The Spanish Contribution to Patriot Victory in the American Revolution

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife Francisca, without whose encouragement and support none of this would have been accomplished; to my son Sam, who always listens to my stories and makes me proud every day; to my mother Martha who first suggested I go back to school and study what I love; and my father Gary who always encouraged my love of reading and history.

Appreciation is due to my professor and advisor, Stanley Carpenter, Ph.D. for his guidance in completion of this work.

This work is also dedicated to the memory to all those who furthered the cause of American liberty.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

SPANISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO PATRIOT VICTORY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By

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This thesis examines the contributions to American patriot success during the American Revolution. The American colonies did not have the supplies, ships, men, or hard currency to win their freedom from Britain alone. While it seems to be common knowledge that the French aided the cause of American independence, comparatively few people know that Spain aided the American patriots as well. This thesis examines the political situation that existed between Spain and France at the time, and how the two countries’ relationship and diplomats at both royal courts shaped policy with regard to American aid. This thesis also reveals the levels of covert aid Spain provided before entering the war in 1779. Spain’s system of covert intelligence gathering and observation is also detailed. This thesis examines the many successful military actions against British troops in Louisiana, along the Mississippi River, and along the Gulf
Coast. This thesis examines the various key persons involved in providing effective aid to the American patriots during the revolution. And finally, this thesis shows that the total of war material, intelligence, troops, and financial aid provided by Spain in support of the patriots significantly helped the Americans achieve ultimate victory over the British.
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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of hostilities between Britain’s American colonies and the Mother country, governments of several nations took eager interest in the struggle. In April, 1775 local militia from the area surrounding Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts engaged a column of British troops sent up from Boston to seize gunpowder and weapons stored at Concord. From what probably seemed at the time a small, local colonial problem sprang the greater call to arms of the seventeen North American colonies to rebel against the government in London.

Following the skirmishes of April 1775, the forces that the newly appointed General George Washington had at his disposal must have been disappointing at best. The army of 13,000 men included many noncombatant roles as well, so fighting strength could have been less. General Washington’s Continental Army consisted of men without proper clothing, proper weapons if any weapons at all, little to no training, and scant supplies. Such a small and ill-equipped force, while motivated, could not withstand real combat against the British Army or Royal Navy. To add to the sad state of the army, the stockpile of war material such as gunpowder, not only for the army but for militias and artillery was at alarmingly low levels. In all colonial militias combined, there existed 100 barrels of gunpowder, enough for each man to

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fire possibly nine rounds.² The lack of basic supplies with which to wage a war against an enemy with comparatively limitless supplies hindered efforts of field commanders and Congress as well. The American colonies had relied upon the mother country, Britain, to supply most of their manufactured goods. The only solution to the problem of acquiring more arms, gunpowder, shot for small arms and artillery, cloth for uniforms, and every other necessary military need was to import from friendly nations.

It seems that every historical account of the American Revolution at least mentions the valuable assistance and contributions made by France to the patriot forces in their long struggle against the British. Another nation also assisted the rebellious colonies in their bid for independence, the nation of Spain. Histories of the American Revolution seldom mention the contributions of Spain to the patriot victory over Britain, but evidence shows that strategic observation, planning, and execution of material, financial, and military aid by Spain to the patriot cause helped ensure victory along the Gulf Coast by ending British dominance in the region and speeding overall victory in the war.

²Ibid, 90.
Chapter Two

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Numerous volumes have been written on the subject of the American Revolution. Broad overviews of the war and biographies of key figures such as General George Washington or John Adams abound, as do volumes concerning the French contribution to winning the war. What can prove more difficult to find are works that focus in detail on the war in the southern colonies of East and West Florida, the aid provided by the Spanish during the war, and the significance of Spain’s assistance to the overall war effort. Few biographies exist of key figures in the war along the Gulf Coast, and even fewer offer real detail of the amount of material assistance and military actions by Spain along the Mississippi River and Gulf Coast.

Several authors make mention of the Spanish presence in works with a larger scope. Stanley D. M. Carpenter’s *Southern Gambit: Cornwallis and the British March to Yorktown* deals with General Cornwallis’ forces and their march to Yorktown. Carpenter touches on the Spanish military actions in Louisiana and along the Gulf Coast on several occasions in relation to the overall experiences of the British Army in the South. He also mentions Bernardo de Gálvez, Governor and Field Marshal of the Spanish forces that engaged

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the British in several battles along the Mississippi River and along the Gulf Coast. Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy’s *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*, while a wonderful resource for detailed study of the team of officers and politicians assembled for what is known in Great Britain as “The American War,” also offers some information on Spain’s participation not only in entering the war but also in the naval action before the siege of Yorktown, which ended on October 19, 1781. While both authors successfully cover their intended topics with the inclusion of Spain in both works, the aim of each author’s work is not to offer a comprehensive assessment of Spain’s military or financial activities in the war.

A few volumes that seem to address themes in the American Revolution that are not associated with Spain, provide interesting and useful facts that further understanding of Spain’s territorial presence, and political and military leadership in Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. Thomas B. Allen’s *Tories: Fighting for the King in America’s First Civil War* at first glance does not seem to offer specific reference to Spain, but much about Tory activity in Florida and at Fort George in Pensacola is covered. *West of the Revolution, An Uncommon History of 1776* by Claudio Saunt shows the extent of international activity in North America minus the thirteen colonies in rebellion in 1776. An entire chapter is devoted to Spain’s interest and activities in North America, with Cuba included as well. Commerce, interaction with natives, the growing

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interest in the then new possession of Louisiana and anti-British sentiment are all well documented. While not heavy on detailed information, the work is informative. Joel Richard Paul’s *Unlikely Allies: How a Merchant, A Playwright, and a Spy Saved the American Revolution* introduces the confusing group of personalities and their interaction to help finance the war in America. As the title states, the unlikely allies of an American merchant, a famous French playwright, and an unconventional French cavalry officer are presented in a way to explain the actions surrounding the financing of the American Revolution. Spain’s involvement in the financial intrigues between the Continental Congress, Paris, and Madrid, as well as dummy companies set up to ship the aid to America help further understanding of why and how Spain involved itself in aiding the patriots.

