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GOVERNOR FOLCH AND THE BURR CONSPIRACY

by ADAM SZÁSZDI

THE GREAT STRANGE EPISODE of American history, the Burr conspiracy, can be considered nowadays a well-known story, and the more so since the publication of Professor Abernethy's work, *The Burr Conspiracy* (1954). However, even though pertinent Spanish documents have been taken into consideration, the usual tendency is to view the subject from the perspective of those operating within the United States. Therefore, it should be an interesting experiment to cross the Florida boundary and place ourselves in the shoes of the Spanish authorities of that time.

Due to the heritage of colonial prejudices and the Spanish intrigues in the West after the Revolution, contemporary Americans see Spain's hand in the conspiracy, headed by Aaron Burr, Vice-President during Jefferson's first administration. Although by now enough is known to disprove the validity of this accusation, historians still are somewhat suspicious of the Monarchy's conduct. The fact is that such suspicions are not completely groundless, chiefly because of the attitude of the Governor of West Florida, Colonel Vicente Folch y Juan.

The first news of the conspiracy reached Madrid through the Marques de Casa Irujo, the Spanish Minister in the United States. Burr approached him through a third person, sometime in March, 1805, while the Minister was staying in Washington, his permanent residence being Philadelphia. Burr asked him for a passport to Mexico, but this was refused by Casa Irujo, who was aware of the Vice-President's "mysterious and frequent" conferences with the British Minister.

Casa Irujo's relations with Burr are usually considered with suspicion. It would be misrepresenting the facts to suppose that any friendship existed between them. When Burr set out for Pittsburgh, the Minister immediately warned the Marques de Casa Calvo, the King's agent in Louisiana, to watch his movements. Casa Irujo expressed the opinion that Burr was "astute, clever, ambitious and an intrigant, without moral nor political principles, led in his aims and conduct by ambition, his favorite passion."

Towards the beginning of August, 1805, the Philadelphia press was already commenting on Burr's projects. As a result, Casa Irujo knew quite well that an attack on Mexico was contemplated. But he considered that project ridiculous, and thought that at the best it had been proposed to the British Minister, in order to obtain some money from him.

As far as the separation of the western states from the Union was concerned, the Spanish Minister thought it had to occur eventually, due to the sectional struggle within the United States. But he also thought that for the moment the West was not yet ripe to maintain its independence. He considered such an eventually very favorable to the King's interest, but that was about all of which he could be accused.¹

Although the Spanish Minister to the United States was contemplating the possible dissolution of this country, the main preoccupation of the Court of Madrid was the protection of the King's possessions and honoring its international obligations. Burr's Mexican plans were not taken so lightly as by Casa Trujo, chiefly since the Government knew about the trip undertaken to the Viceroyalty by the Irish-born and Eton-educated Daniel Clark, erstwhile consul of the United States in New Orleans and land speculator. The seizure of his papers was even suggested in order to gather more information. Casa Calvo was ordered to remain in New Orleans for the same reason.² Even before this, on February 2, 1806, orders were sent to the Viceroy of New Spain and to the Captain General of the Floridas, to arrest Burr if he were found on Spanish soil.³

Of all the King's representatives, however, the man who had to deal closest with the Burr conspiracy was the Governor of West Florida, Folch. He was subject to the authority of the Captain General in Habana, but as a result of the English blockade maintained by seven warships off Cuba, Folch had no means of communicating with Cuba except through officers disguised as civilians, who used American passports and embarked at New Orleans on board neutral ships.⁴ Folch tried to convince the Captain General in Habana, Marques de Someruelos, of the need

1. Casa Irujo to Pedro Cevallos, August 5, 1805, Servicio Historico Militar (cited hereinafter as SHM) Madrid, leg. 6,636, MS 5-1-9-16.

