente, de todo compromiso, tanto con las potencias extranjeras como con la España misma, sólo espera las noticias de sus comisionados para determinar sobre el asunto en cuestión.³⁵

This announcement from the Prime Minister led Alvear to conclude that the Liverpool administration was well disposed towards recognition, although he had yet to meet Canning to confirm this assesment.

Alvear meanwhile met some of the envoys of the other South American states, who were there for similar motives. Amongst them were José Manuel Hurtado of Colombia, José Mariano Michelena of Mexico and Juan García del Río of Peru. García del Río had actually held two meetigns with Prince Polignac. Hurtado, moreover, had already managed to have a couple of conferences with Canning. He told Alvear that the British Foreign Minister had informed him that he had recently exhorted the Portuguese to recognize Brazilian emancipation, and he had expressed his hopes that, if this was achieved, Spain might shortly recognize South American independence as well.³⁶

On 6 July 1824 Alvear had further reason to believe there was a favourable disposition towards the recognition of the River

³⁵ Alvear to Rivadavia, 29 June 1824, in G.Rodríguez, Contribución histórica, pp.32-33.

³⁶ T.Davis, Man of Revolution, p.37.

Plate. On that day The Times reprinted the letter sent by Canning to Rivadavia announcing the appointment of Parish as Consul to Buenos Aires to protect British commercial interests, and to report on the state of affairs in that area. There was also news about the completion of a loan from Baring Brothers to the government of Buenos Aires. It had been negotiated by one of the Robertson brothers, now a Director of the Bank of Buenos Aires, and by Félix Castro, a prominent Rioplatense merchant.³⁷ In spite of this good news, Alvear was unable to arrange a meeting with Canning, and by late July his hopes of doing so were low. However, on 21 July, the very day he was to set to sail for the United States, he unexpectedly received an invitation to meet Canning thanks to the mediation of John Hullet, to whom Alvear had a few days before expressed his regrets about not being able to meet with the Foreign Minister. On receiving this invitation he naturally suspended his journey.³⁸

The meeting between Alvear and Canning took place on 22 June 1824. What transpires from Alvear's account of the dialogue that took place is that Canning gave him a cold reception. Before the interview he had sent Alvear a set of questions about the state of affairs in the River Plate. Once he had him in front of him he immediately proceeded to cross-examine in a hasty and almost irritable manner.³⁹

Canning's first move was to ask Alvear if he knew anything about Rivadavia's deposition from the Government, to which Alvear answered that he had no official confirmation about this. The Foreign Minister carried on with the interrogation and asked a few questions concerning the technicalities of the political institutions operating at present in the River Plate, such as the

³⁷ F.G.Dawson, The First Latin American Debt Crisis. The City of London and the 1822-25 Loan Bubble, New Haven, 1990, pp.79-80.

³⁸ T.Davis, Man of Revolution, pp.37-38.

³⁹ Ibid., p.39-42; G.Rodríguez, Contribución Histórica, pp.44-49.

extent of authority attributed to the Executive and to the Congress.

He also enquired about the situation of the other South American states, and indicated that the events occurring in Peru, where Bolívar was still attempting to defeat the Spanish, could prove menacing for the River Plate if the Spaniards were to win. Alvear replied that the River Plate Provinces had acquired their emancipation from Spain fourteen years ago and had no reason to fear the Spaniards anymore.

Alvear took the opportunity whilst reviewing the South American situation to bring Canning up to date about the situation of Uruguay, still being besieged by Portuguese troops, and to attempt to gain his attention and sympathy for the River Plate in this dispute. Canning initially reacted with alarm and surprise, but then merely asked if there was any way of finding a solution.

