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## THE MAN WHO WAS PEDRO MENENDEZ

by ALBERT MANUCY

Four sixteenth century sources are the basis for most of the knowledge that we have about Pedro Menendez de Aviles.<sup>1</sup> They include archival manuscripts, biographies by two of his contemporaries, and a priest's journal of the voyage to Florida. Titian painted him by order of Philip II, and the portrait engraving so often reproduced is based on the painting. He is not a handsome man; his head is small, held quite erect; dark hair, half curly despite a rather close cut, frames a high, round forehead. The beard is also trimmed short. His nose is overlong and the mouth too small; between widespread dark eyes are habitual creases, and the eyes under the straight brows look at you directly. His build is compact and muscular. He was a man of action and good to be with, the records indicate; for though he had a ready tongue, he would also listen. The record also says he was a great friend of his own opinion.

There is a story about Menendez which, despite obvious apocryphal qualities, is not improbable, and it epitomizes certain traits of character: He was the young captain of a coast guard vessel. One pleasant morning off the coast of Galicia, he and his crew of fifty watched a trio of freighters making slow passage to the next port. On the hindmost vessel was a bridal party, happily escorting a young woman to her betrothed. Suddenly out of nowhere came four French corsairs—a ship and three swift *zabras*, which overtook and captured the bride's crowded transport.

Menendez and his men bore down on the action with drum-

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1. This paper is based mainly upon the two-volume sourcebook comprising the contemporary Solis de Meras manuscript and numerous other documents and letters, collected by Eugenio Ruidiaz y Caravia under the title *La Florida, su conquista y colonizacion por Pedro Menendez de Aviles*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1893). In order to animate the characterization of Menendez, I have occasionally "quoted" his utterances in free translation, sometimes with ellipsis to sharpen the point. In such cases, the Spanish text is supplied as a footnote for comparison.

beating, fife shrilling, and pennants hoisted aloft. "Yield this prize," he shouted to the pirates, "else I will hang you all!"<sup>2</sup>

Of course they laughed, and two of the *zabras* moved to grapple with the Spaniards. Menendez ran, the *zabras* in pursuit, until his pursuers were widely separated from each other. Then, he turned fiercely upon the foremost and took her. Next Menendez put half his fighting men aboard this captive, and used both her and his own vessel to capture the second *zabra*. The crew of the third, still guarding the bride, saw him coming back, and realized he intended to carry out his threat of the hangman. In quick council they decided to yield the prize and leave, which they did.

The chivalrous courage shining forth in this little tale was something to be expected in a Spaniard of the sixteenth century. For the Spanish heritage was a heritage of bravery, displayed often during 800 years of holy warfare. Now Spain was fired anew by the challenge of discovery and conquest of a New World, with boundless opportunity for brave deeds in serving God and the king, and for fabulous rewards to boot. As for Menendez, physical courage highlights his entire career. Storming the tower at Dartmouth harbor; striding boldly into the midst of an Indian horde; these and many other acts document his courage. This is personal bravery, bred from self-knowledge, married to faith in one's destiny, consummated in physical action. At times it borders upon bravado, bolstered either by pride or by the need to impress an enemy, or a potential friend. Most generally, however, it is tempered by common sense.

The 1566 exploration of the St. Johns River reveals this common-sense variety of valor in action. The expedition consisted of 100 men in three *bergantines*. These were small, fast galleys, well suited for probing the rivers and inlets of an unfamiliar coast. The penetration was fairly successful until they reached the lands of the Cacique Macoya, about fifty leagues upstream. Though the day was growing late, Menendez was determined to push on. For a league farther they rowed, the river becoming more and more narrow. Along the shore they could see armed warriors. Ahead, the river banks came together at a narrow pass, which was obstructed

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2. "[Menendez] les dixo que dexasen la presa que llevaban; si no, que a todos los ahorcaria. . . ." Meras manuscript, Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, v. I, 3.

by a row of stakes. The current, up to now barely noticeable, became stronger.

The rowers reached the line of stakes and broke through. The men strained at the sweeps and the craft inched ahead against the hurrying water. Now the river was so narrow that two pikes would reach across. The oarsmen were perfect targets for Indian bowmen.

