

Don Diego de Gardoqui to Conde de Floridablanca, New York, 6 December 1787 (excerpts)

My dear sir. Being informed by the bearers of my communications of May and July, in which I sent Your Excellency my last confidential letters numbers 16 and 17, that they had reached you. I refrain from tiring you with duplicates, and I take this opportunity which seems safe, to express my sincere hope that the delay which I experience in receiving Your Excellency's orders is not due to ill health.

Since that time I have communicated to Your Excellency in detail as much as opportunity has permitted and in particular the progress and results of the Philadelphia Convention and my journey to see General Washington.

My reception was cordial and I was given all the attention that was my desire.

He manifested a desire for the affairs of our two nations to be settled amicably and showed signs of being convinced by my reasoning, but he has many misgivings about the settlers on the banks of the Ohio and the Mississippi.

He promised me to do what he could to help settle our differences, but said this would be difficult until after the establishment of the new government.

After mature reflection I have formulated my idea of what we can expect, and I confess to Your Excellency with the greatest sincerity, that I believe I can negotiate the Treaty if the new plan of government is established, because leading persons, whom I have sounded out with as much tact as I possess, seem favorable, but it will be necessary, Your Excellency, to undeceive ourselves; I mean to say, that they will not depart from their position of refusing expressly to cede the right they claim to the navigation of the Mississippi, and they will agree to the treaty only when they see no way to avoid it, and for the purpose of gaining fifteen or twenty years in order to be able to talk to us in another tone, because the intention of all of the Southern States, and of the multitudes who (now more than ever) are trying to migrate is to get nearer to our possessions and to that River....

It seems probable that the plan of government suggested by this Convention will be ratified by the required nine States, perhaps during next year, in spite of the opposition which is expected from the important states of Virginia and New York.

The first is divided into two factions composed of its leading citizens, and they have postponed the Meeting of their state Convention to consider the matter until May.

Although no one knows what will happen in this convention, it is asserted that the Governor and his faction, which is the strongest, are violently opposed to the constitution. It is to be expected that their assembly will meet as usual at the beginning of the year and that in it they will reveal their will.

In the meantime there is an infinite amount of writing pro and con, but it seems that the majority inclines toward ratification, rather, in my opinion, because of the depleted state of their Treasury and the decayed condition of Commerce, than because of a knowledge of the sacrifices that the people are making for the Government.

They expect great benefits from it, but I confess that I do not find any reason why they should change their system of exclusion which has been established for them, so that I expect that even after this trial they will find that they have advanced little....

In the general account that I remit with this correspondence, Your Excellency will note that I charged an item of 5750 Pesos which I justify to you by the following account:

5000 Pesos which on two occasions I ventured by way of a loan to Mr. Henry Lee⁵ as I advised Your Excellency at that time in my confidential communications.

300 Pesos which in like manner I risked to Mr. John Parker⁶ because it is well to do so.

450 Pesos for several Entertainments for the person indicated in my last account.

This is the total of my expenditures, and I hope it meets Your Excellency's approval.

The State of Virginia continues to oppose our ideas tenaciously and has appointed a person from the Kentucky country as a Member of this Congress,⁷ but this does not surprise me because there are certain powerful persons who have much influence and, according to reports, large debts from which they expect to escape by using those new territories which have cost them nothing.

These people are bitterly opposed to the new plan of Confederation because if it goes into effect they will lose their importance and will be in financial straits and they fear that we shall make the agreement we desire.

At one time I considered refuting anonymously the writings of which I send a translation, but on investigating them thoroughly I found that they were productions of the Members who were here, and that it would not be worth while to contradict them, and I have since had this confirmed, because I have seen that they are not worthy of much attention.

I send this in duplicate to Philadelphia because I am informed that there are two vessels there that are about to sail, and I conclude with enclosing the adjoining paper concerning my entertainment on San Carlos' Day so that Your Excellency may see that I am continuing the work.

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