Canning also asked Alvear about the real authority of Buenos Aires over the other River Plate provinces. After Alvear had answered that the capital had no authority over the provinces, Canning astutely followed the question by asking who exactly was Alvear representing in his capacity of Minister to the United States. Alvear replied that he was representing all the River Plate provinces, on account of the United States government having recognized the independence, through President Monroe's declaration, of all the provinces which had comprised the River Plate Viceroyalty.⁴⁰

The conference ended with Canning asking to see Alvear's credentials. Alvear promptly refused this request, fearing that it was a strategy to make him reveal official papers concerning his mission to the United States. He explained that he did not have his credentials with him at that moment. Towards the end of the meeting Alvear conveyed his government's conviction that Great Britain was the most progressive, illustrated and moral nation in Europe, and the most favourable towards the newly formed

⁴⁰ G. Rodríguez, Contribución Histórica, pp.44-49.

States of South America. At this point Canning abruptly interrupted Alvear's speech, and acknowledging bluntly his appreciation proceeded to put an end to the meeting.⁴¹

The effect this meeting had on Canning and on his appreciation of the situation in the River Plate is not easy to determine. Neither is it clear, for that matter, why Canning adopted such a distant attitude towards Alvear during this conference. He could have been in a bad mood on that particular day, or he might have felt suspicious about the exact nature of Alvear's mission. Another reason might well have been a certain degree of irritation at the way in which Alvear had conducted himself since arriving in England, stimulating the hopes of both the British merchants and exciting public opinion about the prosperous future of the River Plate. This only served to put further pressure on the government to take a rapid decision in the delicate matter of recognition. However, another likely explanation for Canning's attitude may lie in the arrival of news in London from Buenos Aires of Rivadavia's departure from the government. This may have had a negative impression on the Foreign Minister. As to the influence this meeting had on Canning's future decisions about South American states, it does not seem that Alvear's visit contributed much in accelerating recognition. Nor did he add much to what Canning knew already about River Plate affairs. Alvear embarked on 29 July for the United States, where a more auspicious welcome was awaiting.

During the time Alvear was in England, the Liverpool ministry had to deal with frequent complaints voiced by the Whig opposition in Parliament. At the beginning of the 1824 sessions Lansdowne, who was mentioned in Alvear's letter to Rivadavia, and was at this stage the most active amongst the Whigs on South America affairs, drew up a motion for the recognition of South American independence

⁴¹ Ibid., pp.44-49.

as guarantee against any Spanish attacks in that continent. The motion was defeated by ninety five to thirty four.⁴²

Henry Brougham, one of the most influential figures of the Whig opposition, also condemned the government for failing to oppose the Holy Alliance, and thus losing influence in Europe.⁴³ Many other prominent Whigs supported the London merchants and their demands for South American recognition. This was the case of the prestigious historian and politician Sir James Mackintosh, who criticized Canning for having suggested that it was those with commercial interests of one sort or the other in South America who were most anxious for recognition. This eccentric Whig leader riposted:

....With regard to the influence of what may be said here upon the loans to the independent states, I can only say, that I have not the slightest interest in them. I find ample employment for the whole of my capital at home; and however I might speculate in other matters, I am certainly not a speculator of that sort.⁴⁴

Mackintosh was even more emphatic when he spoke to the House of Commons on 15 June 1824 on the occasion of the petition presented by the merchants of London:

....When Great Britain (I hope very soon recognises) the states of Spanish America, it will not be as a concession to them, for they need no such recognition; but it will be for her own interest, to protect the trade and navigation of her subjects, to acquire the best means of cultivating friendly relations with important countries, and of composing by immediate negotiation those differences which might otherwise terminate in war.⁴⁵

⁴² A.Mitchell, Whigs in Opposition 1815-1830, Oxford, 1967, pp.175-176.

⁴³ F.G.Dawson, Latin American Debt Crisis., p.76.

⁴⁴ P.O'Leary, Sir James Mackintosh. The Whig Cicero, Aberdeen, 1989, p.159.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.158.