Two warriors showed themselves on the bank. They brought an ultimatum: "Cacique Macoya tells you to go no farther. You must turn back. If not, we begin war with you."

It was a moment of extreme peril. If they continued, the deadly arrow flights were certain. If they retreated, the Indians would believe they were afraid and might attack anyway. Assuming a nonchalance he did not really feel, Menendez spoke to the interpreter: "Tell them they can start war whenever they wish. While I did not come here to harm them, *I must go up this river*. Yet say also that now it is night, and I will stay here until morning."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the boldness of the reply saved the white men. The vessels anchored. Night descended and there was no attack. It began to rain, and the arquebusiers cursed as the wetness got to the matchcords and powder and rendered their guns useless. But now that the rain had neutralized the weapons, there was no dishonor in retreat. Menendez ordered a quiet withdrawal. Under cover of darkness the rowers found the break in the line of stakes, and the *bergantines* slipped through it. Providential rainfall had saved the pride and saved the hides of men on both sides.

Personal bravery is one thing; moral courage may be quite another. Menendez, it is said, was an honest man, but honesty is a commodity that is not always easy to prove. Menendez' biographers present an excellent case, simply by pointing out that he died poor. Charges preferred against him by the bureaucrats of the *Casa de Contratacion*, to whom he was responsible as captain general of the treasure fleet, were merely vengeful attempts (say his advocates) to repay him for his too-honest methods of doing business.

Once, during a fleet inspection by officers of the *Casa*, Menendez noticed that their boat flag was of crimson damask and bore

3. "Dixeronte [Menendez] de parte del cacique Macoya que no pasase adelante e se volviese; si no, que le empezarian a hacer la guerra. Respondioles el Adelantado que el no iba a hacerles mal, e que viniesen a hacer la guerra cuando quisiesen; que tenia necesidad de pasar por aquel rio adelante, e por ser noche, queria quedar alli hasta la manana . . ." *Ibid.*, I, 253.

the royal arms. This banner was only for the king - or by special privilege, for the captain general. Menendez quietly hauled it down and stowed it away. The men from the *Casa* were furious and when the opportunity came, years later, they threw him into prison, and charged him with exceeding orders, breaking rules, and permissive smuggling. As if Menendez could close his eyes to smugglers! "He who serves God and he King must not lose even one short hour," he had once informed a merchant who had proffered a fat bribe to hold up sailing time.<sup>4</sup>

The other accusations, breaking rules and exceeding orders, are more credible. His intelligent inconsistency in following orders, though demonstrated many times, was never understood by Menendez' enemies. Yet the explanation was simple: he chose whatever course of action seemed in the best interest of his king and country. Thus, on one assignment he shocked conventional captains by taking a quartet of freighters through corsair-infested French waters without waiting for armed convoy. The wind was right for him and wrong for the French; he saw no reason to wait. But another time he followed orders to the letter. He was assigned to meet a convoy coming through the English Channel. Rather than chance missing them, he stayed at sea through a terrific storm while more prudent men ran for port.

It took moral courage to make the decisions which exterminated over 300 Frenchmen in Florida. Menendez permitted the carnage after the surprise of Ribault's castaways-men who had surrendered hoping for mercy. On the basis of those decisions, he has been often condemned as a hard and unfeeling fanatic. Yet, for his day and time, the course he chose was possibly the only one. It was a harsh age. True, a few of his own people thought him cruel, but others praised him as a good captain. In the mind of Philip II, there was no question. "We believe you have done this with full justification and prudence," he wrote, "and hold ourselves well served thereby."<sup>5</sup>

Naturally the French court professed outrage, choosing to overlook Ribault's strike at St. Augustine, a maneuver which had

4. [Menendez] diciendo publicamente que no saua nadie lo que era perder vna ora de tiempo y seruir a Dios y a su Rey. . . . " Testimony of Graviel Justiano, *ibid.*, II, 621.