2. Cevallos to the Secretary of War, March 28, 1806, *ibid.*

3. Josef Caballero to the Principe de la Paz, February 2, 1806, *ibid.*

4. Folch to Someruelos, No. 59, January 6, 1807, SHM, 5-1-9-12.

for an independent command of West Florida. He knew the problems of the province much better than the Captain General. Furthermore, communications with Madrid through Washington were easier than by way of Cuba. But, of course, the Marques de Someruelos was not to be convinced so easily. Folch also had trouble with Intendent Juan Morales (accused of having increased his private fortune by one million pesos while provisional Intendent of Louisiana ⁵) who refused to reveal to the Governor the extent of his powers. Folch was at a complete loss trying to determine his duties. Even knowledge about the funds in the *Cajas* and the quantity of stored foodstuff was kept from him. This, coupled to his lack of authority to make important decisions without consulting the Captain General, rendered his position extremely difficult. ⁶ As Folch explained to his friend, General Samper:

. . . depending on a Captain General who resides at 200 leagues distance; (and considering) that these are occupied by the Gulf of Mexico, that the decisions of the Captain General take six or seven months to arrive, and that when they come ill conceived, I find myself faced by the difficult alternative of disobeying the Captain General or serving ill the King; they are capital inconveniences which render this destination intolerable. ⁷

Colonel Folch had governed West Florida since 1796. He rightfully considered himself the man best acquainted with its problems. He always showed extreme distrust of the United States, because of its aggressive attitude. He considered ridiculous the Americans' pretension of comparing themselves to the republics of antiquity and attributing their amazing increase to their constitution. He rather thought that the good fortune of the United States was due to the war in Europe and that the only way to curb their arrogance would be by sending after the war a considerable number of troops and ships to the region. ⁸

Folch thought that the Burr conspiracy was simply an attempt to separate the West and Louisiana from the Atlantic

5. Folch to Antonio Samper, April 16, 1807, SHM, 5-1-10-2.

6. Folch to Someruelos, No. 68, February 15, 1807, *ibid.* The dubious record of Morales did not impede his later appointment as Intendent of Puerto Rico.

7. Folch to Samper, April 16, 1807, *ibid.*

8. Folch to the Principe de la Paz, March 23, 1807, *ibid.*

states. He believed that if the United States did not change the form of its government it had to break up sooner or later into its component parts, such as New England, the Middle States, the South, and the West. He believed the West was going to initiate the process. At that moment this seemed to be quite logical and Folch's appraisal was sound. Subsequently the secession of the South was overcome only when Lincoln modified, if not the letter, at least the spirit of the Constitution.

Since the Governor of West Florida did not seem to see Burr's movement as a special threat to the Spanish Monarchy, the only question was, what attitude to take in the civil strife that was developing over the border. Washington would invoke international law. The Burrrites would contend that the secession of the West served Spain's interests, protecting Mexico from the United States. This would be in agreement with the former Spanish policy, in view of the possibility that the new state would offer to become a Spanish protectorate.

What attitude then was Spain to take in such a conflict? International law prescribed a friendly conduct toward the United States, but Folch thought the United States too often forgot its international obligations towards Spain, as in the recent expulsion of Casa Calvo from New Orleans. And if the Republic were allowed to become strong and stable, it would mean the disappearance of European possessions from America, Spain of course being the country that had the most to lose. Therefore, Colonel Folch proposed to maintain a strict neutrality and to decline any invitation to cooperate, with the pretext that he was lacking authority and had to consult first the Captain General.⁹

This then was going to be the line followed by the Governor. Undoubtedly, he well understood the problems his country was facing in its relations with the United States. Maybe he was the Spaniard who best knew the American Republic. But, although General James Wilkinson (military governor of the western territories of the United States, bribed by Spain and trusted by Burr at the same time) was sending Folch detailed information about Burr's aims against the Floridas and Mexico, he refused to believe the seriousness of the situation as far as Spain was concerned, thinking probably that the Americans were only trying to draw him into the conflict. As a result, he instructed Carlos