The Times remained sceptical about Mackintosh's position towards the Spanish American colonies, when it commented on this debate a few days later. The newspaper, which was not in favour of complete recognition, claimed that his efforts for this measure were "reduced to very little, in short to nothing". It thought that the debate with Canning had been a dull one, and argued that its only interesting feature was a slight indication that the Foreign Minister might consider some sort of partial recognition. It concluded that if this was effected "we applaud the prudence of the British Minister."⁴⁶

Other notable Whigs chose to adopt a more moderate stand than Mackintosh. Lord Holland and his Holland House circle, had very strong ties with the Spanish liberals since 1812 and still maintained their loyalties to the Spaniards which naturally left them in an awkward position regarding South America. Lord Grey, the leader of the Whig faction since 1806, was more concerned for the stability of Europe, and reckoned that recognition would only land Britain in a more complicated position. He agreed with Canning that England had no right to stop Spain from trying to get her colonies back, but argued further that she had no right to prevent Spain's allies from helping her. Nevertheless, he ended up favouring recognition and supported Landsdowne's motion.⁴⁷

Canning, also encountered bitter opposition from inside the cabinet, from the more conservative faction, led by Wellington, which disliked his policy of distancing himself from the Holy Alliance.⁴⁸ For these men, more in line with Castlereagh's foreign policy principles, the Alliance, with all its faults, symbolized European unity, and they feared that undoing it would only disrupt the order which had been maintained on the continent since

⁴⁶ The Times, 29 June 1824.

⁴⁷ A. Mitchell, Whigs in opposition, p.176.

⁴⁸ W.W.Kauffmann, British Policy, p.214; W.Hinde, Canning, p.349.

Napoleon's defeat. They therefore viewed the recognition of the South American states as an anti-Alliance policy, and by the middle of the year 1824, Canning must certainly have been giving them the impression that he was effectively working in favour of this cause. As if all this was not enough, the King was still opposed to South American recognition as well.

These diverse poles of opposition towards his handling of South American recognition left Canning in a delicate situation. He had the Whigs pressing for immediate recognition and his Tory enemies, and the King himself, accusing him of doing too much in this respect.

Nevertheless, the Tory and Whig opposition towards Canning's South American approach was not strong enough to effect any change in the Foreign Office. The Whigs essentially criticized his delay in promulgating recognition, but were basically in favour of the line he had adopted, and as for the the die-hard Tories, they were only too aware that Canning's permanence at the Foreign Office guaranteed their own permanence in the Government. In spite of their desire for the a policy more sympathetic to the Holy Alliance, they were prepared to sacrifice such a stand to remain in the Ministry.⁴⁹

This was apparent when, in the Parliamentary debates towards the end of July, Lord Liverpool and Canning managed to obtain a consensus in both Houses when they brought forward an address in which they formally declared that Britain had no longer to consult either Spain or her other European allies on South American recognition and would, from now on, determine herself the right moment for recognition. This was what Alvear had reported to Rivadavia.⁵⁰

At much the same time as his conference with Alvear, Canning received the first despatches from Parish in Buenos Aires. In a

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.174.

⁵⁰ F.G. Dawson, Latin American Debt Crisis, p.77.

letter Canning wrote to Parish on 23 August 1824, he acknowledges having replied to him on 29 July after he had received his first despatches, and this was less than a week after having seen Alvear.⁵¹ Canning sent his reactions to Parish to the first reports he had received about the River Plate:

....Your despatches contain, generally speaking, a satisfactory report of the situation of Buenos Ayres; of the moderate principles of the Government, of its tendency to a stable and tranquil settlement; and of the disposition manifested, as well as by persons in power as by the inhabitants at large, to cultivate with this country the closest relations of friendly intercourse.⁵²

Although there was no mention in this letter about his meeting with Alvear, Canning made clear, the present stand of Great Britain respecting relations with the River Plate and with Spain. He enquired more about one of the points he had put to Alvear during his interrogation, which apparently was still not all together clear to him:

....It is neither the right nor the intention of Great Britain to do anything to promote the separation of any of the Spanish Colonies from Spain. But the fact of that separation is an indispensable preliminary to any further proceedings or inquiries; and it is not till after the fact has been decisively ascertained, that a question can arise as to the expediency of entering into arrangements founded upon a recognition of it. The fact of separation seems to be clearly established with respect to Buenos Ayres, by the length of time which has elapsed since its original declaration, of independence, and since a Spanish force has existed in its territory; and by the absence of anything like a Spanish party in the state. The competency of that state to enter into arrangements with other countries does not appear liable to question. But there is one point upon which your report is not so clear, as might be desired, I mean as to the power of the government of Buenos Ayres to bind by

⁵¹ Canning to Parish, 23 August 1824, PRO F.O. 6/2. Also in C.Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol.I, pp.114-116, and in H.S.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, p.124.