5. Philip wrote: "creemos que lo habreis echo con toda justificacion y prudencia, y Nos tenemos dello por muy servido." Crown to Menendez, May 12, 1566, *ibid.*, II, 363.

almost reversed the roles of Frenchman and Spaniard. France was, of course, Spain's traditional rival. French corsairs had taught Menendez how to fight on the sea, using bitter experience as the textbook. He came to surpass his teachers, and in those early years made his living by hunting the sea ruffians and smugglers. There was no closed season on them, and the crown supplied the hunting license. The license was valid in Florida, too. Philip had said: *If there be settlers or corsairs of other nations not subject to us, drive them out the best way you can.*<sup>6</sup> The military objective was to destroy French capability in Florida. Since the storm had deprived the French of transportation, the only way to drive them out of Florida was to send them into eternity.

The morality of fanaticism was not a major influence in the decision Menendez made. The French Protestants were killed not for their religion, but because they were an overwhelming physical threat, not alone to Menendez and the settlers at St. Augustine, but to Spain's commerce and sovereignty. True, the captives at Matanzas were given a chance to disavow their "new religion." But this was hardly more than a gesture, made at the behest of the Spanish chaplain. The women and children at Fort Caroline had been spared without regard to their religion, as were also the men at the wreck of Ribault's *Trinite*. Menendez took them in, despite the risk of spiritual contamination to his own people - a risk that, as a sort of public welfare officer, he was bound to abhor.

On the other hand, he showed deep concern for the spiritual welfare of those around him. Such concern was no mere matter of lip service to the Church. Neither was it a burning fanaticism which sought the death of all infidels and heretics. It was (as best we can judge) a simple, direct faith in God; and with it, certainty that Menendez was God's instrument. This faith, alive and strong, was a tremendous factor in Menendez' plans and decisions and actions. In his master plan for the settlement and development of Florida, pastoral care was of course provided for the colonists and soldiers, and it was deemed no less needful to take Christianity to others.

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6. The contract with Menendez read: "si ay en la dicha costa o tierra algunos pobladores cossarios o otras qualesquier naciones no sujetos a Nos . . . procurareis de los hechar por las mejores vias que pudieredes . . ." Agreement with Menendez for conquest and colonization of Florida, *ibid.*, II, 417.

This was a responsibility Menendez accepted - nay, welcomed - not in lukewarm fashion, but as a personal matter to be handled with zeal. For instance: he set out for Havana to deliver some of the French captives. A gale almost foundered them, and when at last they set foot ashore, the whole company knelt in prayers of thanksgiving.

Menendez brought the French Protestants together, repeated his pledge to send them back to France, and then exhorted them to return to the Catholic faith. "I say this to you," he told them earnestly, "because I want your souls to be saved."<sup>7</sup> His words caused some to weep and to beat their breasts, the records indicate; others held steadfastly to their Huguenot doctrine.

Again, we find him discoursing with the Calusa Indians at some length on Christian belief. He told them about God, whom all creatures must worship and obey, and of heaven and the joyful life therein. He also described a warlike, unprincipled cacique called the Devil and of his abode, with its extremes of heat and cold, where the disobedient endured eternal torment. The Indian cacique seemed rather to enjoy his harangue. "I have noticed," he said, "from your customs, music, and victuals, that your precepts are better than mine, and I wish to embrace them myself."<sup>8</sup>

This was a scene repeated many times. Menendez believed that relations with the Indians must be founded upon the principle of a militant Church bringing the Gospel to people who, without it, were condemned. In his view, communication between Christian and potential Christian had to be kept open, regardless of obstacles. Being sure that man is God's agent for the spread of the Faith, he could accept the Princess Antonia in an Indian marriage, despite his existing marriage to Ana Maria de Solis, because the arrangement promised eventually to save many Indian souls. He agreed to the marriage, believing at the same time he must endure punishment for this sin; yet if in God's plan one man's suffering in eternity was necessary for the salvation of so many, then he was willing to be that man.<sup>9</sup>

7. "[Menendez] aquello les decia por desear que se salvarsen." Meras manuscript, *ibid.*, I, 138.

8. "[Carlos] respondio que por que habia conocido en el modo de los espanoles, en su musica y en sus manjares, ser mejor su ley, la queria abrazar. . . ." *Ibid.*, I, 165.

