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“A FREE FACETIOUS GENTLEMAN,”
JEAN SAVY, DOUBLE AGENT?

by AILEEN MOORE TOPPING *

THE SPANISH MINISTER, Don Joseph Patino, had read other accounts of the alarming growth of the new English colony called Georgia. He recalled the Franciscan friar's report of a conversation with an Indian chief who had been brought to England from Georgia by Mr. James Oglethorpe. The chief had stated that the English would use his people to capture San Augustin de la Florida.¹ A French engineer who had come to Madrid to solicit payment for past service in the Indies had presented a description of present conditions in Cuba, Florida, and Carolina. He had learned in South Carolina that “they will not feel secure until they have thrown us out of Florida.”² A Roman Catholic resident of Charles Towne had told of the manner in which parcels of His Catholic Majesty's land were distributed to new settlers in Georgia.³

Don Joseph Patino also recalled recent intelligence from America and England. Governor Francisco del Moral of Florida reported that San Agustin and San Marcos de Apalache were dangerously weak, but Governor Francisco de Guemes of Havana claimed he had no engineer who could be sent to Florida to ascertain what must be done to strengthen the two presidios.⁴ The Conde de Montijo, His Majesty's ambassador in London, reported that the House of Commons had appropriated funds to be used that year to build a line of forts

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1. Conde de Montijo to Joseph Patino, remitting statement of the Reverend Father Joseph Ramos Escudero, November 8, 1734, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo 2591. Archivo General de Indias is hereinafter cited as AGI; Audiencia de Santo Domingo as SD, followed by a legajo number.
2. Gaspar de Courseille to the King, 1735, AGI, Indiferente General, legajo 1905.
3. Francisco del Moral Sanchez to Patino, September 8, 1735, remitting Pedro Neri to the governor of Florida, August 4, 1735, AGI:SD, 2591.
4. Patino to Moral, October 19, 1735, AGI:SD, 2591.

in Georgia.⁵ Mr. Oglethorpe's sister had told Montijo that recently her brother had seen in Georgia an Irishman who had no known reason for being there. Suspecting the man to be an emissary sent by a Spanish official, Oglethorpe had arrested him and expelled him from the colony.⁶

These recollections were disturbing. But the year 1735 would soon come to an end. It was time to think of a new year, time to plan for action. Patino, the king's counsellor of state, secretary for the Indies, and secretary for the navy, turned to the mail received that morning from the Spanish embassy at Paris, and began to reread Trevino's letter and Jean Savy's memorial.

The series of events which were set in motion by those papers will be narrated here by the use of selected documents found in Spanish and British archives. Most of the documents are translated from Spanish or French; those which were written in English are copied verbatim. Some were written by or about a man who signed his name Jean Savy when he wrote in French and John Savy when he wrote in English. In the Spanish papers he is called Don Juan Savi.

* * * * *

Don Fernando Trevino had written on October 17: "A few days before I left Paris to come to this royal residence of Fontainebleau the commander of the Halbardier Guards of the Spanish Queen dowager came to see me accompanied by an Englishman who says he is a Catholic named Jean Savy. Savy was for many years in America where he practiced navigation and trade and served with the rank of a lieutenant of infantry in the colony of South Carolina. He says that having had serious grievances and vexations because of a difference of religion with Mr. Oglethorpe, the director of the new colony of Georgia which borders on Carolina, where Mr. Oglethorpe is beginning to settle Protestant families who were expelled from the Archbishopric of Salzburg in the Circle of Bavaria, he decided to come to France in July of this year with the intent of revealing to the King our Sire the encroachments made every day by the English of the two colonies mentioned above

5. Montijo to Patino, April 15, 1735, AGI:SD, 2591.

6. Ibid., December 6, 1734, AGI:SD, 2591.

and their serious purpose of advancing until they attain their goal of taking possession of San Agustin

Savy offers to destroy all the settlements and forts which have been built by the English in His Majesty's dominions and to drive the intruders back to the former boundaries to which the Peace Treaty of Utrecht limits them. Savy would serve under the orders of a Spanish commanding officer, and would require few soldiers. I asked him to explain the matter in a clear and formal memorial, and he has done so in the paper which I now send to Your Excellency. I must tell you also that Savy is prepared to travel to Madrid at his own expense if Your Excellency thinks it wise for him to go to carry out his plan. He requests rigorous and inviolate secrecy in the affair, as he declares that merely hearing his name and the fact that he is going to Madrid is enough to arouse suspicion and anxiety in all England."

