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THE CAPTIVES OF FLORIDA

by EUGENE LYON*

IN SEPTEMBER 1565, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés of Spain sought out and attacked the Huguenot French in their Florida settlement. When his victory was won, a number of men, women, and children had become captives of the Spanish, while at least two Spaniards were prisoners in the hands of the French. Some of these people possessed noble blood; most were common sailors and soldiers. A few gained a degree of notoriety from their experiences— at least one of the captives was received at the court of Philip II of Spain, while another appeared before the Queen Mother of France. While some lived to return to their native lands, for many their capture led only to hard labor, prolonged imprisonment, or death. Why had these men, women, and children become prisoners?

A long and bitter rivalry between the houses of Hapsburg and Valois had continued as the sixteenth century passed. Over these same years, both royal houses had fostered the exploration of the North American mainland. The voyages of Verazano and Cartier and unnumbered visits by Norman and Breton fishermen encouraged the French to claim rights in the land they called *Terre des Bretons*, New France, or *Françiscane*.

For their part, the Spanish kings traced their title to the mainland to the donations of Pope Alexander VI and the consequent Tordesillas agreements. Operating within these authorizations, the Crown of Castile proceeded to license and send a long series of explorers and *adelantados* to the land they named Florida. Over a period of more than fifty years, none of these— Ponce de León, the Ayllóns, Narváez, De Soto, De Luna, Villaña— succeeded in making a permanent settlement. Their formal acts of taking possession of the land, however, had provided the desired seal of legality.¹ Any intruders in Castile's Indies domains, now extended to Florida, were guilty of trespass.

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1. Summary of the Spanish claims and explorations is in the *consultas* of the Council of the Indies of May 5, 1565, Archivo General de Indias (hereinafter referred to A.G.I.) *Indiferente General 738, Ramo 7*. A portion of this material is to be found in the Stetson Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

For their part, the kings of France had not accepted any such pat sharing-out of the hemispheres. With tongue in cheek, Francis I asked to see the will of Adam so that he might learn about this division of the world.² As war followed war in Europe, the waters of the New World were increasingly frequented by French vessels. These "corsairs," English as well as French, began to assume the proportions of a major threat to the Spanish.³ By the 1550s fleets sailing on more-or-less regular schedules exchanged the products of Spain for the mineral and agricultural wealth of the Indies; their route took them through the Bahama Channel, past the Florida peninsula and the southeastern mainland. The sack of Havana by Jacques Sore and the continual presence of foreign vessels kept the Spanish in a state of perpetual alarm. By 1559, a number of Frenchmen had been captured in the Indies and returned as prisoners to Seville. Usually these men had been formally exiled from Spain's possessions, and had often come condemned to long terms of service in the Mediterranean galleys. In 1562, Philip II of Spain, deeply concerned about his vital maritime lifeline, issued orders to Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, captain-general of his Indies fleets:

We are informed that in the Indies sailing routes go some French, English and Scotch corsair ships, seeking to steal what comes and goes from there; this is a disservice to God our Lord, to us, and is against the peace agreed upon between us and the princes of those kingdoms. Because these corsairs should, by rights, be hung as peace-breakers and robbers and violators of the orders of their own lords and rulers, I order you, if you capture any of the said corsairs, to proceed against them and punish them in conformity with justice, executing it then upon the sea with all rigor: in order that you might do this, we give you full powers.⁴

2. Luis Garcia Arias discusses this statement in "Una frase famosa en las relaciones marítimas hispano-franceses del siglo XVI," *Cuadernos de Historia Diplomática*, Tomo III (Madrid, 1954-1956), 131-62.
3. In announcing the Peace of Cateau-Cambresis in 1559, Philip II cautioned his officials in the Indies: "See that the said peace is observed on our part and because, as you know, between peace and war we are accustomed to having corsairs which go to rob against the will of their prince, it is well that in this time the ships which come from those parts do not come unprepared." *Sobrecedula*, Valladolid, May 23, 1559,-A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 427, Book of 1543-1601.
4. "Instructions to General Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, 1562," A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 415. It is also cited as Crown to Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, January 23, 1562, in Eugenio Ruidíaz y Caravía, *La Florida*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1902), II, 407. (Hereinafter referred to as Ruidíaz, *La*

In that same year a direct French challenge was laid down to the Spanish by Jean Ribault's founding of a colony at Port Royal on the present-day South Carolina coast. Taking possession of the area for France, Ribault erected a white marble column bearing the royal arms to symbolize this possession. When he sailed, he left a small garrison behind.

Through his ambassador in Paris, Philip learned of the settlement at Port Royal. He immediately asked Menéndez and his governor at Havana to investigate this incursion of the French and to expel them, if possible, from his dominions.⁵ In May 1564, Manrique de Rojas was sent north from Cuba for this purpose, but when he arrived at Port Royal he found that the Frenchmen were gone. After waiting fourteen months for a relief vessel, they had deserted the colony, sailing east in a small ship they had built. A sixteen-year-old boy, Guillaume Rouffi, had refused to leave, and he was captured by Rojas and returned to Havana along with Ribault's column.⁶

The Spanish had scarcely cleared Florida waters when the second French expedition, 300 men in three ships commanded by Rene de Laudonnière, arrived at the mouth of the River May—the present St. Johns. He named the triangular form which he constructed, Caroline, in honor of King Charles IX. The French established relations with the nearest Indian groupings and began to explore the immediate area and the upper reaches of the St. Johns River. Once their supplies were exhausted, however, the settlers apparently were unable to support themselves from the land. There was, moreover, a limit to what they could get from the Indians. In his *Histoire Notable*, Laudonnière describes the sufferings and privations of the colony, and he recounts the mutiny of a few of his officers and men and their

Florida.) See also the *Jegajos* entitled "French Corsairs, 1523-1596," A.G.I. *Patronato* 267, and "English Corsairs, 1528-1596," A.G.I. *Patronato* 265, as well as the citations below in A.G.I. *Justicia* 212. There are many references to corsairs in sixteenth-century Spanish archival documents.

5. Crown to Diego de Mazariegos, February 13, 1563; Crown to Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, February 13, 1563; A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 427, Book of 1543-1601. Menéndez, engrossed in the return of the 1563 combined fleets, would scarcely have had time to act upon this order, which he undoubtedly had received when he reached Havana.
6. Report on the "French who went to populate Florida," and report of Manrique de Rojas, Havana, July 9, 1564, A.G.I. *Santo Domingo* 99. For details of the voyage of the Port Royal French to La Coruña, see "Information of Governor Blas de Merlo," La Vega, Jamaica, March 26, 1565, A.G.I. *Justicia* 212.

seizure of some of his vessels. By December 1564, three small ships carrying about seventy men were engaged in land and sea raiding in the Spanish Caribbean. They captured five ships, a number of Spaniards, and killed several, including one Antón Nuñez, secretary of the *audefiencia* of Santo Domingo. Only one small vessel, however, made its way back to Fort Caroline. Thirty-two Frenchmen were captured in Jamaica, and six had been taken in an abortive attempt to forage for supplies at Cagay, Hispaniola. The governor of Cuba had trapped another group fourteen leagues from Havana and captured eleven.⁷