⁵² Canning to Parish, PRO F.O. 6/2.

its stipulations with a foreign state, all the members of the government of Buenos Ayres.⁵³

It seems obvious that Canning was eager to know what was the exact extent of representation of the government of Buenos Aires over the rest of the River Plate provinces. Canning may have assumed that here lay the key to the future stability of the state, which seemed to be a highly desirable requirement for recognition. He nevertheless instructed Parish that if the situation in the River Plate remained stable, he was to contact the government there, and convey that it was His Majesty's desire to conclude a commercial treaty with them soon. He stressed that:

....The full power of the government of Rio de La Plata will necessarily set forth the political style and title by which that Government designates itself; and you will not proceed to the opening of the negotiation unless that instrument shall bear upon the face of it the authority, not of Buenos Ayres alone, but of the whole of the States comprehended in the description of the United States of Rio de la Plata.⁵⁴

The sudden appearance of this treaty question arose from the need of Canning and Lord Liverpool to formalize commercial relations, an indispensable requirement for recognition. Nevertheless, they needed still further evidence of the stability and unity in the River Plate to present the case for recognition to the rest of the Cabinet.

At around this time, Rivadavia was preparing to embark on another trip to England. After refusing to stay on as a minister in the government of Las Heras, who had offered to keep him in his post in spite of his being considered an "enemy" of the new government, he had decided to leave for London, explaining that he was going for personal reasons, but also as to promote the

⁵³ Canning to Parish, Ibid.

⁵⁴ Canning to Parish, Ibid.

diplomatic and economic interests of the River Plate.⁵⁵ He was named Charge d'Affaires of the River Plate in London. Parish was enthusiastic about Rivadavia's trip to England, and reported to Canning that:

....Mr.Rivadavia's intentions in leaving this country were as I have already stated in a former despatch to visit his children, and upon his private affairs; but it has appeared to me in public view that the greatest advantages may arise from his presence in England at this moment, advantages which I could neither reconcile it to myself to overlook or to hesitate at once to suggest to the consideration of this government.⁵⁶

Parish believed that Rivadavia was the ideal representative to communicate the state of things in the River Plate, as he had been the principal Minister of the previous government. He added:

....That if the time be approaching and from my present knowledge of the settled state of things here joined to the advices received from England, I feel that it cannot be far distant for entering into relations with these provinces of a more ostensible character. No one possesses to such an extent the confidence of the government and people of Buenos Aires as Mr.Rivadavia, no one is better qualified to enter upon any negotiations with His Majesty's government which may be necessary towards their final establishment.⁵⁷

Rivadavia arrived in London in September. Canning seemed as pleased as Parish about his arrival:

....M de Rivadavia arrived by the same packet which brought your despatches. He professes himself not to be furnished with any powers on the part of his Government, but states himself ready to furnish every information in his power [as] to the state of affairs in Buenos Aires.

⁵⁵ J.Lynch, The Spanish American Revolutions 1808-1826, p.7

⁵⁶ Parish to Canning, 20 June 1824, AGN, Sección 7, 17-6-2.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

It is certainly very important for His Majesty's Government to possess in him so valuable and so authentic a source of information.⁵⁸

Although it was true that among the motives of Rivadavia's journey to England were a visit to his children, who were in boarding schools in this country, and to persuade the government that the River Plate was stable and thus accelerate recognition, he had other private affairs to attend to, probably the most important reason for his return.