Savy had written: "Jean Savy, Roman Catholic, a native of the city of London, whose father was a Frenchman and a Catholic, has the honour of representing to Your Excellency that at thirteen years of age he was sent aboard a merchant ship to learn navigation and trade on the coast of South Carolina in the Indies, and that in the course of time and because of his diligent study of navigation and pilotage and his knowledge of that country and its coasts he earned the confidence of merchants engaged in that trade so well that they chose him to be a pilot and a first mate, and later to command ships.

He also devoted some time to learning something about service on land as a lieutenant in the company of Colonel Palmer of Carolina, as is verified by the commission he carries. Because of his experience on sea and on land he has the advantage of a perfect knowledge of all the roads, forts, settlements, and creeks from San Agustin to Georgia, as well as knowledge of the different languages of the Indians or savages of that country, having been their slave for a considerable time during the war which the Yamasees waged against the Carolinians about the year 1716.

Moreover he is very well informed about all that has happened since the beginning of Mr. Oglethorpe's enterprise. On lands which belong to His Catholic Majesty Mr. Oglethorpe

has founded a colony of refugees from Salzburg and vagabonds from different countries who are imperceptibly approaching so near to San Agustin that now they are disembarking shiploads of people and all necessary supplies to settle Altamaha, only seventy-five miles or twenty-five leagues from San Agustin, and they openly declare that they will make of that place a good and effective barrier against the Spaniards.

It is said that another shipload of people and supplies will soon be ready to set sail from England to increase and reinforce the settlements on the Ogeechee River in an area between San Agustin and Georgia where they have already built a small fort. At a place called Thunderbolt, twelve miles from Georgia by sea and four by land, there is a settlement of four families with a little fort. On the Savannah River at a place named Captain's Bluff they have built a small fort with six pieces of ordnance. When I was there that settlement consisted of twenty families; judging from its appearance I think it probably has been increased by forty or fifty more. Farther up the Savannah River in a town called Ebenezer are those poor refugees brought from Salzburg by Mr. Van Veck [Baron Philipp Von Reck]. It looks as if that town cannot endure because all provisions for it must be hauled in from Georgia.

With a secret understanding with the English Court the entrepreneurs of these companies and colonies settle these people in a country and on lands which belong not to them but to the King of Spain. They do this with great effort and care not to mention expense, but as they do it with the pretense of charity it is easy for them to justify being there without the King's knowledge or permission. Doubtless they have other more selfish motives which spur them on to work with so much vigilance and perseverance without taking the trouble to consider the justice or injustice of their actions. . . .

I have the honour of offering my services to His Majesty, and with my knowledge of that country, which I left only last July, and with few men and little expense, I undertake to evict the usurpers and to destroy all their towns, houses, and forts in such a way that they surely will never wish to return there. I shall require only about four or five hundred well armed men with some experienced officers to command them and to maintain military discipline, as well as ten large boats or pirogues

which are used in that country, each armed with two guns, to transport our troops. I myself shall guide the men where that is necessary, and I shall not undertake anything without the approval of the commanding officer. . . . At this time I ask for no other employment, authority, or recompense, for I am already convinced of His Majesty's great justice and generosity, and I trust that as the success of the expedition gives him evidence of my zeal, ability, and loyalty he will reward me proportionately.

I have many things to say about the relations of the inhabitants of San Agustin with those of Carolina, but I shall keep them until another time."⁷

On November 7, Patino dispatched to Paris a royal order to send Savy to the Court.⁸ Trevino replied, November 28, that Savy was ill and could not depart at that time.⁹ On January 30, 1736, Patino was informed that although Savy had recovered from his illness, he was unable to travel to Madrid at his own expense, but that he would come if he were given the sum of 600 pounds, the cost of the journey.¹⁰

On April 23 Trevino informed Patino that on the king's order he had given Savy "two hundred livres which he desired in currency and a letter of credit for four hundred livres which he is to cash in Bayonne. Tomorrow morning he will depart in the mail coach for Bayonne, because being a seaman he is not accustomed to riding, and he will set out for the Court without delay. He is carrying my passport with the assumed name of Michael Wall a native of the realm of Ireland, because of the great importance of concealing his name and the object of his journey from the ministers and from English sympathizers. . . ." ¹¹

On June 24, 1736, Patino sent a royal order to Don Juan Francisco de Guemes y Horcasitas, governor of Havana and captain general of Cuba, reminding him of previous commands that he assist the governor of Florida by sending provisions, mili-

7. Fernando Trevino to Patino, October 17, 1735, remitting a copy in French of Jean Savy to Patino, AGI:SD, 2591.

8. Patino to Trevino, November 7, 1735, AGI:SD, 2591.

9. Trevino to Patino, January 30, 1736, AGI:SD, 2591.

10. *Ibid.*, January 30, 1736, AGI:SD, 2591.