9. Folch to Someruelos, No. 63, January 8, 1807, *ibid.*

de Grand Pre, Commandant of Baton Rouge, not to attack the Burrites, unless provoked by them.¹⁰

This policy of strict neutrality, motivated by a desire of neither giving help to the government of the United States, nor infringing Spain's international obligations, explains Folch's attitude in the incident that involved the garrison of Fort Stoddert. On December 12, 1806, Captain Thomas Swaine, commanding the Fort, wrote to Folch almost literally copying from Secretary of War Dearborn's November 8 letter to him. The Captain had just received orders from Wilkinson to move with part of his troops down to New Orleans. So, Lieutenant Gaines was sent to Mobile to arrange the transit of the troops with Spanish authorities.¹¹ Folch refused to grant it, saying that only the Captain General could allow the passage of the American troops. He also took exception to the Dearborn-Swaine contention that relations between the two countries would remain good unless the Spaniards should impair them. According to Folch only the Americans could disturb the harmonious relations then existing.¹²

The report that the Colonel sent to Someruelos in Habana indicates that Gaines tried to convince him to allow the troops passage by using as an argument the common interest of Spain and the United States. It was suggested that Burr also threatened the Spanish possessions. Folch seemingly did not want to believe this. Yet he was of the opinion that the requested transit should be granted to Swaine, if not for any other reason, at least to dispel the rumors published in the newspapers about Spanish complicity in the conspiracy. In his words: "I do not know, upon what basis

10. Folch to Grand Pre, December 24, 1806, *ibid.* An example of Wilkinson's messages reads: "New Orleans, December 6, 1806, Sir, this will be handed to you by Lt. Marry of the Artillery who goes to Fort Stoddert in charge of goods for the indian agency. I pray you to let him pass without delay. Tomorrow I shall write you on a subject of high interest to your Government by a messenger express. In the mean time I can assure you *on the honor of a soldier* that every arrangement making here, is as well to *protect the dominations of Spain* as to support the government of the *United States* against its own *lawless citizens*. Tomorrow I shall be more explicit by Gilberto. With respect and esteem, yours, J. A. Wilkinson. His Excellency Governor Folch. *Es copia de su original. Vizte Folch y Juan.*" SHM 5-1-9-12. Prof. Abernethy cites a letter of the same date from Wilkinson to Folch and Morales (Thomas P. Abernethy, *The Burr Conspiracy* [New York, 1954], p. 176).

11. *Ibid.*, p. 187; Swaine to Folch, December 12, 1806, SGM 5-1-9-12.

12. Folch to Swaine, December 13, 1806, *ibid.*

they report it; but even in case it be true, it is convenient to hide our cooperation until assured of the favorable outcome of the enterprise.”¹³

The Americans soon tired of waiting for Someruelos' permission. On December 26, Swaine passed through Mobile en route to New Orleans accompanied by Lieutenant Murry, probably to confer with Wilkinson. Soon rumors started that Swaine was under arrest for complicity in the Burr affair. At the same time, late on December 30, Folch heard that the American garrison at Fort Stoddert was on the point of forcing its way through Florida, traveling aboard a ship that had been obliged to unload its cargo of cotton. The next morning he called in the ship's master who had brought this news. On the basis of this evidence Folch sent a courier to Stoddert at ten o'clock in the morning. He returned at four in the afternoon of the following day, January 1, reporting that he had seen the American troops embarking on a schooner. On his way back, at half-past eight in the morning, he heard cannon shots and supposed that this meant the departure of the American garrison. It was exactly what had happened.