A handful of authors used biographical studies to show the depth of Spanish involvement in the Americans’ struggle for freedom. Three authors in particular describe the life of Bernardo de Gálvez, governor of Louisiana and commander of Spanish land forces in North America. Jose Montero de Pedro’s *The Spanish in New Orleans and Louisiana* is a detailed account of not only Spanish influence on the region of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast, but also the governors of then Spanish Louisiana. As Consul General of Spain in New Orleans in the 1970s, Montero de Pedro sought to document Spain’s contributions to the city of New Orleans and the region as a whole and in doing so assembled much useful information about the activities of Spanish officials and citizens at the time of the revolution. While the author does not offer detailed lists of supplies or a roster of militia members, his information on the governors at the time of the revolution is extensive and provides insight into the Spanish presence in the region.

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American Revolution provide insight as to the sentiment of Spanish government. Originally published in 1934, John Walton Caughey’s *Bernardo de Gálvez in Louisiana 1776-1783* represents the first “modern” biographical work of the famous governor.\(^9\) Most studies of Gálvez and associated persons, or Spain in the revolution in general, reference Caughey’s work. Caughey covers Bernardo de Gálvez’s career from beginning to end, and shows is great detail how the Spanish government, through Gálvez and his associates, worked to help the American rebels. Caughey draws on original sources in the Archivo General de las Indias in Seville, Spain, as well as archives in Madrid and the U.S. Library of Congress. Following in the footsteps of John Caughey decades later, Gonzalo M. Quintero Saravia’s *Bernardo de Gálvez: Spanish Hero of the American Revolution* shows background of the Gálvez family, their rise to prominence in Spanish political and military circles, and how Bernardo de Gálvez in particular used his skills as a soldier and politician to aid the Americans in the years before Spain entered the war in 1779 and then engage and defeat the British in Louisiana and West Florida.\(^10\) Quintero Saravia relies not only on primary sources from Seville and Madrid but Caughey’s work as well. Not only does the author detail Gálvez’s activities during the Revolution, but chronicles Gálvez’s career afterward as a complete biography of the man.

Many primary sources offered detailed information on certain events covered in the more readily available secondary sources. The English translation of Bernardo de Gálvez’s battle diary gives a day by day account of the Pensacola campaign of 1781. Author Winston de Ville

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edited *Yo Solo. The Battle Journal of Bernardo de Gálvez During the American Revolution* which is not, as the title implies, an account of Gálvez’s exploits from 1779-1781, but rather an account of the Pensacola/Fort George operation, its outcome, and a detailed list of the prisoners and spoils of war.¹¹ Charles Gayarré’s two works, *History of Louisiana* and *History of Louisiana, The Spanish Domination*, bear consideration as primary sources even though they were written in the 1860s and 1850s. Gayarré, as a direct descendant of one of Gálvez’s officers, used primary sources and personal interviews to recount the actions taken by the Louisiana Battalion or Spanish militia during the campaigns against the British. An interesting work compiled by author and attorney Leroy Martinez presents complete muster rolls of the soldiers and auxiliaries of the Spanish missions and *presidios* (forts) in what are now the states of Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. The importance of Martinez’ *From Across the Spanish Empire: Spanish Soldiers Who Helped Win the American Revolutionary War, 1776-1783 Arizona, California, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas Military Rosters* is that is shows the level of individual and unit participation in contributing to the overall war effort by Spain’s territories in North America.¹²

Moving from primary sources back to particularly useful secondary sources, several authors have made significant efforts to write about a comprehensive Spanish war effort. Both J. Barton Starr and J. Leitch Wright, Jr. wrote about the struggles in the Floridas during the Revolution, and both works were published in the same era of the mid-1970s. J. Barton Starr’s


Tories, Dons, and Rebels: The American Revolution in British West Florida\textsuperscript{13} and J. Leitch Wright, Jr.’s Florida in the American Revolution\textsuperscript{14} both focus on the specific region of the two Floridas, East and West, and the military operations that occurred during the war. While the authors cover the Spanish and British engagements in detail, an overall accounting to Spanish involvement in the war is outside the scope of both works. Author Light Townsend Cummins explores the Spanish government’s network of observers and spies that operated in Cuba, Louisiana, and the American colonies during the Revolution. Spanish Observers and the American Revolution 1775-1783 shows how the government of Carlos III learned what was happening with the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, the state of military preparedness of British forces along the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast, and sentiments of patriot leaders in order to facilitate distribution of aid during the war years.\textsuperscript{15} The work is focused on a small but important aspect of Spain’s involvement in the American war effort. Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It by Larrie D. Ferreiro presents the American Revolution as a global conflict with France and Spain both playing a central part in the war, both in the American colonies and abroad.\textsuperscript{16} The author describes the activities of Spanish ministers and merchants in Spain itself, and also describes in detail the bureaucratic back and forth between officials in Spain, Havana, and New Orleans and how the


\textsuperscript{14} J. Leitch Wright Jr., Florida in the American Revolution (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1975).