While these events were taking place in the Indies, Philip II and his councils had determined to send another *adelantado* to attempt again to make a settlement on the American mainland. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés was the obvious choice for this vital task. Most of his life had been spent on the seas, and much of this time he had been fighting the French. His keen sense of strategy and tactics and his fine seamanship and loyalty to the Crown had led to royal appointments to posts of great responsibility in the Indies fleets and to voyages to England and Flanders. Menéndez also had the ability to raise a force of ships and men through his own resources and those of his many relatives and friends. This was an important consideration at a time when Crown revenues were short because of the many pressing commitments on the continent, in the Mediterranean, and in the Indies. On March 20, 1565, formal agreement was made with Menéndez for the conquest and population of Florida, to be executed at his own expense.⁸

7. See Rene de Laudonnière, "L'Histoire notable de la Floride." in Paul Gaffarel, *Histoire de la Floride Française* (Paris, 1875). The first part of Governor Merlo's "Information," a third-person description of the 1562 and 1564 French expeditions, gives what is apparently the prisoners' own story of the raiding journeys. Spanish eyewitnesses then outlined events which took place in Hispaniola, Cuba, and Jamaica. Unfortunately, apart from these prisoner narratives or interrogations, no first-hand French reports of Laudonnière's men's corsairing expeditions exist. Paul Gaffarel depends heavily upon the Le Moynes narrative, which on this point was a second-hand account. It seems to confuse the Hispaniola and Cuba landings of the various parties from Fort Caroline. See also Crown to Casa, May 22, 1565, A.G.I. *Contratación* 5,167, Book III.
8. The only out-of-pocket expense to the Crown was to be a 15,000-ducat *merced* if Menéndez sailed before the end of May. The Menéndez *asiento* and *capitulaciones* may be found in several places in the Archive of the Indies: A.G.I. *Patronato* 19, No. I, *Ramo* 15; *Patronato* 257, No. 3, *Ramo* 3; *Contratación* 3,309, 1^o, "Asientos pertenecientes a la Florida": it is summarized in *Contaduría* 941, fol. 6. It has also been reprinted in

Now information began to arrive from the Indies which would shortly give added urgency to the Spanish effort and radically change its character. News of Laudonnière's settlement on the St. Johns had reached Spain late in March with the arrival of a ship from Cuba. The governor described his capture of the French from Florida, and enclosed copies of the prisoner interrogations, which provided detailed information about Laudonnière's dispositions. Even better, he also sent along three of the captives.⁹

Additional information came from Don Francisco de Alava, the Spanish ambassador in Paris, who maintained an efficient network of spies and informers at the French court and in the port cities of France.¹⁰ From Don Francisco, Pedro Menéndez, and other sources, it was learned early in May that the French were preparing to dispatch a large fleet to Florida.¹¹

Philip was now certain that an armed colony of the political and religious enemy had been implanted in the territorial domain of the Crown of Castile, dangerously near the Bahama Channel fleet lifeline. Its ships had engaged in acts of piracy in open defiance of Spanish law. Now, the enemy was to be strengthened by a substantial reinforcement. Decisions were not long in coming. Details of Fort Caroline's location and its defenses, together with the three prisoners brought from Cuba, were turned over to Pedro Menéndez. In the face of the enlarged threat of the French, plans for Florida were altered significantly; now troops, guns, and supplies were to go at the king's expense,

Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, II, 415-27.

9. *Casa* to Crown, March 26, 1565, A.G.I. *Contratación* 5,167, Book III. Sent along with the governor's report in the ship *Vera Cruz* was the prisoner interrogation found in A.G.I. *Patronato* 267, No. 1, *Ramo* 37, and dated at Havana, December 22, 1564. Guillaume Rouffi had acted as interpreter during the questioning. The Cuba governor also sent a follow-up letter: Diego de Mazarregos to Crown, April 7, 1565, A.G.I. *Santo Domingo* 115. A sketch of Fort Caroline accompanied the letter. News of the actions of the governor of Jamaica apparently did not reach Spain before Menéndez sailed; more definite news of this came September 5—see Council of the Indies to Crown, October 2, 1565, A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 1,218. Word of the Huguenots' raids in Santo Domingo had come, however, by the end of May; Crown and Council of the Indies to *Casa*, May 22, 1565, A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 1,966.
10. The correspondence between Alava and Philip II is in *Archivo Documental Español* (Madrid, 1954), Tomo VIII.
11. See *consulta*, Council of the Indies, Madrid, May 12, 1565, A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 738, *Ramo* 7, No. 74. The report by Pedro Menéndez that sixteen ships and 2,000 men were to go to Florida was discounted somewhat by Philip II (see marginal notes).

in addition to those furnished by Pedro Menéndez. Added support was also to be provided in the Indies.¹²

What was the nature of the French reinforcement which so alarmed the Spanish? Gaspard de Coligny, the Huguenot admiral of France, had commissioned Jean Ribault, newly freed from his English imprisonment, to command the fleet. His flagship *Trinité* led the way as seven ships and approximately 1,000 men sailed from Le Havre and Dieppe late in May 1565. Menéndez's main contingent of ten ships and, 1,000 men left Cádiz late in June.

The French ships arrived on the Florida east coast on August 14. They watered "at a little river" and traded with the Indians for silver recovered from wrecked vessels. There they met a Spaniard who had himself been shipwrecked in the area twenty years before.¹³ Bringing him along, the French sailed northward, reaching the mouth of the St. Johns on August 28. The three smallest vessels entered the river, while the four larger ships remained anchored outside the bar. The long process of unloading supplies for the fort and the colony began.

In the meantime, Pedro Menéndez had made a stormy passage to Puerto Rico, arriving there August 8. Even though his ships had been battered by high winds, he was determined to press on to Florida without waiting for his vessels from Asturias to arrive and without calling at Santo Domingo or Havana to pick up reinforcements. With a reduced force of five ships and 800 men, he left San Juan, knowing that he was in a race with Ribault's relief fleet. If he could arrive first at Fort Caroline, victory was possible. Once reinforcements arrived there, the issue might be in doubt.¹⁴

Menéndez sighted Cape Canaveral on August 25, and then turned north to the supposed latitude of the French settlement. His battle plan was simple. He had learned from the prisoners

12. Royal *cedulas* to the *Casa*, May 9, 15, 1565; and Council of the Indies to *Casa*, May 22, 26, 1565; Council of the Indies to Pedro de las Roelas, May 22, 1565; all from A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 1,966. The reactions of the *Casa* to these orders are seen in *Casa* to Crown, Seville, May 22, 28, 1565, A.G.I. *Contratación* 5,167, Book III.

13. Nicholas Le Challeux, "Histoire Memorable du demier voyage en Floride," in Gaffarel, *Histoire de la Floride Francaise*, 460, describes the arrival in Florida and the incident of the captive of the Indians. It is possible that this man was Pedro de Bustinçuri.

14. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to Crown, August 13, 1565, A.G.I. *Santo Domingo* 224; Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, II, 70-74.

that Fort Caroline was located at some little distance up the St. Johns River. Thus, if he could seize the river mouth, he would bottle up the defenders. Events, however, forced a change of plan. When the Spanish approached the St. Johns inlet on September 4, they discovered the four French ships anchored there. Ribault had won the race.¹⁶

Menéndez boldly sailed up to the moored French craft and dropped his anchor close aboard the *Trinité*. At his hail, the French freely identified themselves—that was all Menéndez needed. He shouted in answer that he was the *adelantado* of the Crown of Castile, sent to eject them by force from their trespass on the domains of Philip II. He then cut his anchor line and led his ships in assault against the enemy. The French also cut or slipped their cables and made good their escape from the heavily laden, storm-damaged Spanish vessels. Taking his fleet south, Menéndez established his own base at St. Augustine on September 6. He planned to fortify himself there until opportunity should arise to meet the French on favorable terms.