Early on Friday, January 2, the American ship crossed Pass Heron. From there Captain Schuyler of the 2nd U. S. Infantry sent a message to Folch, announcing his crossing of Spanish territory. The Colonel, believing him still at Stoddert, answered with a threat to use force to stop the foreign troops. He did not know that they were already out of his reach. He had given orders to the two ships in the harbor of Mobile which were more or less seaworthy, the "Luisiana" and the "Vigilante," to cut off the Americans. But, because of weather conditions they could not leave until daybreak of January 2. Naturally they arrived too late and of course national honor was offended. Nevertheless, Folch found it more diplomatic to forget the incident.¹⁴

On January 3, Wilkinson wrote to Folch announcing Burr's approach "with his brigands," and advising him to reinforce Baton Rouge. He also mentioned Burr's designs on Mexico and enclosed

13. Folch to Someruelos, No. 58, December 13, 1806, *ibid.*

14. Folch to Someruelos, No. 60, January 6, 1807, *ibid.*; Schuyler to Folch, January 1, 1807, *ibid.*; Folch to Schuyler, January 2, 1807, *ibid.*; Folch to Baron de Feriet, January 1, 1807, *ibid.*; Folch to Francisco Maximiliano de Saint-Maxent, January 4, 1807, *ibid.*

a copy of Jefferson's proclamation. Captain Swaine brought this message to Mobile. This determined the Governor to transfer his headquarters to the fort on the Mississippi, a decision he announced to Someruelos on January 6. Yet, he was ostensibly going to Baton Rouge only to "discover the intentions of the insurgents," and he continued to give the appearance of paying little attention to Burr's anti-Spanish aims.¹⁵

It was not until January 11 that Folch confessed to Someruelos that the King's domains were in real danger. However, he believed Burr's forces much more important than they really were. He felt that Burr had committed a tactical error when he did not send a secondary force of 2,000 men from Muscle Shoals down on the Tombigbee. The Spaniards would have been obliged to give up Pensacola and then retreat to Mobile, resisting there while they could. At the same time Burr's principal force would have taken Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Of course, Burr lacked the necessary troops to realize such a plan.¹⁶

What were the reasons for the sudden change of opinion of the Spanish Governor? There seems to be only one, namely the information he was receiving about the plans and activities of the Mexican Association of New Orleans. Casa Calvo had started originally to observe these activities. On his expulsion Folch took over. The Mexican Association was a branch of a similar organization in New York. Among its most important members were Judges Prevot, Workman, Old, and Nicolle, Edward Livingston (Burr's debtor), Daniel Clark, Father Rodriguez, Major Nott, and Lewis Kerr. It was said that the secretary of the Viceroy of New Spain and three magnates were also in the service of the Association. Each of the magnates contributed 100,000 pesos to the expedition planned against Mexico. There were a number of emissaries in the Viceroyalty whose task was to gain over the "libertine priests and the friars known for their immoral conduct." The Association also pretended that a number of officers in the *Provincias Internas* had been seduced, although there was no actual proof of this. The Association did not fail to consider the possibility of buying off Folch too. This proposal was defeated by

15. Wilkinson to Folch, January 3, 1807, *ibid.*; Folch to Someruelos No. 59, January 6, 1807, *ibid.*; Wilkinson to Folch and Morales, January 5, 1807, SHN, 5-1-10-2.

16. Folch to Someruelos, No. 65, January 11, 1807, *ibid.*

Workman, who warned against revealing the secrets to this astute Governor, known as a staunch royalist. He felt that West Florida could be taken easily anyway. And once that was accomplished Folch would be left with the only practical solution of joining the revolutionaries.

The plans of the Association called for recruiting 10,000 men from Kentucky, 8 to 10,000 Louisiana militiamen, 3,000 regular troops and 5,000 Negro slaves who were promised freedom. They would meet on the Natchitoches river in February or March. An expedition would be sent by sea to the Rio Grande, under the pretext of quelling existing border troubles. Then the Army would declare its independence from the United States. Some 50,000 American families would be given lands west of the Mississippi.