\textsuperscript{15} Light Townsend Cummins, Spanish Observers and the American Revolution 1775-1783 (Baton Rouge, LA: University of Louisiana Press, 1991).

military operations against the British were planned and executed. Ferreiro’s work lacks the
detail to show the significance of overall Spanish aid, but succeeds giving a new look at the
involvement of both France and Spain in the patriot cause of liberty. Robert Haynes’ *The
Natchez District and the American Revolution*, like other works cited, offers a well-documented
look into a specific aspect of the war in Louisiana.¹⁷ Fort Panmure in the Natchez area was
garrisoned by British troops and protected the Loyalist planters and merchants. Haynes shows
the importance of the district regarding trade along the Mississippi River, and the eventual
Spanish control of the area. Guillermo and Gregorio Calleja Leal’s *Gálvez and Spain in the
American Revolution* presents the most comprehensive look at Spain’s involvement in the
American Revolution at all levels.¹⁸ The volume, originally written and published in Spain and
translated into English, was sponsored by the Spanish Center for National Defense Studies and
gives an account of Spain’s military exploits during the war, as other works cited have. The
authors have taken the research further to show with detailed tables and charts backed by
research in Madrid and Seville, the financial aid loaned and donated by the Spanish government
and private citizens to the American war effort. Financial aid provided to the French, as well as
detailed accounts of material aid to the Americans, what, how much, and where each shipment of
muskets, artillery, uniforms, and munitions are shown in detail.

Compared to the amount of information available concerning French assistance during
the American Revolution, there seems to be comparatively little with regard to Spain’s support

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¹⁷ Robert V. Haynes, *The Natchez District and the American Revolution* (Jackson, MS:
University Press of Mississippi, 2011).

¹⁸ Guillermo and Gregorio Calleja Leal, *Gálvez and Spain in the American Revolution* (Valencia,
Spain: Albatros, 2016).
of the patriots. While many of the sources provide useful information to show that yes, Spain provided much needed material and military aid for American independence, none of the works reviewed take the information and come to the conclusion that without the timely, immense Spanish military and financial aid, overall victory for the patriots culminating with the defeat of the British under General Cornwallis would not have happened. An in-depth study of the assistance that Spain provided and its impact on the patriot cause and without which a defeat of the British at Yorktown in 1781 would not have happened, should be made.
Chapter Three

SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUPPORT

After the defeat by the British of Spain and France in the Seven Years’ War, or French and Indian War in North America, Spain lost much territory including Florida and temporarily Havana, Cuba.\textsuperscript{19} After the Peace of Paris was signed in 1763 ending the war, Spain lost much territory it previously held for centuries and gained, through the “gift” of the Louisiana territory by France. Britain did not want the expense of administering the territory itself, and did not want France to retain control of it either, so Spain assumed the expense of maintaining the colony from 1763 onward.\textsuperscript{20} Spain’s leaders felt humiliated after the end of the war and desired to see British influence reduced in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. This situation set the stage for involvement in the future hostilities between the American colonies and Britain. For years, the Bourbon rulers in France and in Spain, first cousins Louis XV and Carlos III, agreed to mutual communication efforts concerning trade, military actions, and the like as mutual protection against British aggression primarily. While France intended to offer material aid to the American colonies early in the war, Spain assumed the more cautious position of developing a group of spies to observe events in the region. Having twice before signed Bourbon Family Compacts in 1733 and again in 1743, this Third Bourbon Family Compact functioned in the


\textsuperscript{20}Ibid, preface.
same manner as the others, and was signed in 1761, two years before the end of the Seven Years’ War.

As noted earlier, European powers watched with increased interest the events in Britain’s American colonies. From violent domestic confrontations in 1770 and 1773, the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party respectively, to the larger armed confrontation on the Lexington and Concord roads in 1775, American colonists showed anger and frustration with British rule and ultimately a desire for independence. This new conflict within the British Empire interested both France and Spain, the injured parties that still harbored ill will against their historical enemy. The court of Carlos III of Spain began to develop a plan of action to observe both sides of the conflict, not only to gather intelligence for the protection of Spain’s territory in the event that the conflict spilled over into Spanish areas, but to assess potential opportunities for dealing a blow against the British and to potentially engage in trade with the colonies in the unlikely event of their victory.21

Two gentlemen employed by His Most Catholic Majesty Carlos III’s court formulated a plan of action with varying degrees of involvement in the growing war of independence in Britain’s American colonies. The Spanish Ambassador to France, Pedro Pablo Abarca de Boleo, the Conde de Aranda, and Spain’s Minister of State, Pablo Jerónimo Grimaldi y Pallavicini, the Marques de Grimaldi, both advocated a plan of observation and intelligence gathering. Aranda favored forming a more aggressive spy network in the American colonies as well as along the Gulf Coast with the intent of gathering enough actionable intelligence to aid in overt military involvement as soon as possible. Aranda’s supporters included many confidants of the king, 21 Ibid, 5.
which frustrated the plans of Grimaldi. The Marques de Grimaldi advocated intelligence gathering but wanted to remain neutral in the conflict for as long as possible. Spain’s military and financial position could not support a full scale conflict with Britain again, and he wanted to maintain the status quo while gathering information that could affect Spanish interests in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. Both plans included the formation of a group of observers, loyal Spanish citizens who could be trusted with confidential intelligence gathering and communication. To understand both men’s proposed plans however, one first needs to understand their backgrounds.