11. *Ibid.*, April 23, 1736, AGI:SD, 2591. The alias used by Savy is spelled in various ways. Savy spelled the given name Michel; in Spanish it is written Miguel. The last name is spelled Wall in most of the documents.

tary stores, and troops to St. Augustine. He was also told of Savy's impending arrival in Havana. Patino authorized Savy's plan: "You will send to the presidio of San Agustin three hundred men from the garrison of Havana with a corresponding number of good experienced officers and an equally competent commanding officer. Jean Savy will lead those men and others who will be added to the corps by the governor of Florida up to the towns and forts which the English now occupy in His Majesty's dominions. Savy will suggest the methods to be used in attacking and dispersing the intruders, making use of his practical experience of their methods of warfare, their weapons, and the stratagems they may attempt.

If you are not already well informed about the activities of the English in Florida, you are to send Jean Savy to confer with the governor of Florida about the measures which must be taken. . . . His Majesty trusts that before you proceed to the execution of this important task you will verify the proposals, designs, and actions of Jean Savy, so as not to endanger the success of the enterprise. His Majesty does not doubt that you will proceed with great care and will employ the required precautions. During the time that Jean Savy is in Havana or is engaged in any commissions you may entrust to him the Royal Officials of Havana will pay him one thousand pesos per year, as you will see in the letter he carries."¹²

Savy's sojourn in Madrid was reported to the Duke of Newcastle, British secretary of state, in a letter written July 5, 1736, by Benjamin Keene, the British ambassador. A French officer who was soliciting a commission in the English service had told Keene that "Wall was a blustering talkative fellow who had been in our Plantations in America, and had, as far as he could get it out of him, given a Project for a descent on some part of Jamaica."¹³

Savy arrived in Havana on December 16, 1736. Four days later, in a letter to Patino, he described in detail his voyage from Cadiz to Santiago de Cuba and his overland journey from

12. Patino to Juan Francisco de Guemes y Horcasitas, June 24, 1736, AGL:SD, 2591.

13. Benjamin Keene to the Duke of Newcastle, July 5, 1736, in Great Britain, Public Record Office, State Papers Foreign, 94 (Spain), 126. Public Record Office is hereinafter cited as PRO; State Papers Foreign as SPF.

that port to Havana. His ship had put in at Santiago October 28, "where the governor after having read Your Excellency's letters came himself in his launch . . . he received me very graciously in his home." In Havana Savy had learned "of the bad conduct of the governor of San Agustin de la Florida, who openly permits trade with the men of Charlestown in Carolina and allows their trading ships to enter and leave the port without payment of the King's duties, a thing he does not permit to Spaniards. I have this information from persons who came here from San Agustin less than a month ago and from reliable men who were sent there by the governor of Havana."¹⁴

In the summer of 1736 Governor Guemes sent the engineer Antonio de Arredondo to Florida to ascertain what fortifications and reinforcements were needed there. Arredondo was also commissioned to convey to James Oglethorpe the Spanish governor's demand that he demolish the forts and towns he had built south of Santa Elena (Port Royal) and remove his people from Spanish territory. In their communications to Oglethorpe, Guemes and Arredondo cited Article VII of the Treaty of Madrid of 1670, which had been affirmed by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. By those agreements Spain recognized England's title to lands which she held and occupied in America in 1670, at a time when the English settlement at Charles Towne had just been established. Arredondo used this mission to examine English fortifications as he sailed in his own schooner up the inland waterways from St. Augustine to St. Simons Island where he met Oglethorpe. The engineer also examined San Marcos de Apalache, and on his return to Havana in November he made recommendations for reinforcing Florida and for expelling the English from Spanish territory. With this information Guemes was well prepared to consider Jean Savy's plan.¹⁵

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14. Savy to Patino, December 20, 1736, AGI:SD, 2591, in French, autograph. In Santiago de Cuba Savy became acquainted with Leonard Cocke, a factor of the South Sea Company. In a letter to Commodore Digby Dent, commandant of a British squadron at Jamaica, Cocke reported "finding him [Wall] a free facetious Gentleman & that loved his Glass. . . . I think I pretty well sifted him & it seems he is to make a Descent on the new Settlements of Georgia." Leonard Cocke to Digby Dent, November 3, 1736, British Museum Manuscript Department, Additional Manuscripts, 32794, Newcastle Papers CIX folio 250.
 15. Guemes to Patino, December 12, 1736, AGI:SD, 2591, remitting copies of the correspondence of Antonio de Arredondo and James Oglethorpe and Arredondo's report to Guemes. Oglethorpe's justification for having