9. This very Spanish (and therefore credible) view was set forth by James Branch Cabell in *The First Gentleman of America* (New York, 1942).

In contrast to his harsh judgment upon the French at Fort Caroline, these things suggest Menendez' warm regard for humanity, which is a common mark of leadership. The strong leadership qualities which evidenced throughout his life were based to a surprising degree on action-physical action. Consider the vast distances of the sixteenth century, and his mobility is amazing. With such celerity does he move from place to place that it is difficult to keep the narrative straight. There was not, however, any confusion in his mind; his travels invariably had purpose.

In that age of derring-do, when a show of courage was to be expected from one's leader, Menendez went far beyond this to set high standards of physical prowess and stamina. His exhausting four-day march through the storm to Fort Caroline at the head of his men, and his readiness to return to St. Augustine the day after the victory, is an example. Another is the pace he set for his comrades on the long trek to the Ays country. They would start at two in the morning and walk until daylight, rest two hours, walk until eleven, rest two more hours, then walk until sunset, covering about twenty-five miles a day. As usual, Menendez headed the troop. When beaches narrowed and the sand deepened, the column stretched longer and longer. Two of the young men, it was said, died of exhaustion rather than confess they could not keep up with their forty-six-year-old leader. A day's rations were a half-pound of hardtack and water where you could find it. During the rest periods, men foraged through dunes and brush, harvesting the heart-leaves of the cabbage palm and searching for anything else that was edible. (How strange, at the end of the long journey, to be greeted by a kiss upon the lips from an Indian cacique!)

Crossing the Florida Straits to Havana in an open boat, Menendez demonstrated prowess of still another sort. A gale wind made up huge following seas that raced from poop to prow and threatened every moment to swamp them. If the craft yawed, she would be buried under tons of water from the next roller. It took an expert steersman to keep her stern to the wind, and none of the crewmen had the skill for it. Menendez shouldered aside the frightened man at the tiller and stayed at the post all night. Toward morning he called over one of the French prisoners-a man with the manner of a born sailor-and let him prove himself. Between the two of them, they outlasted the gale.

In general, he was a good judge of men. The records make it



clear that dozens of stalwarts gave him their fealty and stood ready to die in his service. Others were less than loyal, in spite of his best efforts to win them. An example is the Florida mutiny of 1566. Menendez, having returned from Havana to St. Augustine, learned that a shipload of deserters was about to sail from the St. Johns River. At once he sent a conciliatory note: "If I had been with you we would have left this country before now. I don't blame you for deciding to leave when you had no food. However, now there is plenty, and it would be treasonous to abandon the King's forts."<sup>10</sup> Thirty-five of the rebels decided to go back, but the others argued that they did not know how to plow, and Florida was good for nothing else. They stripped the thirty-five and set them ashore. Indian arrows killed the poor naked creatures before they could reach the fort.

Mutiny was a fact of life amid the grinding hardships and hazards of the frontier. Menendez was realistic about it. "We do not know these new captains and their men very well," he said to his lieutenant. "Since so many of them refused to obey orders, it's necessary to overlook what can't be helped. We are faced with doing what *can* be done, rather than what *should* be done."<sup>11</sup>

People, unable to perceive the vision of their leader, were his great failures. But people were also his triumph. "You've shown good judgment," or "You acted like a good captain," he would say, and it was an accolade eagerly received.<sup>12</sup> There were those who followed him unto death, kinsmen and friends such as Juan Menendez and Martin Ochoa. Menendez felt the losses keenly. Yet a leader must look forward, not back. "I am very sorry," he said. "But in this work, death and hardship and danger cannot be avoided. May God forgive these brave soldiers."<sup>13</sup>

10. Menendez wrote: "si con ellos estuviera, se hubiera antes salido de la tierra . . . e que ninguna culpa les daba en haberse amotinado para se salir de la tierra, cuando no tenian comida; mas entonces que habia harta, que era gran traicion la que harian a S. M., desamparandole sus dos fuertes. . . ." Meras manuscript, Ruidiaz. *La Florida*, I, 179.