The Conde de Aranda, Pedro Pablo Abarca de Bolea, grew up in Siétima, Aragon, Spain. He originally intended to pursue the life of a priest, attending the University of Bologna in Italy. However, his passion for military a vocation led him to a lifetime of government service, beginning in the Spanish army as an artillery officer and rising to the rank of Supreme Commander of Spanish forces during the Seven Years’ War. Born in 1719, his world view as a young man was shaped by the Enlightenment spirit of the day. He embraced the ideals of certain progressive thinkers of the era, including Voltaire and others, and valued diplomacy over brute force, stating once during disputes with Morocco, “we are no longer in the time of the Crusades.” Generally, the Conde de Aranda favored action against Britain, no doubt in part of the animosity felt by many Spanish military men after the defeat in the Seven Years’ War. Many Spaniards would like to have seen Britain embarrassed on the world stage, and the Conde de

\[22\] Ibid, 28.
\[24\] Ibid, 69.
Aranda supported the actions of the American colonists against the British government. Since like-minded individuals often congregate together, the Conde de Aranda found kinship with the likes of the new Minister of the Office of the Indies, José de Gálvez and the French Foreign Minister, Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes. Both José de Gálvez and the Comte de Vergennes believed as the Conde de Aranda did, that a British military and government weakened by war would be ill-suited to put pressure on either Spain’s or France’s overseas possessions. With a couple of key allies or at least like-minded compatriots, the Conde de Aranda felt secure in dealing with representatives from the American rebels that came to meet with him in Paris. As Minister to France, the Conde de Aranda viewed his position at France’s court as a way to gather information from several sources, to understand the French position on the American colonies’ situation, and to make recommendations based on information and his own interpretations. To that end, as early as 1775, the Conde sent a plan to Carlos III in Madrid suggesting that Spain and France join their naval forces and attack British supply lines to create havoc in the British economy. While possibly a bit rash at that early time, the plan shows Aranda’s strategic thinking and desire for France and Spain to deal a blow to Britain, either directly or indirectly by aiding the American rebels. In Paris in 1776, the Comte de Vergennes met with the Conde de Aranda and revealed that France, by way of ports in the Caribbean, would be shipping military aid to the Americans. Surprised by this news, Aranda contacted his most well-placed friend and confidant, José de Gálvez, Minister of the Indies. Gálvez of course also


26 Ibid, 27.

27 Ibid, 52.
favored covert assistance to the Americans, and with the blessing of the king, Spain formulated plans to move supplies from Spain, through Havana, and on to New Orleans for distribution to American contacts. Conversely, intelligence about the war in the American colonies traveled from New Orleans and Havana back to Spain. Late in 1776, diplomats from America traveled to both the French and Spanish courts to discuss plans for a formal alliance. The Bourbon-Borbon monarchs already had their Family Compact, but alliances with the newly formed Continental Congress would need to be created. To facilitate and treaty of alliance, the American Congress sent Silas Dean, Arthur Lee, and Benjamin Franklin. France moved at a quicker pace to help the Americans, so the first meeting between the Conde de Aranda and the American emissaries occurred under cover of darkness on December 29th. The Conde received Franklin, Lee, and Deane at his suites on the north end of the Place Louis XV, the Hotel de Coislin.28 Aranda explained over the course of several meetings that Spain would help the colonists in their struggle against Britain, and along with the Comte de Vergennes, assured the American diplomats that aid would come indirectly through shell companies both in France and in Spain, with Spanish aid arriving in New Orleans.29 As pro-American as the Conde de Aranda was, the Marques de Grimaldi seemed to be his opposite.

The Marques de Grimaldi, born Pablo Jerónimo Grimaldi y Pallavicini in Genoa, served at both the courts of Fernando VI and Carlos III as a diplomat. Early in his career, the Marques de Grimaldi was considered by French ministers as being: “supremely gifted in the art of


29 Ibid, 67.
reconciling political agreement with friendship in opposing parties." Grimaldi had been instrumental in the signing of the Third Bourbon Family Compact and the treaty to end the Seven Years’ War, and by the time of the hostilities in Britain’s American colonies, he was a seasoned diplomat. Wealthy, well connected, and cautious, the Marques by nature did not rush into agreements or alliances without considering as many aspects of a situation as possible. This cautious attitude served him well as a career diplomat but put him at odds in the mid-1770s with personalities like the Conde de Aranda and José de Gálvez. Although the Marques did not share the same pro-American sentiments as early as his counterpart the Conde de Aranda, Grimaldi worked with Arthur Lee to reassure the Americans in 1777, prior to the Treaty of Aranjuez in 1779, that aid would be sent from Spain to New Orleans, even though Spain could not openly support the Americans as early as France did. A general feeling of suspicion of Italian influence in Spanish politics, as well as diplomatic failures with a failed invasion of Algiers in 1775 culminated in the dismissal of the Marques de Grimaldi and the installation of his replacement, the Conde de Floridablanca.

Besides the Conde de Aranda in Paris and the Marques de Grimaldi in Madrid, several key persons within the Spanish colonial government and its employ figured prominently in Spain’s efforts to influence events along the Gulf Coast and aid the American rebels. Two governors of Louisiana, an American merchant, and Spanish civilians made up the group of figures who gathered intelligence, procured and distributed aid to the American colonists, and fought against the British along the Gulf coast.

Luis de Unzaga y Amézaga served as governor of Louisiana from 1769 to 1776. Governor Unzaga, originally from Málaga in southern Spain, entered service with the Spanish army in 1735. Serving in posts as varied as Spain, Italy, North Africa, and America, Unzaga attained the rank of Colonel in the Havana Regiment, coming from Cuba to New Orleans with another Spanish officer, General Alejandro O’Reilly.\(^{31}\) In 1769, General O’Reilly brought Unzaga, the newly appointed governor of Louisiana, with him to New Orleans. When the pair arrived in New Orleans, Unzaga was installed as the new governor on December 1, 1769, and his tenure as governor was marked by cooperation between French, Creole, and Spanish inhabitants. As governor during the first years of the American war for independence, Unzaga maintained Spain’s official stance of neutrality in the years 1775-1776, but cultivated relationships with Americans such as Oliver Pollock. Unzaga indulged a certain amount of illegal commerce and smuggling as it related to the American rebel activities, and kept a calm, prudent hand on the government of the territory.\(^{32}\) Governor Unzaga’s steady leadership and indulgence of covert American trading and smuggling helped pave the way for a smooth transition to his successor, Bernardo de Gálvez.