On January 22, 1737, Guemes informed Patino that he had examined Savy's plan. "Not only do I find it ill conceived," he wrote, "but I think that it is impracticable at this time and that it would inevitably risk a failure from which worse consequences would result. In brief the plan is that he is to be given five hundred men to go overland from San Agustin to Savannah in Georgia, a distance of fifty leagues, through uninhabited forests and thickets where many deep streams must be crossed, with each man carrying on his back the supplies and ammunition needed for so long a march. I do not think anyone could do that except Indians and certain Negroes and mulattoes who are equally accustomed to hardships and exposure and to life in the forests. Such men might be able to do it provided that they were strong experienced swimmers. . . . I made Savy see the weakness of his plan by pointing out these difficulties and others, including the fact that he is not acquainted with the new settlements, fortifications, and forces the English now have, nor with the ports they have occupied since he left that country.

The more Englishmen there are in Florida now, the more difficult it will be to attempt this expedition, for their presence makes the requisite secrecy impossible and also makes it too dangerous for Wall to go to San Agustin. Because this fellow while travelling overland from Santiago de Cuba spread mysterious rumours which have caused suspicious comment about his arrival here, I am forced to believe that the English already know about it. I have been obliged to warn Wall to behave with discretion and caution so as to conceal the reasons which brought him here, and I have told him to spread the word that he will return to Spain with the fleet because he has nothing to do here.

It is my opinion that a successful expedition to scourge and banish the English must be undertaken in three parts. . . . One party would go overland. It would be made up of our Florida Indians and some Negroes and mulattoes, with forty or fifty

built Fort St. George at the mouth of the St. Johns River was two-fold. First, he cited the grant made by Charles II of England to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina in 1665 which included territory to 29 degrees of latitude. Second, he had not found between St. Simon's Island and the St. Johns anyone who was not a British subject. Guemes stated that Oglethorpe's only justification was "the power to do it and the fact that there was no one to stop him."

troopers who can endure hardships and one officer especially chosen to command this corps, and Michael Wall would go with them. Simultaneously five hundred soldiers would go in pirogues built for the purpose; they would attack the fortifications which the English have at the mouths of the rivers and on the islands. Those men and the party which goes overland would operate together to divide the English forces and to create confusion. A third body of two hundred men would cruise in ships along the seacoast to guard the shore and to prevent English vessels from cutting off our expeditionary forces at any point. Those men would then go ashore at a place chosen as most suitable, with orders to join the commanding officer of the five hundred men who went up the rivers and to serve with him for the duration of the operation." In Guemes's opinion it would be impossible to launch such an expedition before the following spring because of a lack of men and of money, and also because of the imminent change of government in Florida.¹⁶

Before Guemes's letter reached Madrid, Patino had died. He was succeeded by Don Sebastian de la Quadra as counsellor of state and by the Marques de Torrenueva as secretary for the Indies. It was the latter who answered Guemes. "I have received your letters . . . in which you report what you have done with the motive of securing the presidio of Florida. . . . I have given an account of all this to the King. The vigilance, prudence, and care with which you have acted up to the present in this important matter have merited his Royal approbation. . . . Since the year 1721 official papers have been conveyed by the ministers whom the King has had and now has in London to the end that the British Ministry should restrain the outrages which the inhabitants of Carolina and their Indian allies are wont to commit against the residents and dependents of Florida, and that the boundaries to which the intruders should be returned be declared and marked. . . . The cited papers . . . have produced no effect . . . and the latest, which was conveyed on October 2, 1736 has been answered with the same indifference,

16. Guemes to Patino, January 22, 1737, AGI:SD, 2592. Francisco del Moral Sanchez was removed from office by the same royal cedula which named Manuel de Montiano to succeed him as governor of Florida. El Pardo, April 12, 1737, AGI:SD, 851. For a few months before Montiano's arrival from Spain Manuel Joseph de Justis served as interim governor of Florida.

coolness, and generalities. . . . The excesses and irregular procedures of the English of the newly created company called Georgia have made it necessary for the King to repel them by force. . . .