After holding council of war, Ribault decided to carry the offensive to the Spanish. He reboarded ship, intending to seek out Menéndez, destroy his ships, and land a force in small craft to erase the Spanish settlement. Ribault left his treasurer, the Sieur de Lys, at Fort Caroline. Laudonnière, who had been ill, was also there, along with the women and children from the fort and fleet, and possibly 180 men.¹⁶ Sailing south with his four largest ships and eight small craft, Ribault caught Menéndez unloading supplies and cannon across the St. Augustine bar. Fortunately for the Spanish, their best ships, the *San Pelayo* and *San Sebastian*, which drew too much water to pass into the harbor, had already been sent away. As it was, Pedro Menéndez narrowly escaped capture, but after he withdrew inside the bar, the French departed.

Now there occurred an event of nature—in which the Spanish

15. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to Crown, September 11, 1565, A.G.I. *Santo Domingo* 231; Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, II, 74-84.

16. By Laudonnière's itemized account, he had a garrison of 105, exclusive of women and children; Laudonnière, "L'Histoire notable," in Gaffarel, *Histoire*, 399. If 132 were killed in the fort, exclusive of women and children, and a number were killed, ransomed, or escaped, one cannot reconcile the figures. Le Moyne asserts that only 150 people were left behind by Ribault in the fort, including women and children. Le Challeux gives the garrison total at 240.

saw the hand of God—which gave Menéndez his dreamed-of opportunity. A severe windstorm, perhaps a September hurricane, began to blow. Superb seamen that he was, Pedro Menéndez could see at once that the threat of Ribault's ships had, for the moment at least, been dispersed by the winds. His enemies were divided, and he sensed that Fort Caroline had been weakened to buttress Ribault's marine striking force. When the Indians near St. Augustine advised that it was possible to reach the French fort overland, he decided to stake virtually his entire force in a concentrated attack. Preceded by axmen and guided by Indians and a French prisoner, the *adelantado* led 500 men out of St. Augustine on September 18, to begin the difficult journey across a land overgrown with trees and shrubs and flooded from the recent storm.¹⁷

At dawn on September 20, the Spanish surprised and overran the outnumbered garrison of Fort Caroline. In the thick of the fighting, Menéndez called out to his captains to spare women and boys under the age of fourteen. Some of the French escaped by rowing or swimming to the three ships the French had left in the river or by fleeing to the woods. Laudonnière had climbed the walls of the stockade, and he was wounded by a Spanish soldier as he disappeared into the forest. An eyewitness described the slaughter of the rest:

They made a pretty butchery of it, except for a small enough number, among which were the deponent, three drummers (one from Dieppe and the other two from Rouen), and four trumpeters (three from Normandy and the other, named Jacques Dulac, from Bordeaux).¹⁸

How many Frenchmen were killed and captured at Fort Caroline? Menéndez says, "we cut the throats of one hundred thirty-two," and ten more who had fled to the woods were captured and killed the next day. Fifty women and children were saved, together with the eight musicians. Gonzalo Solís de Merás added that a number were ransomed from the Indians—perhaps

17. Menéndez describes his strategic decision in a letter to Philip II: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to Crown, October 15, 1565, A.G.I. *Santo Domingo* 231; Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, II, 84-105. The taking of the fort is more fully discussed by Gonzalo Solís de Merás, *Pedro Menéndez de Avilés* transl. by Jeanette T. Connor (DeLand, 1923; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1969), 98. Lyle N. McAlister's introduction gives a view of the historiography of the French-Spanish conflict.

18. "Deposition of Jean Mennin," in Gaffarel, *Histoire*, 445.

ten in all.¹⁰

Several smaller parties of the fugitives, about thirty-five individuals, eluded bands of searching Spaniards and made their way to the French ships in the river. Among these were Laudonnière, the artist Le Moyne, and Le Challeux the carpenter. When Menéndez attacked, three of Ribault's lightest vessels were moored in the river, and several smaller craft were anchored close to the fort. The Spanish sank one of these last by gunfire and captured two as prizes. Jacques Ribault, son of the French commander, was captain of the *Pearl*, which was anchored in the river. Alarmed at the Spanish assault, he moved his little fleet downriver. Once the shaken survivors were safely aboard, it was decided that only the *Pearl* and the *Levrière* were fit for the journey back to France. Three smaller craft were scuttled in the river. When at last they sailed, at least two Spaniards—the man captured on the east coast in August and one other—went along.

In the meantime, Ribault's ships had been caught up in violent winds and tumultuous seas. Desperately, they maneuvered for sea-room, but were finally driven ashore, one after another, along the storm-ravaged beaches. One small vessel escaped the storm, and made its way out of Florida waters.²⁰ Three of the larger ships had become stranded below St. Augustine, while a fourth went aground some seventy-five to ninety miles farther south.²¹ On September 22, men from St. Augustine found a lone French survivor of the earlier wreck of a small reconnaissance craft which had been dispatched a week before to observe Spanish operations. Pedro Menéndez's brother Bartolomé took

19. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to Crown, October 15, 1565. Solís de Merás, *Pedro Menéndez de Avilés*, 106, estimates that twenty were killed in the woods and that seventy women and children were spared.
20. See "Papers relating to various Frenchmen who came prisoners in the fleets and who were captives in the jail of the Contratación of Seville—1571," A.G.I. *Patronato* 267, No. 2. *Ramo* 7. Two prisoners, it is stated, came to New Spain in one of Ribault's ships which weathered the storm.
21. The location of the Ribault shipwrecks and their correlation with the three groups of survivors dealt with by Menéndez poses many problems. Menéndez advised Philip the French had told him three ships of theirs had wrecked twenty to twenty-five leagues south of Matanzas. Ribault's *Trinité*, at that time, was anchored dismasted, five leagues south of Matanzas. Yet it must have been a major French ship which was stranded at Cape Canaveral. Perhaps the balancing factor was the number of smaller vessels which sailed out of the St. Johns River area with Ribault. One of the "three ships" could have been one of these.

a small force south and recovered and re-floated the little vessel, near the inlet soon to be named Matanzas.²²

There shortly appeared at this inlet a straggling band of French seamen, moving up the beaches from their shipwrecks, trying to get back to Fort Caroline. Menéndez, who had returned to St. Augustine, heard of their arrival from the Indians and hastened to the spot with one of his French prisoners who was to act as interpreter. After a short parley, the luckless Frenchmen were ferried across the inlet in small groups, taken behind some sand dunes, and killed. Accounts vary as to the number slain and spared. The expedition's chaplain, Father Grajales, who witnessed the massacre, says 111 were killed, and "ten or twelve" found to be Catholics were spared. Another witness, Solís de Merás, says that eight out of a total of 208 were granted their lives. Menéndez himself mentions saving sixteen: "twelve were Breton seamen they had kidnapped, while four were carpenters and caulkers of whom I had need." While reporting these events to the king, Menéndez was interrupted by the news that a second body of French survivors had just been sighted at the same inlet. After dealing with this group just as ruthlessly as he had with the first, he resumed his letter. "I spared the lives of two young gentlemen about 18 years old," he wrote, "and three others—a drummer, a fifer, and a trumpeter." Solís de Merás puts the figure of those saved at about sixteen out of a total of 150. Among the victims was Jean Ribault himself.²³

The harvest of prisoners was not yet complete. Learning from the Indians that the survivors of one of Ribault's ships had built a fort near their wrecked vessel at Cape Canaveral, Menéndez decided to march south and deal with the Frenchmen. Then he could also carry out an earlier plan to explore the lower coast, and seek the site for a fort to help in the defense of the

22. "Narrative of Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales," in A.G.I. *Patronato* 19; Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, II, 455. This record of the Menéndez expedition, written by its chaplain, a secular priest from Andalucía, has also been translated into English by Edward W. Lawson, "Letters of Menéndez," (typescript mss., St. Augustine, 1955), and Charles E. Bennett, *Laudonnière and Fort Caroline* (Gainesville, 1964), 141-63.

23. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to Crown, October 15, 1565; "Narrative of Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales"; Solís de Merás, *Pedro Menéndez de Avilés*, 115. The French contemporary chroniclers Le Challeux and Le Moyne and the modern French writer Gaffarel used second- or third-hand testimony in their description of events at Matanzas. They can offer no reliable estimates of numbers, and were not aware that there were two distinct groups of Frenchmen killed at Matanzas.

Bahama Channel. While 100 of his men sailed in three small craft, Menéndez led 150 more in an arduous trek southward along the beaches. Early in November 1565, the Spanish came upon a makeshift fort put up by the shipwrecked French. Weakened as they were by hunger and exposure, the survivors could offer little resistance. When one of the earlier French captives, a trumpeter, was sent forward by Menéndez with a promise to spare their lives, most surrendered, but others fled into the woods. According to Solís de Merás, 150 Frenchmen turned themselves over to the Spanish; Menéndez himself estimated their number at between seventy and eighty. On short rations due to their increased numbers, the land party continued south to the Ais inlet, where they rendezvoused with the ships. A garrison of 200 soldiers, together with a number of the French captives, were left in the vicinity, where an ostensibly friendly Indian chief had sworn his fealty to Philip II. Pedro Menéndez, taking fifty of his own men and twenty of the French, set sail to seek supplies in Cuba.

By the end of 1565, between 200 and 320 French men, women, and children had been captured. In point of time, the earliest prisoner taken had been Guillaume Rouffi. After being present at the interrogation of the Havana prisoners in 1564, he had passed into the service of Menéndez and came to Florida, where he served as an interpreter.²⁴

The governor of Havana captured the next group of Frenchmen, the men who had claimed that they had fled the harsh treatment of Rene de Laudonnière and confessed the Catholic faith. Only five of these—Francisco Juan, Alberto Melenes, Miguel Cobin, Juanes de Sigaray, and Martin Joaber—have been identified. In February 1565, some of these men—probably including the first two—were sent to Spain, and they returned to Florida with Pedro Menéndez. On June 25, another five of the same group arrived in Seville, where they were lodged in jail.²⁵

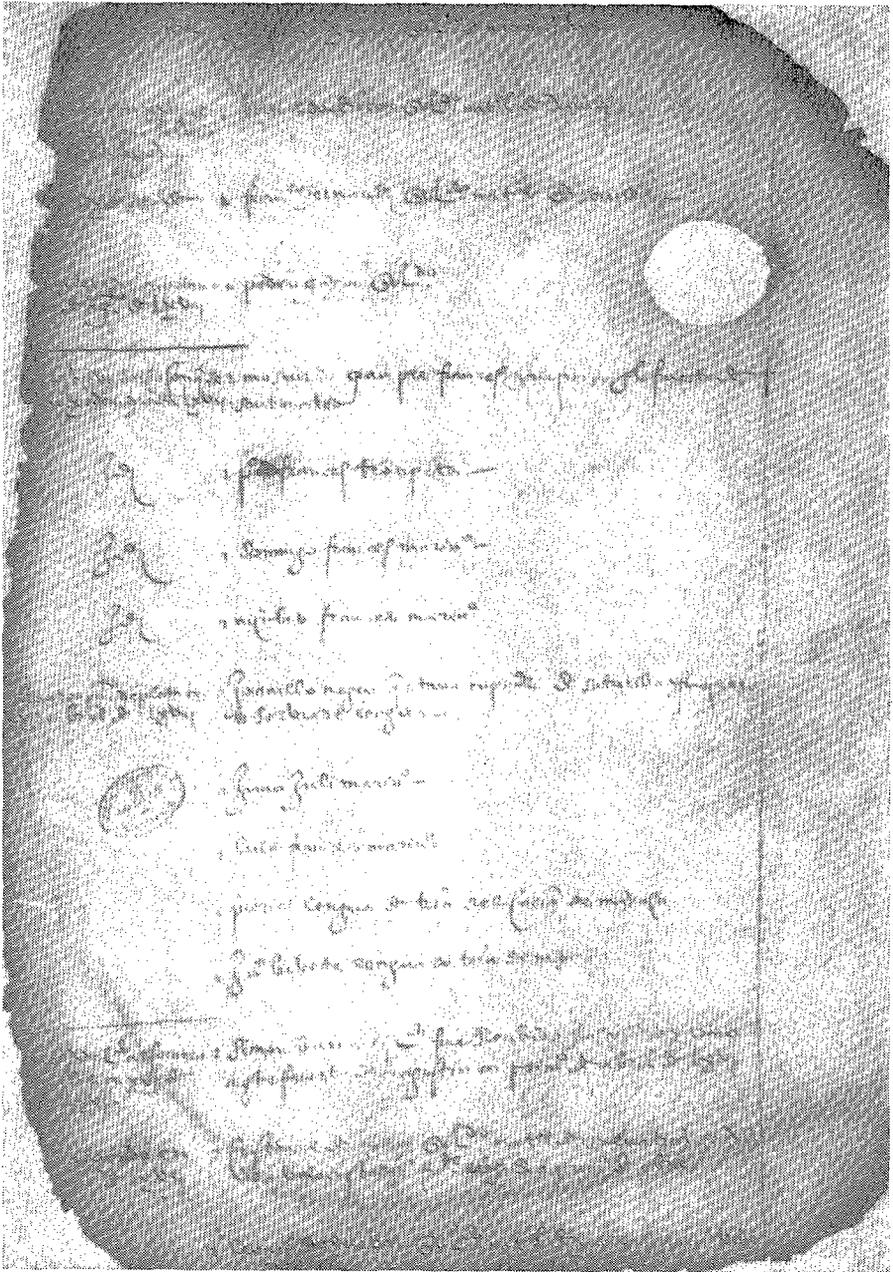
24. Rouffi may have been also sent to Pedro Menéndez from Havana; on March 22, 1565, a royal order had been sent to the Cuba governor asking for "the Frenchman who was in Cuba and familiar with the language and customs of Florida," so that Menéndez could take him along; Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, II, 671. On this date, news of the other French prisoners in Havana had not yet arrived. Rouffi appears on the 1565-1566 ration list A.G.I., in *Contaduría* 941; microfilm, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, reel 1.