Bernardo de Gálvez y Madrid, or Bernardo de Gálvez as he is more commonly known, was the son and nephew of some of 18th century Spain’s most distinguished men. To better understand the drive and ambition that characterized Bernardo de Gálvez’s life, one should first understand who he would have considered role models. His uncle José de Gálvez earned a law degree from the University of Alcalá, Spain, rising through positions of importance in the


\(^{32}\) Ibid, 40.
nation’s legal community first as an attorney, then as a judge at the Court of King Carlos III. Later promotions as a public servant included a governorship in the Philippines, Inspector of New Spain (Mexico), and the jewel in the crown of public office, a promotion to Minister of the Indies, putting his stature in the government second only to Carlos III himself. Most historians agree that through the patronage and example of José, the other Gálvez brothers decided to enter government service. Antonio de Gálvez joined the army and rose in rank while serving in California and later in the Canary Islands. By the 1780s, Antonio had been promoted to garrison commander at Cádiz, back in Spain. Brother Miguel followed in José’s footsteps by studying law and eventually earning a promotion to Spain’s Minister of War at the court of Carlos III. Later in his career, Antonio would be instrumental in negotiating peace treaties between Sweden and Russia, and also trade agreements between Russia and Spain. José’s brother Matías, the father of Bernardo, found success in the military. Promoted through years of service from cadet to Lieutenant General, Spain’s highest military rank, Matías served as commander of Spain’s armies in New Spain and Guatemala, as well as the Viceroy of New Spain. It comes as no surprise then, with a father and uncles serving as excellent examples of successful public and military service, that Bernardo would seek a career in the military. As a young man, Bernardo attended the Royal Military Academy in Avila. While a cadet at the academy, Bernardo joined a fraternity of cadets that followed the new model of military science espoused by Frederick II of Prussia. The ideals of the Enlightenment pervaded the group, which called itself “The Mystery of Avila.” Upon leaving the military academy, it was customary for cadets to purchase a

33 De Ville, Yo Solo, 46.

34 Quintero Saravia, Bernardo de Gálvez, 5.
commission into an army regiment. Bernardo’s father, while himself an officer in the Spanish army, lacked the necessary personal connections to secure an commission for his son, so Bernardo’s uncle José decided to help. José de Gálvez knew that the French army had a history of accepting Spanish cadets in certain regiments. In June 1762, with the Seven Years’ War still raging, Bernardo de Gálvez joined the Royal Cantabre regiment of the French army as a lieutenant. No historical evidence exists that shows significant military action by Gálvez while a lieutenant in the French regiment, but Bernardo gained valuable experience in daily military life and important later, he learned to speak French.

Between the end of the Seven Years’ War in 1763 and 1769, Bernardo accompanied his uncle José on his travels through New Spain. By now an experienced soldier, Bernardo served on New Spain’s northern frontier as Captain in the Spanish army in a campaign against the Apache. While campaigning against the Apache in what is now western Texas, Captain Gálvez received one arrow wound and two spear wounds, his arm and chest both pierced. As a result of his experience in the Apache campaign, Gálvez learned much about guerilla tactics; camouflage, concealment, operating in small groups and using the element of surprise all made an impression on Gálvez. The tactics and heavy, cumbersome equipment of the Spanish frontier troops annoyed Gálvez, and he recommended the development of a new kind of unit that:

… could penetrate the mountains with less hindrance, leave fewer traces, and was less noisy during marches [and] …take off the saddles anything superfluous, no more big impedimenta, nor useless flaps.

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36Ibid, 61.
Gálvez learned from observation and experience what worked and what did not work on a campaign and in guerilla style warfare, and would later use those lessons while fighting the British along the Mississippi River and Gulf Coast. After the Apache campaign, Gálvez was recalled to Spain in the summer of 1775 for an ill-fated Spanish attack on Algiers in which he was wounded again. Undoubtedly due to his uncle José’s influence, Bernardo was given command of the Louisiana Infantry Regiment in New Orleans, with a promotion to Colonel. Within in a year, Gálvez would be sworn in on January 1, 1777 as the new governor of Louisiana, the successor of the outgoing governor Unzaga. Not only did Gálvez inherit the expected duties of a governor of a province, he inherited a situation where he was expected to facilitate aid to a group of rebellious American colonists. The normal duties of taking accurate census records, keeping a proper accounting of the region’s agriculture, visiting different areas of the province, monitoring legal and illegal trade within the region, and keeping the peace between a very diverse population would be enough to keep a governor occupied, but Governor Gálvez felt strongly about the cause of not only a British defeat but the American patriot cause.37

As part of Spain’s overall plan to aid the American patriots in their war against the British, a person or persons was needed to act as a middle man to handle and distribute the goods to patriot agents. Oliver Pollock, a successful New Orleans businessman, had lived in the city for some time and was a personal friend of both the former governor Unzaga and the new governor Bernardo de Gálvez. Originally from Ireland, Pollock’s family emigrated to Pennsylvania where he engaged in imports from the West Indies. In addition to legal pursuits, Pollock also dealt in smuggling in and out of Cuban ports. Having relocated from Philadelphia