Previous to this information obtained by Folch in October, Casa Calvo had discovered the Association's aims against Mexico. He knew that Wilkinson and his staff were expected to head the enterprise. The plan contemplated the occupation of Baton Rouge and Mobile by the Americans, while a fleet from Jamaica would attack Pensacola. Merchandise, 200,000 pesos worth, was to be assigned to the Indians, and the army would enter Spanish territory as liberators. Father Rodriguez had already translated into Spanish a proclamation to be used when the invasion began. It depicted Spain as Bonaparte's puppet, against whose tyranny it warned the Mexicans. There were some Mexicans at Natchitoches. Proposals were also made to the heads of the Negroes - Carlos Brule, Josef Cabaret and others-who consulted and gained the consent of their old chief, a certain B.D. The Kemper brothers, Reuben, Nathan, and Samuel (frustrated land speculators who had already organized a revolt at Baton Rouge) were to make a second try which actually took place on August 7, 1807. Agents were to be sent to the Viceroy of New Spain, General Jose de Iturrigaray, with the purpose of bribing a certain influential person in his entourage (apparently the secretary). Iturrigaray was considered to be completely inept. This was probably the mission that took Daniel Clark to Mexico. The contemplated attack was to coincide with the one prepared by General Francisco Miranda to free Venezuela from Spanish rule. However, the Association's ardor declined somewhat as a result of Napoleon's victories in

Europe together with the rumor that Florida was being transferred to France.¹⁷

Since Folch knew of the anti-Spanish plans of the Association from practically the beginning, it is time now to analyze the reasons for his previous skeptical attitude towards Burr's designs, an attitude that lasted till January 11, 1807. It seems, Folch felt that the Mexican Association actually represented the Government's policy which he also accused as being responsible for Miranda's expedition. (It appears, Governor William Claiborne of Louisiana toasted its success in public.) Wilkinson was also known to Folch as being mixed up in these plans. Furthermore, it was rumored that the crown of the West would be offered to Jefferson, Burr or a Mexican noble. In that case, the official warnings received from the United States government and its representatives in Louisiana of Burr's projects had to appear highly suspicious. Folch could not very well accept in good faith Wilkinson's invitations to cooperate. When Burr was officially denounced as a conspirator the Spanish Governor saw in this simply a split between the enemies of Spain, a split that should be exploited. Between January 8 and 11 he received some new information which startled him into immediate activity against Burr.

In a letter to Intendant Morales, dated January 15, from Delphine Island, Governor Folch declared, "three days ago [there] has come into my possession the detailed plan which the insurgents of Kentucky have formed against the King's domains." This plan, in short, consisted of an attack on Louisiana and the Floridas. With the artillery and munitions captured, Mexico would be invaded by land and sea and its independence declared. Finally, a new power would be constituted with the inclusion of Louisiana and the trans-Allegheny west.

Since the principal immediate aim of the Burrites seemed to be the capture of the Spanish artillery, and since there were not enough troops nor fortifications to defend it, Folch decided to send most of the artillery without gun-powder to San Juan de Ulva at Veracruz, keeping the destination of the expedition a secret. Most of the arms and munitions were to be concentrated in Mobile, as well as the merchandise of the Indian trade. His next measures were to order Colonel Carlos Delassus, the Com-

17. Folch to Someruelos, No. 67, February 10, 1807, *ibid.*

mandant of Pensacola, to send 150 men and some artillery to Baton Rouge. Colonel Francisco Maximiliano de Saint-Maxent had to send 100 men from the garrison of Mobile. The Governor was also counting on the militia, hoping to gather about 3,000 men for the defense of Baton Rouge.¹⁸

These troops were ready to sail within twenty-four hours of receiving the order. Folch preceded them by two days. He was joined by some detachments at Pass Christian, and by the rest at Bayou Nanchak. He had been forced to stop at Pass Christian in order to clear the ships of the ten inches of snow that fell on January 17 and 18. It was here that he received a letter from Wilkinson, dated January 5, inviting the Spanish authorities to enter into close cooperation with the Americans in resisting Burr. This determined Folch to go to New Orleans, since he wanted to get new information on the latest plans of the Mexican Association.