In November 1823 Rivadavia had written to Hullett & Company, informing them of the existence of rich mines of both gold and silver in Famatina, near the city of La Rioja. He offered them participation in their exploitation. He took steps to form an English mining company. Hullett & Company organized the Rio de la Plata Mining Company with a nominal capital of one million pounds. This association with Hullett & Company helps explain why Rivadavia designated John Hullett as Consul of the River Plate in London.⁵⁹

Another venture Rivadavia was keen on exploring was to encourage the immigration of British subjects to the Plate, to advance local agriculture. He thought that the introduction of immigrants, not only from England but also from other northern regions of Europe, would improve the social, economic and political state of the River Plate and would eventually stimulate agricultural activity. Rivadavia always regarded agriculture as one of the potential sources of wealth of the River Plate provinces. He intended to attract these immigrants by offering them the same conditions he was providing for local farmers, by way of the

⁵⁸ Canning to Parish, 29 September 1824, AGN, Sección 7, 17-6-2.

⁵⁹ H.S.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, pp.134-137.

emphyteusis law. This was his most important reform in the area of agriculture. State lands would now be rented to tenants.⁶⁰

Canning soon realized that Rivadavia had other business to attend to in England apart from promoting the political credibility of the River Plate States. Canning so reported to Parish about Rivadavia's activities in England:

"...M.Rivadavia lived while here in constant intercourse with commercial establishments in this country, establishments highly respectable but still consisting of persons deeply interested in the fluctuations of commercial affairs. I desire that you will lose no opportunity of impressing upon M.Garcia how inexpedient it is that the Government of Buenos Ayres should place the conduct of their affairs in England in the hands of any person in such a situation."⁶¹

These strictures were written by Canning after almost a year of Rivadavia's arrival in London. It is worth clarifying here, that during the intervening months, Rivadavia had also been engaged in other activities, mentioned below, which had provoked similar reactions from Canning.

The fact that British diplomats were forbidden to trade, makes Canning's negative reaction towards Rivadavia's commercial activities understandable, after all he expected the same degree of ethical behaviour from a River Plate emissary.

In the last months of 1824 Canning decided to press for the recognition of the River Plate.⁶² In spite of his doubts and suspicions about the stability of the political situation, especially after Rivadavia's departure from the government, Canning was convinced at this point that the new state was ready for recognition.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.138-139; L.A.Romero, La feliz experiencia, p.251.

⁶¹ G.Canning to W.Parish, 26 September 1824, AGN, Sección 7.

⁶² Sir C.Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol.I, p.23.

Parish's despatches had certainly done a lot to persuade Canning to take this decision. Three thousand five hundred Englishmen were now residing in Buenos Aires, and thirty-nine British commercial houses were already operating in the city, and this must surely have weighed favourably with him, a clear indication of the extent to which British commercial interests in the River Plate had expanded.⁶³

However, there was still dissent in Liverpool's cabinet on this subject. Wellington insisted that River Plate recognition should not be declared until there was some knowledge of the acceptance of the central authority of Buenos Aires by the other provinces of the River Plate.⁶⁴ According to Webster, Wellington was in this manner only attempting to gain time to reach an agreement with the European powers to prevent recognition from being granted at all.⁶⁵ The decision was therefore left in suspense for a few more months.

Canning, as he had already done in August, sent further instructions to Parish in September, and pressed him to find more evidence about the stability and unity of the republic and report it to the British government as soon as possible.⁶⁶

Parish immediately sought to satisfy Canning's request by contacting Manuel García, who had replaced Rivadavia as the most important minister of the new government. A Lawyer, García had been Minister of Finance of the previous government and seemed determined to develop the economy of the River Plate as Rivadavia had done before him, by carrying on with financial reform.

⁶³ W.W.Kauffmann, British Policy, p.176; W.Hinde, Canning, pp,357-358.

⁶⁴ Sir C.Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol.I, p.23.

⁶⁵ Ibid; H.S.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, p.125.

⁶⁶ H.S.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, p.125.