37 Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez, ix.
to Havana, Pollock learned the Spanish language and made contact and friends with other Irish Catholics in the colony. By Spanish law, foreigners could not engage in business activities such as trade in Cuba, and upon being expelled from the island in 1768, Pollock and his family went to New Orleans, where his friend and fellow Irishman General Alejandro O’Reilly was the new governor. Fortuitously enough, Pollock and his family arrived in Louisiana at a time of a calamity, but one that offered opportunity. New Orleans and Louisiana as a whole experienced a famine when the Pollocks arrived, and having arrived with a ship’s hold full of flour, Oliver Pollock saw an opportunity to strike a deal with his friend Governor O’Reilly. Pollock agreed to sell the flour at half price to the government in exchange for a license to do business in Louisiana. As a result of Pollock’s deal, he set himself up in the city as the only foreign merchant of flour, rum, molasses, sugar, gunpowder, and textiles, as well as furs and animal hide from the Mississippi Valley. Pollock’s very lucrative mercantile business and contacts within the textiles, gunpowder, and arms industries as well as knowledge of the Mississippi River area would serve the patriot cause well in the coming years.

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38 Calleja Leal, *Gálvez and Spain*, 42.
39 Ibid, 42.
Chapter Four

COVERT AID

Effective intelligence gathering along the Gulf coast centered at the seat of Spanish colonial government, New Orleans. The governor of Louisiana at the time of the beginning of hostilities in the colonies was Luis de Unzaga. Governor Unzaga came to Louisiana at the behest of the former military governor of Louisiana, Alejandro O’Reilly. Unzaga and O’Reilly served together for years in the Spanish army and Unzaga transitioned easily into the role of governor with the tutelage of O’Reilly. As governor, Unzaga dealt with typical colonial issues such as trade, taxes, criminal and municipal infractions of the law, and eventually in the mid-1770s, with the growing issues of assessing threats from the rebellion to the north. In a letter to Governor Unzaga in June, 1776, Spanish officials urged the governor:

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40 Caughey, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, 43.
…to investigate with all discretion and secrecy not only the success of the English armies and of the revolted colonies but also the intentions of both sides, using every means that he could…⁴¹

After acting upon the order received, the governor learned that the revolution indeed had progressed further than he expected and that the territory of Louisiana possessed, “neither troops to defend the colony, nor forts to contain them, nor means to march on land.”⁴² Being a career military man with years of service to his credit, Unzaga undoubtedly felt exposed over a large geographic area with few militia and regular troops with which to defend the population of New Orleans and the outlying settlements. Resupply typically came from Havana and took weeks to arrive, and without troops and with slow communication lines, the governor adopted a policy of observance and then transmittal of information from New Orleans to Havana and on to Spain. Besides passing on information gained through a network of hunters, fishermen, farmers, and traders, Governor Unzaga and New Orleans merchant Oliver Pollock were contacted by American agents sent by Charles Lee of the American Continental Congress in the summer of 1776. The two agents disguised as traders were in reality Continental officers Captain George Gibson and Lieutenant Linn.⁴³ Gibson and Linn delivered a letter from Charles Lee to Governor Unzaga, stating among other things:

Consequently [the Americans] flatter themselves that not only humanity and generosity, but also interest, honor, and the security of your sovereign will dictate to your excellency the means to supply us the articles we lack, which consist of muskets, blankets, and medicinal drugs, particularly quinine.⁴⁴

⁴¹Ibid, 55.
⁴²Ibid, 55.
⁴³Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez, 86.
⁴⁴Ibid, 86.
As noted earlier, at this point in time in the American colonies, militia did not have much gunpowder, and with the start of actual fighting with the actions at Lexington and Concord, British merchants simply did not trade in gunpowder in the colonies. What little gunpowder existed did not amount to enough for battles against the British. In further negotiations with the governor and Pollock, the American agents repeatedly expressed their need for gunpowder. According to Pollock, “Unzaga privately delivered me gunpowder out of the King’s store, which I delivered to Colonel Gibson, in the American service.” After arranging payment for the gunpowder, Lieutenant Linn took three quarters of the powder up the Mississippi River and beyond to Fort Pitt and Fort Henry, in such a timely manner as to prevent those forts being overrun by British and native allies; both forts protected the overland supply route from New Orleans to Philadelphia. The remaining one quarter of the supply found its way to Philadelphia on a ship paid for by Oliver Pollock. While this transaction represented the only one of its kind during the tenure of Governor Unzaga, it set the tone for further American agents and their trips to New Orleans and dealing with their new, trusted contact Oliver Pollock.

Bernardo de Gálvez assumed the office of governor from Unzaga and immediately set to work in preparing for Spanish involvement in the revolution occurring in the American colonies. As an officer of the Spanish Army who had military experience in Europe, northern Africa, and what is now Mexico and Texas, Gálvez distinguished himself as a brave, sometimes brash commander who did not shy away from engagement. Where Unzaga, a good governor by all accounts, was older and cautious, Gálvez was young and daring. Part of Gálvez’s duties as governor of Louisiana involved maintaining control over trade, both legal and illegal. Smuggling had been tolerated to a certain extent by the Spanish government, but as tensions

between the American colonies and Britain escalated, and as the new governor made little secret of his preference for the American colonists, British smuggling had a brighter light shone on it. Governor Gálvez had been in office for only a few months when he ordered eleven ships captained by English merchants seized on the night of April 17, 1777. One contemporary account stated:

…the British moored some of the ships to the shore with planks or spars but anchored a few of them in river. Gálvez ordered the vessels and merchandise (valued at about $70,000.00) seized and the crews imprisoned. The next day he (Gálvez) issued a proclamation: “We command and order that the said British subjects do depart this day and we forbid every citizen or inhabitant of this colony to receive into their houses or habitations any stranger whatsoever without previously having obtained an express permission from the governor.”