As a result, Folch wrote to Claiborne and Wilkinson on January 21, from the Bayou St. John where at daybreak he had anchored at a safe distance from the cannons of the American fort. He merely asked for the right to cross to Baton Rouge for himself and his staff, while the troops would continue by boat up the Iberville. Yet, both the General and the Governor refused to grant the permission, saying that public opinion was in a state of agitation because of Burr's approach and the rumors of Spanish complicity. Folch's messenger, Lieutenant Carlos Reggio, came back with the refusal accompanied by two aides of Wilkinson and one sent by Claiborne. The American officers expressed the wish to speak to Folch in private. When the Colonel had sent out everybody, they invited him in the name of their chiefs to a conference on the bridge over the Bayou, to be held the next morning. Folch did not try to hide his resentment about the insinuation of Spanish complicity in the Burr affair. He thought that the meeting proposed on a bridge was rather customary between belligerents, but not friendly nations. He cited the way in which he had received General Wilkinson on his way from the Creeks to New Orleans. But he assured the Americans that he would do his duty if Baton Rouge were attacked, and that they could count on him in preserving the peace of Louisiana.

18. Folch to Someruelos No. 65, January 11, 1807, *ibid.*; Folch to Morales, January 15, 1897, *ibid.*

The American officer who was doing the talking for his companions implied that Claiborne's note was not to be taken seriously. He was merely afraid of the cleverness of Casa Irujo and Folch, feeling himself as placed "between two sentinels," but if the Colonel agreed to the proposed meeting, he surely would obtain the permission to enter New Orleans.

The Spaniard parried, saying that to be compared to Casa Irujo was too much honor for him but did little honor to the Marques. Neither he nor the Minister could overstep their instructions, which called for friendly relations. Finally, a Spanish commander would never implore something that by right had to be granted to him. As one of the aides did not understand English, Folch repeated all this in French. The American then retired. The following day the Spanish convoy sailed on to Baton Rouge where it arrived on January 26. From there the Governor acknowledged Wilkinson's letter of January 5.¹⁹

Baton Rouge hardly qualified as a fort. Folch had already in 1804 described its weaknesses to the Captain General of Cuba. Since then nothing had been done. Now he proposed to fortify it by a moat if he received the money.²⁰ The troops under his command were of high morale and well disciplined. But there was no opportunity to try them out in combat because of Burr's premature collapse. Folch attributed this collapse chiefly to the fear caused by the Spanish vigilance. The Governor hoped that Burr would receive the punishment he deserved. (There is no doubt as to what his fate would have been had he fallen into Spanish hands.) However the anti-Spanish activities were not to cease on the territory of the United States.²¹

19. Folch to Someruelos, No. 66, February 3, 1807; Folch to Claiborne, January 21, 1807; Folch to Wilkinson, January 21, 1807, Claiborne to Folch, January 21, 1807; Wilkinson to Folch, January 21, 1807; Folch to Wilkinson February 11, 1807, *ibid.*

20. Folch to Someruelos, No. 65, January 1, 1807, *ibid.*

21. Folch to Someruelos, No. 69, March 16, 1807, *ibid.* Folch describes his troops as follows: Antes de terminar debo instruir a V. S. que las Tropas destinadas a esta Expedicion se componen de una compania de Granaderos del Regimiento de la Luisiana mandada por su capitan con grado de Teniente Coronel Dn. Francisco Colléll, con los Subalternos el Teniente Dn. Rafeal Croquer, y los Subtenientes Dn. Francisco Perez Muro, y Dn. Juan Dominquez: La mitad del Piquete del Regimiento de la Havana al mando del Teniente del mismo cuerpo Dn. Lorenzo Noquera; y el Subteniente Dn. Josef Valverde: De la mitad del Piquete de Puebla mandado por el Capitan del mismo Regimiento Dn. Antonio Salazar: Del del Regimiento de Cuba al mando de Capitan del propio cuerpo Dn. Gabriel O'Ryan, con los