Parish must have taken a liking for García, for he confidentially disclosed to him, many of Canning's despatches.⁶⁷ Parish also requested that the River Plate government declare religious toleration. This request García explained might take some time.⁶⁸

With respect to River Plate unity, Parish advised García that he should find the means to present to him a convincing report so that he could put forward a reassuring case to his government about this most vital requirement for the recognition of this state.⁶⁹

García duly complied with this request in October, when he presented a formal note to Parish, explaining that although all the River Plate Provinces had separate administrations for the conduct of their domestic affairs, they still looked to the government of Buenos Aires for the handling of all negotiations regarding foreign relations.⁷⁰

Parish all the same wrote to Canning towards the end of October 1824 that he considered it wiser for Britain to delay any contacts or decisions regarding the River Plate until a national government was consolidated. Parish considered that there were reasonable chances for the re-establishment of a national government which would unify all the provinces with Buenos Aires as their capital. In January of the following year a National Congress was due to take place in Buenos Aires to resolve this matter.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.127.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.126.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.126.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.126.

⁷¹ Parish to Canning, 24 October 1824, F.O.6/5; Also in Sir C.Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol.I, pp.116-119. For the major work on this subject is E.Ravignani, "El Congreso Nacional de 1824-1827. La Convención Nacional de 1828-1829. Investigación y régimen de Pactos." Academia Nacional. Historia Argentina. Vol.VII.

Parish also informed Canning that he had taken the liberty to disclose confidentially the last instructions he had received to García. This was to give him the notion of imminent recognition by the British government, and was a clever move by Parish, who must surely have been aware that by informing him of Britain's favourable disposition he might well be contributing to the desirable unification of the River Plate provinces.

In a despatch to Canning, Parish explained why he had proceeded to disclose such information, and one can perceive the logic behind the move:

....With this feeling I called upon Mr. Garcia in the evening, and made known to him confidentially the determination which His Majesty's Government had come to as to the establishment of future relations with these provinces. I can ill describe the satisfaction with which this communication was received by the Buenos Ayrean Minister, nor had I the smallest difficulty in convincing him of the obvious necessity of the existence of a formal authority on the part of the whole of the United Provinces before the negotiation could be in any way opened.⁷²

Canning expressed his complete approval of Parish's proceedings in this affair after he received the above letter in late December, and praised the Consul for his astute judgement.⁷³

The news of Sucre's defeat of the Spanish Army at Ayacucho, received towards the end of December 1824, speeded the process by which the members of the Congress agreed to place the conduct of foreign affairs of the Confederation in the hands of the government of Buenos Aires, thus providing Parish and Canning with the requirement they had both been awaiting.

For this reason Parish, who in late December had already announced to the leading British residents in Buenos Aires and to members of the local Government the imminence of British

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Canning to Parish, 26 December 1824, F.O. 6/5; Also in Sir C. Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol. I, p. 119.

recognition, signed the Anglo-Argentine Treaty with García on 14 February 1825. The Treaty established the basis for the future relationship between the two countries.⁷⁴

It regulated the conditions for mutual trade, and also guaranteed the civil rights of British citizens residing in the River Plate as well as formally granting them freedom of worship. The Treaty was ratified by the British Government in May 1825. By then Canning had already achieved the recognition of the United Provinces of the River Plate, or Las Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata.

In mid-December 1824, Canning had urged the rest of the ministry to accept his proposal for the recognition of Mexico, Colombia and the River Plate, on the grounds that the Eastern powers of Europe had persuaded France to remain in Spain, and that this represented a continuing menace to British interests in South America. When Canning perceived that this plea was still met by certain opposition, both he and Lord Liverpool threatened to resign. In the face of this threat recognition was accepted by the Ministry, and announced in an unenthusiastic message by the King in the opening session of Parliament on 7 February 1825.⁷⁵ The fact that Canning did not need to wait any further confirmation about the situation in the River Plate implies that he was already satisfied from what he had heard about the course of events there.

Canning thus consolidated his reputation of champion of the Spanish American cause. However, many contemporaries remained unimpressed with his feat. The feeling in the Whig headquarters was that Canning had delayed far too long in announcing recognition. Brougham, for example, claimed that the merit of it should be ascribed to Mackintosh whom he considered had done a great deal in bringing the Liverpool Ministry to consider South American

⁷⁴ An Englishman, A five years residence, p.162.