His Majesty has resolved and determined that all Englishmen and subjects of any other foreign nation who have occupied his provinces which belong to and are dependencies of Florida are to be removed, expelled, and evicted from them. Their forts, towns, posts, and plantations, both inland and on coasts, bars, and islands, must be demolished, and they are to be cast out of the sites which are found to be in His Majesty's dominion and jurisdiction until they are placed and confined within the limits of the territory which they possessed at the time of the death of King Carlos II, in conformity with Article VIII of the peace Treaty of Utrecht, a copy of which is being sent to you. . . . It is left to your discretion to take the action best suited to the purpose, with the understanding that this involves recovery of what has been usurped, and not the conquest of country which the English hold legitimately.

His Majesty orders that before you actually move to evict the English, when your troops are already in Florida or in a designated place, the English commanding officer is to be notified on behalf of the officer who will command the expedition that within a certain period of time the English must retire to their own lands and boundaries or be ousted by force from the posts they occupy illegally. The interval of time should be adequate, but must be planned in such a way that the English do not make use of the delay to fortify and equip themselves for better defense. In case they refuse, an attack will be begun. . . . If it were possible to obtain the desired result by the use of threats alone without resorting to warfare it would certainly be more fitting and seemly, and the risk of untoward consequences would be removed."¹⁷

In a second dispatch written on the same day Torrenueva answered the letter in which Guemes had reported that he had been obliged to admonish Michael Wall for the imprudence with which he had spread mysterious rumours: "These cir-

17. Marques de Torrenueva to Guemes, April 10, 1737, AGE:SD, 2593. Enclosures: lists of men, weapons, ammunition, and tools to be sent from Spain; orders to be sent on to the Viceroy of New Spain.

cumstances have been brought to the attention of the King. His Majesty commands me to tell you that you must be guided by your impression of Wall's character and your judgment as to the utility or harm which can result from using him, being very prudent in what you confide to him so as not to imperil the measures you must take. Use his proposals and reports with caution, both because of the carelessness you have noted in his conversation and because of his fear that if he falls into the hands of the English they will kill him. His fear is enough to cause the failure of any commission entrusted to him if the commission exposed him to the danger of capture. Proceed warily, doing what you believe to be in the Royal service, and reporting Wall's actions." ¹⁸

Six days later Torrenueva wrote again to Guemes: "The King has commanded me to send you a copy of a letter from Don Thomas Geraldino, to inform you about the fears felt by the English Cabinet because of the preparations they say you are making to evict the English from Georgia. . . . Geraldino will be told to say that the expedition and whatever actions may be incidental to it proceed from your own office in performance of the duty incumbent upon you because of general orders not to permit any foreign nation to occupy or possess lands which belong to the King. . . . You will see that Geraldino says that the naval commandant at Jamaica has had intelligence that vessels are being fitted out in Havana to transport troops to Florida under the escort of a warship . . . and that although there is in London no basis for judgment as to the origin of this rumour, it was conjectured that Jean Savy alias Michael Wall could have divulged this secret. . . . I reiterate the care and caution with which this fellow must be treated. You are not bound by any previous orders concerning him." ¹⁹

The following month Guemes wrote: "as time has given me more opportunity to become acquainted with Michael Wall, I have found him to be incapable of any service except that of a guide in case the operation against the lands and towns occupied by the English is executed in the manner I recommended. In addition to his imprudence I have perceived in Wall

18. Torrenueva to Guemes, April 10, 1737, AGI:SD, 2593.

19. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1737, AGI:SD, 2593.

a great weakness and inclination towards drinking so excessively as to render himself unfit . . . which makes it impossible to entrust anything of importance to him. I have learned that the motive for his plan is revenge for some personal grievance which he suffered in Carolina where his wife now lives in which he was offended by certain individuals who are now in Georgia.²⁰

In June Guemes acknowledged receipt of orders issued two months earlier; he enumerated the difficulties he faced in planning the expedition against Georgia. His letter evoked a preemptory dispatch from Torrenueva: "You say that you are confronted by serious obstacles, the distances, the hazards of the sea and the inopportune weather; that westerly winds and hurricanes settle in on those coasts from July until October when equally dangerous northerly winds begin; and that the most propitious season is after the March equinox. You add that the money which the Archbishop Viceroy of New Spain must send cannot possibly be in Havana until the arrival of the troops which will be transported on the frigate *El Retiro* and the pink *La Concepcion* . . . and you calculate that they will arrive in October or November. . . . You doubt that you can find an officer to command the expedition who is well acquainted with those lands, since not even men who live in Florida know them well. . . . The King has seen your letter, and despite the fact that the many obstacles you mention have caused him to have some misgivings, he confidently expects that the desired result will be obtained, that the new colony of Georgia will be obliterated, and that the English will be driven out of the territories they have usurped.