25. See fn. 9 for the citation of the interrogation. Two of the three men

Several prisoners had been taken at Cagay as a result of the raids of the two other French ships in Hispaniola. Under torture at La Yaguana, they confessed that they had come from a Huguenot settlement in Florida. One of these men may have been Stefano de Rojomonte.²⁶ A much larger haul of captives had been made on January 24, 1565, when Governor Blas de Merlo took two ships and thirty-two Frenchmen in the harbor of La Vega, Jamaica. After a bearing, some of these prisoners were condemned to service in the Spanish galleys. Shortly after mid-March 1565, they were all put aboard a Portuguese ship bound for Spain. The seamen Miguel de Orange and Juan Mendo were among the Frenchmen on this journey. The ship landed at Manzanilla, Cuba, to load hides for the voyage. A Spanish witness later testified that some of the French escaped, seized another vessel anchored nearby, and sailed away. Left behind at Bayamo were Orange, Mendo, and a few others. According to Orange's own statement, he was allowed ashore freely by the Spanish, while nine of his companions were sent to Spain in two other ships. Orange and Mendo settled down comfortably enough, working as fishermen among the cays and marshes of Cuba's south coast. There they were to remain for more than three years.²⁷

sent to Menéndez may have been "Francisco Juan" and "Alberto de Melenes"—Solés de Merás, *Pedro Menéndez de Avilés*, 92, 98, mentions the French guide, and Mrs. Connor identifies him as Jean François, who had come from Spain with the *adelantado*. A certain "Melenche" made a statement about Florida in Seville at about the time the ship arrived with the prisoners from Cuba; Melenche's Deposition, March 29, 1565, M.S., Direction de Hidrografia. Madrid; in *Colección Navarrete, Tomo 14, Dot. 33*. The transcript of French names into Spanish produced some strange results, which confuse the identification and correlation of the prisoners. Unless, however, a clearly French name was unmistakably assigned to a captive, the name used here is that found in the Spanish records.

26. Several witnesses who had been captured by the French corsairs testified in Jamaica in March 1565: see "Information of Governor Blas de Merlo," A.G.I. *Justicia* 212. The La Guayana incident is described in a letter from Luis de Padilla to Francisco de Vela, July 27, 1565, A.G.I. *Santo Domingo* 71, Stetson Collection. Rojomonte's declaration, apparently made in Cuba on February 28, 1565, is at A.G.I. *Putronato* 19, No. 1, *Ramo* 14.
27. In the *legajo* dealing with Orange and Mendo, A.G.I. *Justicia* 212, are their confessions, Governor Merlo's long "Information" of 1565, and material relating to many other French captives. A discussion about Orange and Mendo and their companions in Jamaica and Cuba is found in "Statement of Captain Francisco Calvillo," Madrid, March 28, 1569, and "Statement of Blas De Merlo," Madrid, March 31, 1569, in the same *legajo*.



Page from a Spanish Florida ration list, 1565-1566. The names of some of the French prisoners appear, including "Mosuir de Gran Pré; Pedro, French trumpeter; Domingo, French sailor; Nicholas, French sailor; Luis, French sailor; Pierres, interpreted of the land of the *Cacique* of Mayaca, and Juan Bivete, interpreter of the land of Mayaca." from A.G.I. *Contaduria* 941. Microfilm in P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida; reel 1.

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In Florida Pedro Menéndez's prisoners posed both opportunities and heavy responsibilities. Noblemen like the Sieur du Lys and Pierre d'Ully, recovered from the Indians, were real prizes of war; their ransom might bring substantial sums from their families. Menéndez began negotiations for d'Ully's ransom, by permitting him to write to the constable of France to whom he was related. Some prisoners were turned over to Spanish captains as their own personal rewards of victory. Others, who possessed special skills or abilities, were attached to Menéndez's command. These included the drummer, Guillermo, a trumpeter, and Francisco de Montbalorte, who knew the language of Saturiba's Indians.

After the events at Matanzas Inlet, some two dozen more prisoners had been added. When a fire destroyed the storehouse at Fort Caroline, now re-named San Mateo, supply problems became critical, and Menéndez arranged to have the women and children removed to the island Indies on the first available ship.²⁸

Pedro Menéndez took along some twenty of the French prisoners captured at Cape Canaveral on his voyage to Cuba in November 1565. Solís de Merás pictures it as an epic small-boat journey, in which Ribault's former chief pilot helped the *adelantado* man the tiller all through the stormy night. When the little vessel safely reached port, so the story goes, Menéndez offered those who would renounce heresy a safe return to France. Those who accepted the offer were then seated with Menéndez's own men in a feast of brotherhood. What was much more likely was that Menéndez intended to put these men to use as oarsmen or seamen in his own small fleet of light, fast ships, some of which were already at Havana. These were the vessels which he was permitted to use in supplying Florida by trading with Spain and

28. Du Lys and Grand Pré are listed on the 1565-1566 ration list in A.G.I. Contaduría 941, as are "Guillermo" and Monbalorte. Menéndez informed the king of his efforts to ransom d'Ully in a letter on October 20, 1566, sent from St. Augustine, and found in A.G.I. *Santo Domingo* 115, Stetson Collection. With regard to the women and children. "Francisco Ginoves left the fort of San Mateo within a month after it was captured in the *patax* named *El Espiritu Santo*, of 100 tons, to carry to Puerto Rico, and Española the women, the girls, and boys who were French and whom the *adelantado* had saved from being killed in Fort San Mateo when it was won—so that they would not harm the Spanish soldiers with their evil sect": in "Los despachos que se hibieron," A.G.I. *Escribanía de Camara* 1,024 A. *Pieza* 2.

other places in the Indies.²⁹

In the meantime, on Florida's east coast, where the other French prisoners taken at the Cape had been left, along with a Spanish detachment, what had begun as simple privation ended in disaster. Short of supplies, the men had scattered in groups, foraging hopelessly for food. When the Indian chief at Ais who had sworn undying friendship turned to open warfare, the situation became even more critical. The Spanish captain took his men twenty leagues south, where *Cacique* Gega showed them bits of silver and gold from lost ships and offered to trade. Then, without warning, the Indians waylaid and killed sixteen Spaniards. Hastily, a crude blockhouse was built for protection. The fort, called Santa Lucia, mounted several small guns. Although safe inside, the garrison suffered from hunger and the persistent attacks of Indians. One survivor, artilleryist Diego López, later alleged that the Spanish had finally been driven by starvation to kill and eat their French captives. When the decimated garrison was finally rescued, many Spaniards and possibly all of the French had died.³⁰

While events had moved rapidly in Florida and in the rest of the Indies, the news of the Spanish successes was uncommonly slow in reaching Madrid. When Menéndez wrote Philip from Havana in December 1565, he assumed that his previous dispatches had already reached Madrid. Actually, his letter of October 15, 1565, which had been entrusted to Captain Diego Flores de Valdes, did not arrive until February 13. Flores's ship had been wrecked in the Azores, however, and this had delayed the news which both courts anxiously awaited.³¹

The first notice Philip II had of Menéndez's victory came to him through his ambassador in Paris. Jacques Ribault's ship

29. At this time, Pedro Menéndez Marquez was named to command these ships; Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to Pedro Menéndez Marquez, December 4, 1565, A.G.I. *Putronato* 257, No. 4, *Ramo* 1. The royal trade privilege was given in the Menéndez *asiento* (see note 8).
30. Menéndez described conditions found by a relief vessel in his letter to Philip II, January 30, 1566 in A.G.I. *Santo Domingo* 168, Stetson Collection. Lopez's account is from "Merits and Services of Diego Lopez," December 16, 1569, in Buckingham Smith Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, microfilm 1:2:414: 265-90. A relief ship at Santa Lucia was commanded by Captain Juan de Vascozabal; see A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 1,967 for a letter written about his services by Philip II—Crown to Casa, October 16, 1570, Stetson Collection.
31. The French writers Paul Gaffarel, *Histoire*, and Stephan Lorant, ed., *The New Worlds First Pictures of America* (New York, 1946), 27, accuse

from Florida had landed at La Rochelle, and, by January 6, 1566, Alava could advise his government of the French loss of Fort Caroline.³² Young Ribault had not known, of course, of his father's death at Matanzas. Next, Philip received more detailed information from a bizarre messenger from Florida. The Baron de Fourquevaux, French ambassador in Madrid, wrote on February 4: "the news the Spanish Court has of their victory comes from Don Frances de Alava and from a Biscayan who landed at La Rochelle with the son of Captain Jean Ribault." This Basque, the ambassador went on, had spent many years in Florida as a captive of the Indians. He had married the sister of an Indian king and was adept in several of their dialects. After arriving in France, he escaped his captors and made his way to Madrid. The man brought such good news that Philip gave him a title and determined to send him back to Florida to aid Pedro Menéndez in his relations with the Indians.³³ Apparently this was the man whom Ribault had rescued from the Indians on his way to Fort Caroline. A clue as to his identity appears in a Florida ration list of 1565-1566:

Don Pedro de Bustinçuri, interpreter of the land of the *cacique* of Ayz; he is the one whom the French took to France, and from there he came to the court of His Majesty.³⁴

Philip II's first reactions, upon learning of Menéndez's victory, were characteristic. He cautioned Alava in Paris to be prepared for a strong and wrathful response; he also feared some military retribution by the French.³⁵ As to prisoners whom Menéndez had taken, the king expressed himself rather forcefully. This comment was appended to the *adelantado's* letter of December 12, which had been sent from Cuba:

Philip and the Duke of Alba of willfully concealing the ghastly truth about Matanzas from Forquevaux, Catherine, and Charles IX. The truth is that, until mid-February, they had not yet learned of it themselves. See, *Casa to Crown*, March 6, 1566, A.G.I. *Contratación* 5,167, Book III.

32. Alava to Philip II, January 6, 1566, Archivo Documental *Español* (Madrid, 1954). Book VIII, No. 1,184.
33. Letter from Fourquevaux, Madrid, February 4 and February 18, 1566, in "Lettres et papiers d'état de Fourquevaux," in Gaffarel, *Histoire*, 417, 421.
34. A.G.I. *Conraduria* 941, 1565-1566 ration list. Bustinçuri is quite likely the "Don Pedro Vizcaino" of Escalante Fontaneda's account—Memoir of D^o *d'Escalante Fontaneda, 1575*, transl. by Buckingham Smith, ed. by David O. True (Coral Gables, 1945), 32. Both names appear in the ration list cited above.
35. Philip II to Alava, February 23, 1566, *Archivio Docummtal Español*, No. 1, 202, 246.

It will be well to write immediately to this governor and to Pedro Menéndez, that it will be well that he shall put those whom he has taken alive to the oar, if he can, and it seems to him to be safe; or else send them here to go to the galleys. This as regards those to whom he offered their lives; as to the rest, he does very well in executing justice upon them.³⁶

The anticipated French reaction was not long in coming. Catherine de Medici summoned Ambassador Alava and expressed her outrage over events in Florida in a stormy interview. Fourquevaux was then asked to make strong and formal protest to Philip II. In the name of Charles IX, he demanded justice, reparation, and punishment for Pedro Menéndez. On April 1, 1566, Philip granted audience to the French ambassador, received the French demands, and took them under advisement.

As information began to sift in from the Indies, both ambassadors were kept busy. On March 16, 1566, Fourquevaux advised his king that thirty women and eighteen children from Fort Caroline had left Florida and had been taken to Santiago de Cuba.³⁷ For his part, Alava had discovered another Spaniard who had come with Laudonnière from Florida. He had been taken to the queen and the Cardinal of Bourbon, who questioned him closely about Florida. Once the French court had left the city, Alava had the man spirited away to Spain by a circuitous route.³⁸

In a second audience granted the French ambassador on June 18, Philip flatly refused to consider any reparation for the acts of Pedro Menéndez. He evidently asked for more information about the French captives still held in the Indies, for Four-

36. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to Philip II, December 12, 1565, in "Letters of Menéndez," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, series 2, VIII (1894), 459. This letter, from the collection of Francis Parkman, does not appear in Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, nor is it to be found in the Connor or Stetson collections at the University of Florida. With regard to galley service for French prisoners, Don Alvaro de Bazán had ordered on December 31, 1558, that such captives should be placed at the oar the galleys; their captains, officers, and ship-masters should be hung or thrown into the sea. Cesar Fernández Duro, *Armada Española*, 9 vols. (Madrid, 1895-1903), II, 462.

37. Fourquevaux to Charles IX, March 16, 1566, in Gaffirel, *Histoire*, 424.

38. Alva to Philip II, *Archivo Documental Español*, No. 1,207, 275. This man may have been one of the two Spaniards whom Laudonnière had rescued or ransomed from the Indians in Florida. Originally, they had been held captive by the chief of the Carlos Indians; later they had been passed along to the east coast Indians and thence came to Fort Caroline. See Laudonnière's "L'Histoire notable," in Gaffarel, *Histoire*, 390-91.

quevaux had sent the Spanish king a detailed report on June 20. In this eloquent and remarkable document³⁹ the ambassador complained of what he termed the evasiveness of the Spanish about the entire affair. He claimed that Pedro Menéndez was keeping eighteen sailors from the *Trinité* in "miserable captivity," and protested the innocence of the five Frenchmen who had been transported from Havana to prison in Seville. Next, he furnished a list of men who were, according to his sources of information, still held captive by the Spanish.⁴⁰

In the face of the French pleas, Philip issued the following order:

As to those persons of whom it is said in other articles that they are imprisoned, His Catholic Majesty has taken it well to send an order that all the women be brought back and freed, and also the children of fourteen years of age and under. The other prisoners shall be brought to the *Casa de Contratación* of Seville in order that their cases might be considered and that justice be provided to them with all the indulgence and kindness possible.⁴¹

Quite a change of tone from the comment Philip had scrawled on Menéndez's December 12 letter! The king refused to free the five prisoners brought from Havana; he viewed their cases as a matter of faith, to be turned over to the inquisition for disposition.

This policy was not as helpful to the prisoners as it might

39. The complaint of Fourquevaux may be found in the Spanish records, as transcribed; as Fourquevaux to Philip II, June 20, 1566, *Archivo Documental Español*, No. 1,246, 405. In the Spanish transcript, the French names have been badly distorted (compare with *Archives Nationales*, Paris K, 1506, 104). Woodbury Lowery reproduced both versions, but inexplicably mis-dated them 1568, "Woodbury Lowery, unpublished manuscripts, Florida (1566-1579), Vol. II, microfilm, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, reel 1. 127.
40. Fourquevaux's list contained the names of Jacques Le Tellur, quartermaster of the *Trinité*; Meris LaBatu, her pilot, Tehan Feron, Denys de Caudecoste, Michel Le Feure, Antoine Sainton, Nicholas Sauvage, Pierre Bourbetel, Jacques Drouet, Nicholas Masselin, Marin Thierry, Nicholas d'Outremer, Loys LeChien, Nicholas Margueriete, Guillaume Cautere, and Robert Emo. In addition, he claimed that the Sieur de Grand Pré and eighteen sailors and soldiers were being held in Cuba, while Jacques de Lac, three other trumpeters, three drummers, eight women (and their children), and the Sieur du Lys were in custody at Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico.
41. This order in brief, was written across the Spanish transcript of Fourquevaux's letter of June 20. The expanded version cited is found as "Reply of Philip II to the Ambassador of France," *Archivo Documental Español*, No. 1,214, 295-96. This letter bears no date, but has been assigned (perhaps in error) to March 1566.

have seemed. In the first place, the order was not everywhere respected, and secondly, Philip had done little more than re-affirm long-standing law and practice—foreigners found to have come to the Indies without Crown permission were to be sent under guard to the *Casa* in Seville.⁴² Many French captives reached Seville after having been sentenced or bound over by action of a governor or *audiencia* in the Indies. Lengthy re-hearing before the *Casa* officials was likely. The sanctioning power of the Crown might cut through such legal tangles, but in practice some of the cases dragged on for years.