11. "[Menendez] dixole que, pues no noscician aquellos capitanes ni soldados, e que muchos dellos venian desobedientes, que era menester pasar por cosas, e hacer lo que pudiesen, e no lo que quidiesen. . . ." *Ibid.*, 264.

12. "[Menendez] agradecio mucho al Maestre de Campo lo bien con que se habia gobernado e que lo habia hecho como muy buen capitán . . ." *Ibid.*, 243.

13. "En semejantes empresas no se pueden excusar estas muertes, trabaxos e peligros: Nuestro Señor los perdone, que cierto mucho lo siento." *Ibid.*, 239-40.

Menendez letters demonstrate his talent to express thoughts clearly and well. Perhaps, since they were dictated to a secretary, they also give a hint of the way he talked. Despite the interminable sentences common to prose writing of the period, this excerpt from his report of September 11, 1565, is a straightforward account, with complete mastery of detail: "We sailed along the coast, looking for the French harbor, as far as the 29th degree (for such was the story I had, that the Frenchmen were between the 28th and 29th degrees). Not finding them, we went on as far as 29<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> degrees; and then, seeing fires on the coast, on September 2, I sent a captain ashore with 20 soldiers to try to talk with the Indians, so they might give us news of this harbor. And so this captain came up with them and spoke to them; and by signs they told him the harbor was farther on, in higher latitude, towards the north. Since he returned the same day with this answer, I decided to go ashore myself the next morning to see these Indians (for they seemed a noble race), and I took some things to barter. They were well pleased with me, assuring me that the harbor was farther on; and so we went to seek it. . . ." <sup>14</sup>

Menendez was a persuasive leader. In the black hour just before dawn, near the end of the long march on Fort Caroline, he told his captains, "All this night I have prayed for favor and for guidance in what we must do. I believe you have done the same. We have no food nor ammunition. Our men are dog-tired and discouraged. What shall we do?" Some spoke what was in the minds of the most: Why talk about anything except going back to St. Augustine? "Yes," said Menendez, "but for the love of God listen to my plan. Up to now you have followed my advice. Now I want to follow yours."

14. Menendez wrote: "fuymos navegando al luengo de la costa, buscando este Puerto, hasta los veintinueve grados, que era la relacion que tenia, que los franceses estavan de veintiocho para veintinueve grados; y no los hallando, corrimos hasta los veintinueve grados y medio, y abiendo visto fuegos en tierra de la costa de la mar a dos de Septiembre, mande a un Capitan saltar en tierra con veynte soldados a procurar tomar lengua de los yndios para que nos diesen noticia deste puerto; y ansi el Capitan que fue se junto con ellos y les hablo, y por senas le dixeron que el puerto estava adelante en mas altura a la parte del Norte; y abiendo buuelto el mismo dia con esta respuesta, acorde, otro dia de manana, de yr en tierra a verme con estos yndios porque parecia ser gente noble, y lleveles algunas cosas de rescate. Holgaronse mucho conmigo, y certifique me dellos estar el puerto adelante; y ansi lo fuymos a buscar. . . ." Menendez to the Crown, Sept. 11, 1565, *ibid.*, II, 75-76.

He started with a question: "And are you sure these woods are close to the French fort?" "Certainly," they assured him. "Well then," said he, "it seems to me we ought to go and try our luck, the way we agreed on it. Even if we can't take the fort, we can send the trumpeter to demand surrender. For this we don't need dry powder. And what if the French learn you've gone without paying them a visit? They'll call us cowards!"<sup>15</sup> Of course the Spaniards decided to go on; and an hour later Menendez found the words for the battle cry that sent these bone-weary men plunging into an irresistible attack on the fort.

In great measure, leadership consists of that collection of intangibles called personality. Physical appearance is part of it, and so are the mannerisms and attitudes one acquires in the process of maturing. As rough and ready as he was on a campaign, it is certain that Menendez knew the ways of a gentleman. The chivalry that impelled him to rescue the bride from the rough hands of the French pirates was learned, perhaps, in the courts of Spain and England, where he was no stranger; and certain of the graces common to court life had great appeal for him. Fond of music, he kept a permanent staff of musicians who traveled with him; he spared the lives of French musicians who fell into his hands.