For your guidance I must tell you that the English Cabinet has not sent ships or any troops to support Georgia or to reinforce Carolina. On the contrary the Cabinet tacitly disapproves of that new colony although it takes no action in opposition to it because of the Government's need to please the members of Parliament. His Majesty has commanded that official papers be conveyed to the British Monarch, vigorously protesting the settlement of Georgia, declaring that he could not disapprove any measures which his governors in America might take to stop this damage, and stating that he confidently

20. Guemes to Torrenueva, May 20, 1737, AGI:SD, 2592.

expects that His Brittanic Majesty will apply the most efficacious measures to make his subjects abandon the lands they have occupied in violation of the peace treaties. It is reported that this paper caused so much anxiety in that Court that it delayed the decision for Mr. Oglethorpe's return to Georgia with the command which had been conferred on him."²¹

In August Guemes replied to an order dated May 9: "I am commanded to send Jean Savy alias Michael Wall to Spain on the first vessel which sails from here, paying for his passage from the Royal Treasury because his pay is to be cancelled immediately. And I am ordered to deal with him with the distrust and caution made necessary by the repeated acts with which either foolishly or maliciously he has made known the reason for his having been sent here."²²

The first warship to leave Havana for Spain was the *San Luis*. When the Court learned that the vessel had arrived at Cadiz a dispatch was sent to the naval intendant Don Francisco de Varas y Valdes, informing him that Savy had probably disembarked there and that it was "very important to the Royal service . . . that he not leave that city, His Majesty commands that you have him sought immediately and that without displaying anxiety you manage to keep him there."²³ It was learned that Savy had stayed for a few days in the inn San Andres, and that he had departed without paying what he owed there. Varas was not able to learn "whether he set out for Madrid or embarked on one of the foreign ships which were in the bay."²⁴

Benjamin Keene had sent to the Duke of Newcastle early in November a letter transmitted to him by the British consul at Cadiz; Savy had written to the Trustees of the Colony of Georgia as follows: "It is with the greatest Submission I am master of and a sincere repenting for what I have done against the Colony of Georgia that I dare direct you these lines. . . . I must begin my unfortunate story with my departure from Georgia. I am married in Charles Town, South Carolina, to Capt. Daniel Green's Daughter, a man of worth and honour,

21. Torrenueva to Guemes, October 12, 1737, AGI:SD 2593. Oglethorpe had been given command of all British military forces in South Carolina and Georgia; he would take a regiment with him to Georgia.

22. Guemes to Torrenueva, August 25, 1737, AGI:SD, 2592.

23. Dispatch to Francisco de Varas y Valdes, October 30, 1737, AGI:SD, 2592.

24. Vara's to Torrenueva, November 25, 1737, AGI:SD, 2592.

and having run in debt more than I was able to pay was obliged to go to Georgia, and some time in June 1735 sett away from there in the Brigantine Two Brothers commanded by Capt. Wm Thompson . . . the first Vessell ever come loaded from Georgia. . . .

When we came in the British Channel according to agreement Capt. Thompson put me in a French fishing boat who carried me to Diepe the 19th day of August 1735 from where I proceeded to Paris, and being there destitute of everything to support human Life I applied to the Spanish Secretary Don Fernando Trevino Figuero who sent my letter which was an Acct. of all the Colony of Georgia to the Deceased Don Joseph Patino, who directly sent me money to come to Madrid and then to the Havannah to go against said place. In last August the Spaniards sent 400 men for St. Augustine and there is an order for the Vice King of Mexico to send a Thousand more, they have sent Artillery, provisions, and everything necessary to attack the said place in May next. . . .

I have surrendered myself to the Captain of the Grampus who will carry me to the Commander of Gibraltar from where I shall proceed to London, & then I shall acquaint your Lordships more at large . . . and what I offer now is out of pure inclination to my King and Country . . . now if your Lordships pardon me which I cant pardon myself I shall see my Family fight with Courage for Georgia and lett you into all their Affairs. . . ."²⁵

Savy wrote again to the Trustees of Georgia, this time from Falmouth on November 17. He said that the English consul at Cadiz had been unwilling to risk sending away an officer in the Spanish service. "But . . . I got information of a Ship bound for Lisbon, so leaving all my Cloaths behind on the 11th of this month N.S. I ship'd myself on board in a Disguise, and it was my good fortune to Sail that very Evening and arrived in eight Days at Lisbon. . . . In case myself in Person can oblige You in those Colonys I shall fly to Venture my life or if on the other Hand You do not think me worthy of being pardoned for my many past offences I shall submit to the will of God and dye with