In the fall of 1566, interest in the prisoners' fate quickened. Charles IX urged Fourquevaux to press for the early release of the *Sieur du Lys*, and added with some heat that the courtier was being unjustly held for ransom by a Spaniard who was asking 500 *écus* for his release. The ambassador again approached the Spanish king, acting through the Duke of Alba. On October 20 he wrote his sovereign that a Spaniard had just arrived from Santo Domingo, bringing with him a young man from La Rochelle, who had been captured at Fort Caroline. Fourquevaux connived at the youth's escape, took his deposition, and sent it to Paris. This young man, Jean Mennin, claimed that he had seen eleven Frenchmen hung in Havana. His captors, he said, had taken him to Puerto Rico, where he saw eight of the Florida Frenchwomen and four of their babies. Mennin added that the *Sieur de Gran Pré* was then in Havana with a boy named Jacques and seventeen or eighteen sailors.⁴³

In his narrative, Jacques Le Moyne du Morgues stated that one unnamed sailor was sent to Havana, where he was bonded to a nobleman named Pornpierre. According to Le Moyne two men were sold as slaves and sent to Portugal. During the voyage from the Indies, their vessel was intercepted by a French ship, and they were freed.

Many of the prisoners probably had been scattered to different places by the fall of 1566. At that time, Pedro Menéndez and many of his captains and men left Florida to strengthen the

42. This precedent was established as early as 1540. See *cedula* to the governor of Cuba, November 27, 1560, for a more contemporary citation. The earlier notice was sent to the *audiencias* of Santo Domingo, New Spain, and Tierra Firme from Madrid on June 18, 1540. These are found in Diego de Encinas, *Cedulario Indiano*, 4 vols. (Madrid, 1596; facsimile edition, Madrid, 1945), I, 442-43, 446.

43. "Deposition of Jean Mennin," 445.

defenses of the island Indies and to clear their waters of corsairs. Apparently, the *Sieur du Lys* was one of the men who had left at this time. Some of these men managed to escape their captors in the islands—in December 1566, one Hernando Manrique had smuggled in three Frenchmen and some of Pedro Menéndez's runaway sailors. They were ordered seized in Seville, and legal action was started against them.⁴⁴

Early in 1567, the *Casa de Contratación* advised the king that one of the more prominent French prisoners from Florida had been sent to Seville by Pedro Menéndez. The man, Pierre d'Uilly, was obviously in the process of being ransomed. The Cuss officials interfered with the ransom, and prevented d'Uilly from going on to France; he was jailed until payment arrived for his passage home.⁴⁵

After much negotiation by Ambassador Fourquevaux, the *Sieur du Lys* was finally freed from jail in Madrid. The ambassador continued to press for the release of Frenchmen reported to be serving in the Spanish galleys and for others captured as a result of the events in Florida. He feared that some of these, if not quickly freed, might be taken by the Duke of Alba to the war that was threatening in the rebellious Dutch provinces. Fourquevaux's efforts proved successful when, on May 19, 1567, Philip ordered that eight "French who were brought from Florida" be liberated from the *Casa* prison in Seville.⁴⁶

In the meantime, Pedro Menéndez arrived in Cuba early in 1567, in the course of his anti-pirate sweep. Miguel Orange and Juan Mendo claimed that he met with them there and gave them his passport to return freely to Spain and from there to their homes. As a result, they sought a shipmaster willing to carry them to Europe.

Menéndez had paid little attention to his king's order to return all the Frenchmen captured in Florida to Seville. He con-

44. Crown to the *Casa*, December 10, 1566, A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 1,967; *Casa* to the Crown, April 16, 1567, A.G.I. *Contratacion* 5, 167, Stetson Collection.

45. *Casa* to Crown, January 11, 1567, A.G.I. *Contratacion* 5,167, Stetson Collection.

46. See Fourquevaux, in Gaffarel, *Historie*, 448-49. Philip II's order of release: Crown to *Casa*, May 19, 1567, A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 1,967. The men freed were Miguel Seromo, Gardian Bastian, Briso Guivalier, Martin Goled, Matuyrin Sierun, Guillermo Boxaro, Diego Burdinson, and Estevan Godan.

tinued to utilize the prisoners in his land forces, and he assigned a number of them to his fleet of vessels which served the Florida garrisons. At some point, three men, Juan Bivete, "Fucao," and "Pierres," who had learned the languages of the Indians near Cape Canaveral passed into Menéndez's custody. Together with eight French sailors and Monbalorte, the three men were shown on the ration lists of 1567 for Florida. On May 10, 1567, a marginal note advises that Grand Pré had escaped from Florida in a small ship.⁴⁷

During the summer of 1567 Pedro Menéndez returned to Spain, his first visit in two years. Even though he had to face some detractors, it became clear to Fourquevaux shortly after the *adelantado's* arrival in Madrid that his return had become a triumph. Far from being punished for his acts in Florida, Menéndez obviously was intended for far greater honors and wider duties than he had yet enjoyed. During Menéndez's court visit, Fourquevaux was able to spirit away another captive, a trumpeter named de Montargis, who had served in the *adelantado's* own entourage.⁴⁸

Certainly some of the strangest episodes relating to the French prisoners revolved around two tales of buried treasure. In both cases, the Frenchman involved was reputed to be the sole survivor of a group who had buried treasure in Florida. The French ambassador told of the first instance, in which the Spanish king granted one Captain Parra a commission to seek booty taken from the Indians by a group of Frenchmen. In the second case, Juan Fernandez de Cea, a Portuguese jailed in 'the Azores, addressed Philip directly, telling of his acquaintance with a certain Guillermo, a Frenchman who had been put into his cell. Guillermo, according to de Cea, had confided to him the location of the wreck of one of Ribault's ships, near which the survivors had buried 35,000 ducats. In this early Florida treasure-hunt, Philip II prudently remanded the man and his French adviser to the care and custody of the local governor, requiring that the work be done under his supervision. He also cautioned that the royal fifth share, or *quinto*, be duly collected out of any treasure found.⁴⁹

47. See ration lists, 1565-1566 and 1566-1567, A.G.I. *Contaduria* 941.

48. Fourquevaux to Charles IX, nd., Gaffarel, *Histoire*, 451.

49. Gaffarel, *Histoire*, 451. Captain Parra served with Pedro Menéndez in Florida; see *consulta* of Council of the Indies, March 8, 1569, A.G.I.

The events of 1568 in the Spanish Indies did little to abate Spain's dislike of foreign incursions. In April of that year, Dominique de Gourges's expedition visited revenge upon the Spanish at Fort San Mateo, the site of Menéndez's victory less than three years before. De Gourges's attack helped to stir up Spanish fears of a French combination with Negro slaves or *cimarrones* in a general take-over attempt in the Indies. During the summer, eight Frenchmen who had been captured in New Spain were tried before the *audiencia* of Mexico. They were first condemned to hang, but their sentences were commuted to from three to ten years' service in the Spanish galleys, and they were ordered to Seville.⁵⁰ The state of opinion in the Indies, as well as a hardening enmity toward English intruders, was illustrated further by the attack that same year upon Hawkins's expedition in San Juan de Ulúa.