The records describe a concert Menendez put on for the Calusa Indians, with nine instrumentalists (two each of fifers, drummers, and trumpeters, and a psalterist, harpist, and fiddler), a singing and dancing dwarf, and a half dozen gentlemen who sang in ensemble. In turn, Menendez was intrigued by the aborigi-

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15. The adelantado told them: "toda esta noche he suplicado a Nuestro Senor . . . nos favorezca y encamine en lo que hubieremos de hacer, y así creo lo habreis vosotros . . . tratemos que sera bueno que hagamos, conforme al punto en que estamos y sin municiones ni comida, y la gente muy cansada, perdida y desmayada.

Respondieronle algunos que . . . volviesen a San Agustin . . . y que tratar otra cosa parecia temeridad.

El Adelantado aprobo esto y les dixo: Senores, por amor de Dios, que me oigais una razon . . . hasta aqui siempre habeis tomado mi parecer y consejo, y agora . . . quiero tomar el vuestro. . . .

**Entonces les dixo: Señores, ¿estais satisfechos que el bosque está muy cerca del fuerte?**

Respondieron que si.

Dixoles: Pues pareceme que debemos de ir a probar nuestra ventura, como esta acordado; . . . cuando el fuerte no podamos ganar . . . les invitamos la trompeta . . . e para esto poca falta nos a de hacer la polvora . . . cuando por la manana nos retiremos, si somos descubiertos, los enemigos . . . nos ternan por cobardes. . . . "

Meras manuscript, *ibid.*, I, 91-2.

nal entertainers-an antiphonal-like chorus of young girls and the gyratory dancers inspired by their music. The affair took place in the large and crowded communal house where Menendez was seated on a central dais beside Cacique Carlos and a female whom the Spaniards thought was the chief's wife. This exchange of culture is one of the most entertaining anecdotes in the Menendez biography.

Menendez, who had an ear for speech as well as music, had provided himself with a written list of polite words and phrases in the native tongue, to be used in presenting gifts to Carlos' wife and sister. Turning to the woman on the dais, who was naked as Eve with the figleaf (for this one too had a little covering in front), he spoke in her own language the speech he had composed for the edification of the cacique's wife. The Indian audience, at first amazed, began to show amusement. The lady lowered her eyes modestly. He was quite pleased with his little conceit, until the interpreter said, "That's *not* Carlos' wife, but his sister. She is the one he gives you for a wife."<sup>16</sup>

Momentarily chagrined, Menendez quickly recovered. He rose and took Antonia by the hand, and led her to a seat between Carlos and himself. Then he began all over again, this time using the proper speech, which pleased the whole assemblage. Menendez then asked Carlos to send for his wife. The entrance of this young woman made an unforgettable impression on the Spaniards, for indeed she was very beautiful, walking slowly into the great house, looking as a queen should at the people around her. She wore a handsome collar of pearls and stones - and little else, except a necklace of golden beads over her breasts.

Menendez rose to take her hand, and seated her between Carlos and Antonia. Again he referred to his paper, which gave him the words to tell her that she was very beautiful. At this, she looked at her husband and blushed very prettily. Carlos frowned and ordered her to go, but Menendez resorted to the interpreter and persuaded Carlos to let her stay, and sent at once for the gifts he had brought. First, there was a chemise for each of the two women. When these white garments covered the dark-skinned ladies, green gowns were produced and draped upon them. Then came beads, and gifts of scissors, knives, bells, and last of all,

16. Dixo "que aquella no era su mujer, que era su hermana, la que le habia dado por mujer al Adelantado." *Ibid.*, 160-61.

mirrors. The audience was enchanted with the display and the demonstration; and the look on the faces of the two as they peered into the shiny metal of the mirrors brought a roar of laughter.