25. Savy to the Trustees of Georgia, October 22, 1737, in Great Britain, Colonial Office, 5, 654, Part 1, folio 61, a copy. Colonial Office is hereinafter cited as CO.

the Satisfaction of a Man sorry and truly repenting. . . . For all I did with the Spaniards was only to know their Secrets and to make the Use I now do of them. . . . Should you of Your Charity and Mercy save my Life, I shall acquaint You how to take St. Augustine or the Havannah in Case of War with them, knowing their Forts and their Foibles having studyed nothing else.“²⁶

Savy also wrote to Newcastle from Falmouth, describing the preparations made in Havana for an attack against Georgia. He offered to tell “all I know for the advantage of great Britain. So I hope your Grace will order me up to London as soon as possible and at the same time humbly beg for god sake I may come in some ship as far as Portsmouth or Dover it being Impossible for me to ride, . . . [and] an order here to count me some small matter of money to subsist on having left all I had in the world at Cades to come and serve my Country. . . . It will not be amiss to acquaint your grace of the fault I have committed which was done by me with no other intent but to discover the Spaniards secrets and to make use of them for the benefitt of my King and Country . . . being at Paris December 1735 lately arrived from Georgia and at Diner with Dn Fernando Trivinio. . . . I hapened to say something of those new Collenys which he took so well he desired me to send a memorial to Mr Patino that he woold back with his Interest and promised me great matters accordingly I did being at that time in great poverty and want . . . by the next post Mr Patino sent orders for me to come to Madrid with an order to count me one hundred spanish pistoles and the promise of a Capt Comission and to be paid one Thousand peaces of eight pr Annum so I sett out for madrid were I arived May the 24 NS 1736 and was well received under the name of Michel Wale for fear of Discovery so much have they this affair at heart. It took up some time after several consultations between Mr Patino and myself of what was to be done. . . .

Being at the Havanah saw so much Villany against the Interest of my god my King and Country that my Conscience woold never lett me rest till I could gitt to England so that in

26. Savy to the Trustees of Georgia, November 17, 1737, CO 5, Pt. 1, f 62, a copy.

August last I gave the governor to understand that it was proper I should come to Spain to acquaint the new ministry of what was wanting to effect this enterprise and to return in the four ships that was to come from Spain he consented for my departure."²⁷

Don Thomas Geraldino, the Spanish minister, soon learned of Savy's arrival in England. Some of his letters to Torrenueva were intercepted by the British, and contemporary English translations of them contain the following sentences: "as for Mr. Oglethorpe's voyage to those parts, it continues in the same disposition as I have hitherto reported, notwithstanding it's being often published here that the King has sent 900 men into Florida."²⁸ And one week later, on December 19, "I have heard that the Directors of Georgia make use of the information promised by the said Wall, in order to strengthen their pretensions and to claim the support of the Government here, who will find it difficult to avoid it, the circumstances [being as] they are at present."²⁹

Meanwhile a dispatch dated November 28, 1737, from Torrenueva was en route to Havana. Guemes was advised that His Catholic Majesty had demanded that the English king order his subjects to evacuate all usurped land and to discontinue any further development of the colony of Georgia. The London ministry's reply had been a proposal that the two monarchs name commissioners to fix the territorial boundaries and to settle other differences in conferences. King Philip V had accepted that proposal with the stipulation that the conferences must be limited to no more than six months. Geraldino had been instructed to ask that orders be given to demolish the new forts and to evacuate the territories which the English had taken since the beginning of the century, with neither side occupying them until after the disputed differences were completely resolved. Moreover Geraldino had been "ordered to take especial care to conceal that any order had been given to proceed by force of arms." The governor of Havana was told to proceed "with the same caution as heretofore," and that if any statement became necessary he was to make it understood

27. Savy to Newcastle, November 17, 1737, CO 5, Pt. 1, ff 57-59, autograph.

28. Thomas Geraldino to Torrenueva, December 12, 1737, PRO, SPF, 94, 246.

29. Ibid., December 19, 1737, PRO SPF 94, 246.

that he was acting on his own authority. "Inasmuch as it is consistent that the projected expedition be suspended while the conferences continue until the treaty is concluded, His Majesty commands me to tell you to postpone launching the operation until you have new orders. Nevertheless His Majesty is determined that the expedition be prepared, and he orders you to proceed with the greatest efficiency and discretion in making provisions and plans for it. . . . The termination and results of the conferences will be communicated to you with new orders as to what you are to do in the existent circumstances. His Majesty desires that all plans and preparations be made in consultation and agreement with the new governor of Florida Don Manuel de Montiano. Being now in possession of that government, on the ground, and responsible for San Agustin and Apalache, Montiano will acquire information which can contribute greatly to the accuracy of your plans."³⁰