These ships were engaged in smuggling from English settlements further up the Mississippi River to the port of New Orleans. The pro-American, anti-British tone had been set. As the new governor began gathering information about the revolution in the colonies and preparing for some sort of further assistance, he received orders from the royal court in Madrid advising him of forthcoming aid from Spain:

The bearer will be a commissioner or factor of a Spanish merchant who sends various effects to your province for sale there; they are to be deposited in warehouses, which must be furnished, and are to be entered free of duty.

The shipment that eventually arrived at the port of New Orleans for storage, free of duty, for the unnamed Spanish merchant consisted of,

… 6 cases of quinine, 8 cases of other medicines, 108 bolts of woolen cloth and serge, 100 hundredweights of powder in 100 barrels, and 300 muskets with bayonets in 30 boxes.

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46 Starr, Tories, Dons, Rebels, 66.

47 Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez, 88.
A later dispatch explained that the goods consisted of direct aid from the Spanish government to General George Washington’s second in command, Charles Lee, who would send agents to New Orleans to collect the supplies. In order to continue with the ruse of goods sold and bought in New Orleans without royal approval, Spain would provide a merchant to facilitate the sale for Spain. Miguel Eduardo, the official translator for the Port of Havana, would act as merchant and agent. Miguel Eduardo arrived in New Orleans to carry out the ruse of buying and selling for the Spain to Continental Congress transaction but so many citizens in New Orleans recognized him as an official from Havana that Governor Gálvez found it prudent to replace Eduardo with a local merchant.\textsuperscript{49} Eduardo sailed back to Havana and later functioned as a spy for Spain in the American colonies, while the new local merchant, Santiago Beauregard acted as agent for Spain in the transfer of the goods. For months the goods sat in Beauregard’s warehouse and Gálvez asked Irish-American merchant Oliver Pollock to write to the Commerce Committee of the Continental Congress to send an agent to take charge of the goods. While the goods sat in Beauregard’s warehouse, Governor Gálvez created the appropriate false paper trail. He pretended that the cloth had been sold off as rejected goods from Havana because of poor quality. The gunpowder was to be transferred to barrels of whatever commodity looked to have similar packaging, such as barrels of flour, and then the real barrels of flour would be inspected in public while the remainder of the barrels of gunpowder would be loaded onto ships bound upriver for the Continental Army. The same method of shipping was to be applied to the stands of muskets and boxes of medicine. Gálvez, Beauregard, and Pollock played this shell game of

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid, 88.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid, 89.
sorts in the years before Spain’s official declaration of war against Britain to give the appearance of remaining neutral, and it almost worked.

Such a series of deceptions to ship goods from a province’s own ports may seem tedious, but while New Orleans was very much pro-American, the nation remained officially neutral. And like any other port city during wartime, spies existed. The governor learned from a Spanish spy sent to gather intelligence on Pensacola, that while in West Florida, the spy learned of a small network of British spies operating in New Orleans. These spies, according to the unnamed Spanish agent, regularly sent information on happenings in Louisiana to Peter Chester, the British governor of West Florida. The agent told Governor Gálvez:

…in New Orleans there are some individuals who collect and write to Pensacola all the news and intelligence they can gather relative to the Spanish government. They also correspond concerning the friendly treatment and favors that the Spanish and the French government conceded to the Americans. The powder that went up the Mississippi last fall is said to have been by permission and consent of Governor Unzaga’s administration under the direction of Mr. Pollock, a suspected agent of the Congress.  

Governor Gálvez could not have been comfortable with the knowledge of the spy network operating under his nose, and although records have not been found to support a spy hunting campaign, two British citizens posing as traders were arrested on charges of spying and banished from Louisiana. British agents Robert Ross and John Campbell (not the General in Pensacola of the same name) relocated after their banishment to Pensacola.

50 Cummins, *Spanish Observers*, 63.

51 Ibid, 63.

52 Ibid, 63.
Oliver Pollock, of whom much has been mentioned already, enjoyed a close friendship among the government officials in Louisiana and Havana. A firm believer in the cause of American independence, Pollock continued to function as a go-between for Spain and the Continental Congress during the administration of Gálvez. After Pollock contacted Congress informing them that he could continue to facilitate the shipment of Spanish aid, the Committee wrote a letter in June, 1777 to Governor Gálvez stating:

We have employed Mr. Oliver Pollock who resides at New Orleans for our Agent; and have Instructed him to charter or buy suitable Vessels to transport these stores Coastwise until they can get into some of our Ports or Inlets to land them. He is instructed to consult with your Excellency in this business, and we pray your favourable attention to this business-that you will advise in all things needful-and Protect the Ships, Cargoes & Mr. Pollock if occasion shall so require….We are compelled to go farther in our requests and beg that you will also supply him with money if it becomes necessary to defray the charges and Expenses that will accrue on the transshipping of the Stores. He must grant receipts for what you supply and we will repay the amount by our Agent at the court of Spain.\(^53\)

Mr. Pollock enjoyed the trust of both the Continental Congress and Spain, and all awaited the arrival of the agent sent by Congress. The Commerce Committee sent Captain Thomas Willing as the agent to recover the supplies and return to Fort Pitt via the Mississippi River and Ohio River. After descending the Ohio and Mississippi on the flatboat *Rattletrap* outfitted for thirty men, Captain Willing embarked on a campaign of destruction of Loyalist property en route to New Orleans. Willing and his men destroyed Loyalist property along the Mississippi at every opportunity, as well as took British civilians prisoner and private vessels as prizes. The actions taken by Captain Willing and his men caused diplomatic problems for Spain before and after their arrival in New Orleans. Willing met with Governor Gálvez with Pollock acting as interpreter, and during the meeting Gálvez was surprised to learn that Pollock apparently had no express orders to attack British Loyalists along the Mississippi River and had no desire to engage