That strained relations between the Spanish and American authorities would continue was apparent. Wilkinson made an appeal to Folch for the extradition of a deserter, Sergeant Dunbaugh, on the condition of his being pardoned. Consent was given, but this same letter of the General was the cause of new friction, since he hinted that the testimony of the prisoner could clear the Marques de Casa Irujo of any culpability.²² Next, Wilkinson demanded a free passage for the troops returning to Fort Stoddert. Of course, the Governor of West Florida found reasons enough to deny the petition, such as the previous violation of Spanish territory at Mobile and the prohibition to cross American territory, despite the treaty of 1795 which assured to his Catholic Majesty the free navigation of the Mississippi.²³

It is clear that those who considered Colonel Don Vicente Folch y Juan as a staunch opponent of the United States were completely justified in their opinion. Perhaps Viceroy Iturrigaray's dubious role would deserve a special study, as well as the Mexican Association's influence on the Mexican independence movement. Casa Calvo's later Bonapartist affiliation should not be overlooked either. But it appears that the Spanish Minister in Philadelphia, the Marques de Casa Irujo, was free from any culpability in Burr's conspiracy. The Spanish crown immediately recognized the danger and as a result was ready to collaborate

Subalternos Dn. Fernando de la Rosa, Dn. Josef Eligio, y. Dn. Domingo Gallegos: De un destacamento del Rl. cuerpo de Artilleria a las Ordenes del Capitan segundo Dn. Ignacio Salens. Todas estas Tropas venian a las ordenes del Teniente Coronel Dn. Josef Maria Morcillo Sargento Mayor del Regimiento de la Luisiana.

Ademas de los oficiales expresados han venido para ser destinados a dirigir las companias de Milicias los oficiales del Regimiento de la Luisiana siguientes: El Capitan Dn. Josef Canviosa y Adorno, los Tenientes Dn. Josef Declouet, Dn. Luis D'Annoy, y. Dn. Cirilo Morant: Los Subtenientes Dn. Pedro y Dn. Carlos Reggio, Dn. Carlos, Dn. Luis, y Dn. Enrique de Grand-Pre, Dn. Pedro Keronir, y. para Ayudantes mios los Subtenientes Dn. Francisco Morejon y Dn. Francisco Dalcour. La estricta diciplina y buen orden que ha observado la tropa; el zelo y actividad que han manifestado los oficiales; y la constancia y paciencia con que unos y otros han sobrellevado los rigores de una estacion la mas cruda que se ha conocido en este clima, hace honor a la Tropa Espanola, y en particular a los empleados en esta Expedicion; y por lo tanto creo en Justicia debido el recomendarlos coma lo hago a la Superior proteccion de V.S."

22. Wilkinson to Folch, March 27, 1807; Folch to Wilkinson, March 31, 1807. *ibid.*
 23. Wilkinson to Folch, March 31, 1807; Folch to Wilkinson, April 5, 1807, *ibid.*

fully with the United States. It was the Governor of West Florida, who, cut off from direct communication with his immediate superior, followed a course that was hostile to the United States. His attitude was influenced, not by an understanding with Burr, but rather by the not completely unfounded suspicion that the insurgents' anti-Spanish designs were also shared by the Government of the United States. Whatever the secret relations between General Wilkinson and the Spanish authorities, the latter did not trust him since they knew of his contact with the Mexican Association. In the end, history has vindicated Governor Folch. The aggression against Spanish territories condemned by the Washington government when undertaken by Burr, was later approved when undertaken by Jackson, Polk, or McKinley. But Spain should have attempted only one of two possible policies: to try to maintain at any cost the most friendly relations with the United States, based on sincerity and good will; or, as proposed by Folch, to pursue a course of unflinching opposition, backed by military might in the Floridas. Yet, instead of these, the policy became one of unfriendly relations without the necessary defenses, and Folch's worst fears were fulfilled: the disappearance of Spanish authority from the New World.