Governor Guemes read this dispatch "with notable confusion." He answered it on April 18, 1738: "From the papers which I enclose Your Excellency will perceive the condition in which the Florida expedition was found when His Majesty's orders came to my hands at ten o'clock on the evening of 21 March, after the troops and militia of the expeditionary force which I had prepared with the eight pickets from Spain had already been ordered to embark on the following morning and set sail for Florida, after the supply of provisions and military stores apportioned for the duration of the expedition had already been shipped, and after the fleet of small vessels was already in Florida or near it, because it had left this port on 10 March and I had had a report that it arrived safely at the keys of Matacumbe on the 16th. And if the frigate Santa Barbara had arrived from Veracruz in January as I had prearranged with the Archbishop Viceroy of Mexico, with the provisions and the

30. Torrenueva to Guemes, November 28, 1737, AGI:SD, 2593. Geraldino was in London as a minister plenipotentiary. His handling of the negotiations which led up to his acceptance of the counter proposals made by Newcastle in reply to the official papers which Geraldino had conveyed was severely criticized by Montijo and a committee named to study the matter. Geraldino had not insisted that the Spanish protest be considered as a whole; he had not insisted that English forts in the disputed territory be demolished before the opening of conferences; and he had countenanced delay in the naming of English commissioners. Montijo to the King, March 3, 1738, AGI:SD, 2592.

convicts I had requested, I should not have received the orders of 28 November of last year in time to suspend the operation. It would already have been executed. . . . The delay of one hundred and thirteen days with which I received the cited orders has caused considerable harm in the inevitable expenditures which have been made as well as in the public knowledge of what we were planning to do. To my great regret neither has been avoidable, especially with meddlers as perspicacious and zealous as the factors who live here. . . . From another letter written today Your Excellency will see that with eye-witnesses so close at hand it will never be possible to execute affairs of this size unless they can be performed swiftly."³¹

Guemes's rueful letters and the many documents he sent with them were acknowledged by Torrenueva on August 31: "I have brought to the attention of the King your letter of 18 April of this year in which you give a diffusive narration of the number of men, both regular soldiers and militia, who composed the detachment formed and destined for that operation, as well as the crews of the small vessels and the men aboard the three frigates, two sloops, and one armed schooner in addition to their regular complement of about seven hundred sailors. Being informed in great detail not only of the content of your letter but also of the military review sent with it, His Majesty is satisfied with your conduct in so important a matter. He commands me to tell you that the dispositions, men, and measures with which the enterprise was prepared as well as the plan for its execution have pleased him. According to them it appears that the expedition would have been successful."³²

The expedition which had been postponed never took place. Commissioners named to fix the boundary of Florida and to settle other differences between England and Spain met at El Pardo, but suspended their deliberations at the outbreak in

31. Guemes to Torrenueva, April 18, 1738, AGI:SD, 2593. Among the many documents sent with this letter and another of the same date were detailed reviews of all men and materiel destined for the expedition, copies of letters to the governor of Florida, a copy of a letter dated March 18, 1738 and directed to the governor of South Carolina in which Guemes announced his intention of launching the expedition, and several letters intercepted in Havana which confirmed the fact that factors of the South Sea Company had repeatedly reported plans for the expedition to British authorities.

32. Torrenueva to Guemes, August 31, 1738, AGI:SD, 2593.

October 1739 of the war between the two nations known as the War of Jenkin's Ear. That conflict was the result not of disputes over territorial boundaries but rather of the long standing struggle between English merchantmen, some of them engaged in contraband trade, and the Spanish guardacostas and privateers in American waters. In that war Lieutenant John Savy of South Carolina served in the British army in the West Indies.³³

The story of Jean Savy's international adventures must be concluded by questions for which one has no answers. Was the information he gave to the Trustees of Georgia and the Duke of Newcastle so valuable that it saved him from trial by courts martial for desertion and for treason? Was Savy the Irishman whom Oglethorpe had forced to leave Georgia in 1734? Did that episode give Savy the idea of offering his services to the King of Spain? Was it completely by chance that Savy acted for more than two years as a double agent?

33. J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America*. (Athens, 1971), 95, 208.