In the meantime, one of the earliest of the Florida captives, Guillaume Rouffi, died in Florida on June 9, 1568. He had served the Spanish for four years, and probably he had been most helpful to Menéndez in the Santa Elena area where his knowledge of the Indian languages could have been best utilized. The *adelantado* continued to use other Frenchmen in his Florida forces. During this time, according to an audit of the Florida accounts. Bivete, "Fucao," and Monbalorte were still serving as interpreters, while one Die Rodrigues and "Guillermo" worked for Spanish officials. What particularly had irritated the auditor was that the Frenchmen were being maintained at Crown expense in billets intended for soldiers.⁵¹

By far the most detailed story of any of the French prisoners is that of Miguel Orange and Juan Mendo.⁵² These men, who had been captured in Jamaica and lived freely for more than three years in Cuba, were finally able to persuade a ship-captain, one Francisco Romero, to transport them to Spain. The vessel

Indiferente General 738, Stetson Collection; Juan Fernandez de cea to Crown, October 22, 1567, A.G.I. *Contratación* 5,104, Stetson Collection; Crown to D. Fernando Cavillo de Mendoza, nd (filed in error, 1570) and Crown to Casa, January 26, 1568, A.G.I. *Contratación* 5,102.

50. Their 328-folio packet of trial documents is found in A.G.I. *Justicia* 212.

51. "Audit taken by Andres de Equino . . . of the supplies, arms and munitions carried to Florida for the royal account," A.G.I. *Patronato* 257, No. 3, *Ramo* 8.

52. Orange and Mendo's journeys, their arrest, and imprisonment are detailed with the legal papers of their trial in A.G.I. *Justicia* 212.

left Bayamo, Cuba, on November 23, 1568. One of the two men later testified that only four French prisoners were then left behind in Cuba. Early in 1569, when he arrived at Seville's Guadalquivir River port, Captain Romero turned over the men, together with a Frenchwoman who had come in their company, to the officials of the Casa. When the French ambassador learned that the Frenchmen were in jail, he petitioned Philip II for their release. In the meantime, the two men sent their own request to the Casa. On March 8, 1569, the Council of the Indies made the following recommendation in the case:

Miguel de Orange and Juan Mendo, Frenchmen, who were sent from Florida by Pedro Menéndez to the *Casa de Contratación*, ask their release before the officials of the Casa, who have sent their petition to the King. It has seemed to the Council that the crime of the French who went to Florida has been sufficiently punished, and that what best befits the conservation of peace and the brotherhood of these kingdoms and that of France [is] that Your Majesty might be served by their being set free.⁵³

After reading the council's proposal, Philip wrote these words in the margin: "It is well and thus shall it be done." Apparently, however, the very nature of the Spanish legal and administrative system militated against the immediate release of the men. Spanish justice had to run its course; it proved to be a rather long one.

In accordance with proper procedure, the *fiscal*, or prosecuting official, of the Casa made formal charges against the men: they were accused of having gone in the company of others to the Spanish Indies without license from the Crown. Bit by bit, evidence was gathered and presented. A Spanish captain from Cuba and ex-Governor Merlo testified that they had known the men who had been among those captured in Jamaica and who had lived for a considerable time in Cuba. Both officials strongly urged that the Frenchmen not be released since their knowledge of Indies ports and waters might prove dangerous to Spain if they were to return there.

After receiving a royal order from Madrid requiring the speed-up of the case, the two Frenchmen and Romero were

53. Council of the Indies to Crown, March 8, 1569, A.G.I. *Indiferente General* 738, Stetson Collection. The Frenchwoman, who is not mentioned again in the file, may have been released.

brought before the *Casa* officials where they made their formal confessions. Orange and Mendo stated their cases simply and frankly. They claimed that hunger had forced them to leave Fort Caroline; they denied that they had taken any part in any piracy. They said that they had lived quite freely in Cuba, and had come to Spain with the approval of Pedro, Menéndez and the local authorities in Bayamo. These confessions, together with other testimony, were forwarded to Madrid where the Council of the Indies saw them in June.⁵⁴

Early in the fall, Philip II issued his formal letter of summons directly to the two Frenchmen. This indicated that the case was being transferred to the council's jurisdiction. In the decree, they were given formal notification of the charges made against them by the *Casa's fiscal* and that of the council. They were advised of their rights under Spanish law and urged to obtain counsel to present their case. They did the latter; in November their attorney, one Juan de la Peña, addressed the Crown in the matter. His clients were not guilty of the charge, de la Peña asserted; they had gone to Florida, and from there to the island Indies under the orders of their lawful superiors, Captain Laudonnière and other French officials. In Jamaica, they had not been condemned, as their companions had, because they were "peaceful people," and as such they had lived in Cuba without molesting anyone. The last file note on the two prisoners is dated January 1570; it advises that more papers in the case were coming from Jamaica. Here the documents end. Were they freed? It is quite probable, since their case had been put in the hands of the Council of the Indies which previously had been inclined to mercy in their behalf.

During the two years which immediately followed the trial of Orange and Mendo, many Frenchmen and Englishmen captured in the Indies made the long voyage by ship to Seville. The suffering of those imprisoned there is evidenced by their petitions for better food and care and for their freedom. As new groups arrived from Santo Domingo and New Spain, condemned to exile from the Indies and to galley service, fresh requests

54. *Casa* to Crown, May 21, 1569; A.G.I. *Contratación* 5,168, Book 4. In A.G.I. *Escribanía de Camara* 970, under date of June 7, 1569, there is found the petition of the men to the Council of the Indies. In their petition, they asked for a copy of the *fiscal's* charges against them, and also sought to be moved to Madrid in order to testify in person.

emanated from the French ambassadors for their release. In the fall of 1571, the Crown obtained from the *Casa* a list of all the French captives remaining in Seville. On November 7, 1571, a royal order was issued sending all of them to nearby Puerto Santa Maria to be received there into imprisonment in the galleys. Among them were Jean Deschamps and Guillaume Gendarme, who "had left France in 1565 under Jean Ribault, had escaped in a small vessel when his ships went ashore in Florida, and had made their way to New Spain where they had been condemned to the galleys."⁵⁵ Thus, more than five years after the events at Fort Caroline and Matanzas, some of the last of the captives of Florida had received the punishment which Spain reserved for the crime of trespass in her Indies.

Little enough can be learned of the human dramas involved in the individual stories of the prisoners remaining in the hands of the Spanish. It can be determined, however, that some of them played a key role in the development of events, and a few furnished very vital intelligence as to French dispositions in Florida. Many continued to provide valuable service as interpreters, seamen, and workers for the Spanish. Their fates were indeed varied, depending upon the hands into which they had fallen, and the circumstances surrounding their captures: a few were ransomed, a number escaped, some ended their days in the Spanish galleys, and many died in different parts of the Indies and in Spain. The French monarchs and their ambassadors made sincere protest of this treatment of their subjects, and these protests did have some effect upon Crown policy, if not as much upon what actually happened to the captives. The belated and incomplete release of the prisoners was the only reparation that France was to receive for the loss of her Florida colony, the execution of one of her best naval captains, and the death of many hundreds of sailors and soldiers. Finally, as the Florida conflict itself can best be seen against the background of the long dynastic struggle, so can the treatment of the captives of Florida best be understood in terms of long-established means of dealing with intruders in Spanish lands and waters.

55. "Papers relating to various Frenchmen who came prisoners in the fleets and who were "captives in the jail of the *Contratación* of Seville- 1571," A.G.I. *Patronato* 267, No. 2, *Ramo* 7.