⁷⁵ W.W.Kauffmann, British policy, pp.176-179.

recognition.⁷⁶ This muted reaction could also be perceived in the House of Commons in December 1825, when Canning further justified South American recognition, in a speech delivered about the persistent Franco-Spanish conflict, when he uttered his famous phrase "I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old". After a moment of silence, this was followed by "the sound of faint mocking laughter from the corner of the chamber", before the House erupted into cheering and applause.⁷⁷

In spite of recognition, Canning was still confronted by problems in the River Plate in the two years that followed. The question of the Banda Oriental was still unresolved. This had been one of the matters Rivadavia wished to settle whilst in Europe. While still in London, however, he had further irritated the British Foreign Minister when it was discovered that his mission was also destined for France. In a letter he sent to Parish, Canning referred to this:

....Such being the case, it is almost unnecessary for me to dwell at any length upon the irregularity of the double mission with which Mr. Rivadavia has been charged by his Government. It must be obvious to you, and you will easily be able to convince the Government of Buenos Ayres, that no satisfactory relations could possibly exist between His Majesty's Government and by any individual, however eminent, who should be accredited at the same time both to this country and to France.⁷⁸

Further strife followed when Rivadavia told Canning that it was Britain's duty to ensure that Uruguay was restored to the River Plate, for a promise, he claimed, was implicit in a statement made in 1812 by His Majesty's Envoy to the Portuguese Court in Rio de Janeiro, Lord Strangford. Rivadavia argued that Strangford had

⁷⁶ J. Lynch, "Great Britain", p.19.

⁷⁷ W.W. Kauffmann, British Policy, p.220; W.Hinde, Canning, pp.372-374.

⁷⁸ Canning to Parish, 24 May 1825, F.O.6/7. Also in Sir C. Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol.I, pp.121-123.

given a written guarantee to the River Plate government that Britain would ensure the Banda Oriental's independence from the Portuguese in the Armistice signed that year.⁷⁹ To these pretensions Canning responded, arguing that:

....Mr.Rivadavia ought to know that there is nothing in the whole circle of diplomatic engagements so solemn as one of guarantee; that no nation ever contacts such an engagement without some strenuous motive or some over-ruling interest; that even then no Government, having the honour of the country whose affairs it manages, at heart, would contract that engagement but upon the most mature deliberation, and in the most precise and definite terms.
80

By this time, Rivadavia was already back home in Buenos Aires, where he was elected first President of the United Provinces of the River Plate on 7 July 1826.

Canning had written to Parish that he was only too glad to see him leave England.⁸¹

This dispute between Brazil and Argentina over the fate of the Banda Oriental later developed into a war between the two nations, which began in early 1826. The eventual outcome of this dispute was the independence of Uruguay in 1828, one of the two solutions Canning had effectively suggested when he delivered instructions to the British commissioner sent as mediator:

.... First, that the cession of Montevideo by Brazil should be negotiated on the basis of the arrangement which was in progress between Spain and Portugal when the military revolution at Cadiz broke out, viz., that of a pecuniary compensation to be paid by Buenos Ayres to Brazil for the expenses incurred by that power in the occupation of Montevideo; or, secondly that the town and territory of Montevideo should become and remain independent of

⁷⁹ H.S.Ferns, Britain and Argentina, p.159.

⁸⁰ Canning to Parish, 19 October 1825, F.O.6/7, AGN, Seccion 7; Also in C.Webster, Independence of Latin America, Vol.I, pp.130-134.

⁸¹ Ibid.

either country, in a position somewhat similar of the Hanseatic towns of Europe.⁸²

Canning had used the South American question as a defensive strategy against the ailing conservative ambitions of the Holy Alliance, and was now even prepared to accept the formation of republics in South America for this motive. It was eventually the adoption of this more liberal approach by the Tory government in Foreign Affairs since Canning's arrival, plus the gradual reliability of this nation towards the internal policies adopted by the River Plate governments, especially during Rivadavia's period in Office, which were to prove instrumental for Britain's recognition of Argentina.

⁸² G.Canning to L.Ponsonby, 28 February 1826, F.O. 6/12 Also in Sir C. Webster, Britain and the Independence of Latin America, Vol.I, pp.138-139.

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