The gift-making was not over. Carlos received a garment, as well as a pair of hatchets and a machete, and little presents were given to the head men and women in the gathering. Carlos was unhappy no longer. He ordered the food brought in-varieties of roasted or boiled fish, and oysters, raw, boiled or roasted. To this simple fare, the Spaniards added the touch of another civilization, a quantity of hardtack which was divided among the head Indians. For the four people on the dais, a table was set up, spread with a cloth, and furnished with napkins. Bottles of wine and honey were put on the table, together with sweetmeats and quince preserves. Menendez turned host. He asked for several small pottery bowls, and in these the honey and sweets were served. Carlos and his wife ate from a single bowl, but if Antonia expected Menendez to share hers, she was mistaken; he chose to eat from his own.

This gay occasion throws considerable light on the personality of the Spanish leader. He had no qualms about tackling a new language. (He seems also to have been proficient in French, for once he traveled across France disguised as a Frenchman; and the easy friendship he enjoyed with the English indicates some facility in their language.) More important, in the embarrassing case of mistaken identity, he could laugh at himself and make a bold, quick recovery.

With the ladies, Menendez chose the role of courtly knight-in-armor (rather than "knight-in-arms"). Yet the courtesy he wore as a mantle seems more substantial than graceful mannerisms learned at court. Otherwise he might have ignored the arrival of the fourteen female colonists at St. Augustine in 1566. The women gathered to meet him and were pleased with his words of welcome. To Indian headmen he was no less courteous, although he could instantly cast off the mantle and match their crudities with threats. "If you harm my hostages," he told the cacique of Guale, "you and all your people shall have your heads cut off."<sup>17</sup>

17. "[El Adelantado] dixo luego al cacique que tratase bien a sus cristianos, e que si les hacia mal, que a el e a toda su gente los mandaria cortar la cabeza. . . ." *Ibid.*, 199.

Ordinarily, however, he was much more subtle, even guileful. In reply to Ribault's offer of ransom, he said: *I would hate to lose such a large ransom. I need it to help colonize this country and spread the Holy Gospel.*<sup>18</sup> This was not an acceptance of the offer, yet Ribault would interpret it so, and Menendez knew it. What man (except himself) would refuse 200,000 ducats! Possibly he considered this indirection necessary to bring the matter to a conclusion, inasmuch as the French were having a painful time of it, debating whether to surrender or turn back to the wilderness. In warfare, the word is no less a weapon than the sword; and he and Ribault were at war, whether or not it was openly sanctioned by their sovereigns at home. Whatever the reason, this is one of several recorded instances where Menendez used guile to gain the objective. Some months later, he decoyed a French sodomite (who had formed an attachment with the cacique's son) into leaving Guale, by having him told that Captain De las Alas up the coast would pay well for an interpreter. The man made the trip posthaste, only to find his neck in the garrote.

Menendez sometimes bent the truth to his own ends. The Panuco River, he informed the king, was really part of Florida—probably only eighty leagues from the coast of South Carolina. Officials in Mexico pointed out that the distance was at least 450 leagues as the crow flies, but Philip's cedula brushed aside the facts and extended Menendez' Florida grant "eighty leagues" west to the Panuco. Such was his regard for this loyal vassal.

Unfortunately, we do not have the records that depict Menendez as husband and father. He was a sailor, and home but seldom. The fruits of marriage to Ana Maria de Solis were a son and two daughters. The son, a rising young naval officer, was lost in a hurricane, and Menendez' painstaking search of the Florida coast in the hope of finding him shows a father's grief and concern. Likewise, correspondence relating to his elder daughter suggests an affectionate relationship as well as confident reliance upon her, as she matured, to handle family affairs.

Pedro Menendez was fifty-five when he died in September 1574. From lowly naval apprentice, he had risen to captain-gen-

18. "Respondiolo el Adelantado: - Mucho me pesa si perdiese tan buena talla e presa, que harta necesidad tengo dese socorro, para ayuda de la conquista e poblacion desta tierra: en nombre de mi Rey, es a mi cargo plantar en ella el Santo Evangelio." *Ibid.*, 124.

eral of Spain's mightiest fleet. Among numerous honors, he bore the title of *Adelantado* of Florida; and after others had failed, he succeeded in planting the first permanent colony in 1565, in the land which has since become the United States. Zeal in the crown's service seems to have been his driving ambition. And perhaps because he was certain that serving his king and serving God were one and the same thing, he saw his star more clearly than most men see theirs.