\(^53\) Cummins, *Spanish Observers*, 84.
in further military action along the Gulf Coast. Speaking through Pollock, Captain Willing stated two goals, one being to take ownership of the Spanish supplies sent from Havana, and the other being permission to sell the good plundered from the Loyalists at auction in New Orleans.\textsuperscript{54} If Gálvez had any misgivings about assisting the unpredictable Captain Willing, he did not express them; Gálvez reread his order from Madrid directing him to cooperate with any Americans sent to take charge of the aid. Pollock, anxious to sell the plunder, realize a profit and pay himself back for funds fronted for the Spanish aid, agreed with Willing following the governor’s consent. After the selling the plundered goods, Pollock took it upon himself as a newly minted official agent of the American Congress to outfit a captured British frigate, the \textit{Rebecca}, as an American privateer. Along with the \textit{Rebecca} and Pollock’s own sloop \textit{Virgo}, he also arranged for supplies to be shipped upriver in charge of some of Willing’s men, and Captain Willing and the remainder of the supplies to be shipped back along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts.

After the departure of Captain Willing and most of his men, Gálvez wrote to his uncle in Madrid recalling the whole affair:

\begin{quote}
Having arrived in this city a Captain Willing, commissioned to receive here the effects that were sent to me from the mother country with destination to the English colonies, I ought to inform Your Excellency that the major part of these effects have already left the city, and as soon as all of them have been delivered, I will inform Your Excellency.\textsuperscript{55}

Upon hearing of the polite treatment of Captain Willing and his men by the governor and citizens of New Orleans, Governor Chester in West Florida sent a British warship and stern letter of warning to Governor Gálvez that he was not pleased with the courteous treatment of the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Ibid}, 88.

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid}, 88.
American rebels and that he would be sending additional British troops to strengthen positions along the Mississippi River, beginning at Manchac. Governor Chester repeated the gesture two additional times, with three ships, three stern letters, and three threats. Gálvez was not intimidated in the least and allowed some of Willing’s men to remain in the city as long as they liked. The governor realized, though, that the previously neutral and somewhat cordial relationship with the British in West Florida had come to an end by May, 1778.

At about the same time as tensions between Louisiana and West Florida increased, Spain developed another front for its covert aid to the American patriots. A Spanish arms dealer from Havana, Juan de Miralles, was authorized by the government in Madrid to work closely with the Captain-General of Cuba and observe the actions of the American Congress. While observing and reporting on Congress, Miralles would also ingratiate himself with those who he deemed to be key figures and position himself to be privy to information. His observations and notes would form the basis for accurate intelligence on the activities of Congress so that Spain could act accordingly with diplomatic action and material aid. Miralles initially sailed from Havana to Charleston, South Carolina and made his way northward toward Philadelphia. He arrived in late June, 1778 and took up residence in the city. Prior to hostilities between the American colonies and Britain, Miralles had traveled extensively along the East Coast, and knew its cities and some key businessmen as well. Philadelphia was familiar to him and an old friend, Robert Morris, helped introduce Miralles to Philadelphia society. The President of the Continental Congress, Henry Laurens, referred to Miralles as, “the worthy old Castilian, I have much of his company.” Miralles moved among the highest echelons not only of Philadelphia society but of

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56 Ibid, 89.
57 Ibid, 119.
the new United States. His dinner party guests regularly included George and Martha
Washington, John Jay, John and Henry Laurens, French ambassador Gerard, and Robert
Livingston. Making social and political connections allowed Juan Miralles the opportunity to
accurately gauge the sentiments of those at the most important levels of government and then
report back to the Captain-General in Havana and eventually the Court in Madrid.

Interestingly enough, in order to continue his position as observer and to exert as much
control over his lines of communication as possible, he constructed a cover story and
import/export business between Philadelphia and Havana. Legal trade with Havana could only
take place with official permits, and the Spanish government gladly facilitated the permits for
trade between Miralles’ American business partners and Havana. Miralles and his partners
conducted legitimate trade in rice, sugar, citrus fruit, and tobacco, all the while concealing the
secret correspondence that was the reason for Miralles being in America in the first place.
Robert Morris, the Philadelphia businessman and old friend of Miralles, entered into business
with him and imported quantities of fruit, rum, honey, military supplies, and exported flour
which was in great demand in Cuba. After a year of partnership, Robert Morris discovered that
Miralles was using the flour export business to conceal his confidential reports to Havana;
Morris let Miralles know this fact but that he did not object. Morris then began to use the same
system to communicate with American agents in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. In a letter
to Oliver Pollock, Morris states:

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Ibid, 127.
As vessels are lately permitted to pass and repass between this and the Havana for the conveniency of Don Juan de Miralles, we think that this will be the best mode of conveyance for our future correspondence.\textsuperscript{59}

With secure lines of communication flowing to and from Havana, Miralles supplied valuable information at a greater pace.

Miralles also made loans to individual colonies; he loaned 35,000 pesos to South Carolina, 15,000 pesos for ships and another 140,000 pesos to General Benjamin Lincoln, and also privately purchased a shipment of supplies to be picked up by Captain Willing from Oliver Pollock in New Orleans. The supplies from New Orleans included 9,000 yards of blue cloth, 18,000 yards of red wool, 1,710 yards of white cloth, six boxes of quinine, eight boxes of other medicines, 22,000 pound of gunpowder, and 300 muskets with bayonets.\textsuperscript{60}

His close relationship with Henry Laurens provided him with copies of letters and reports of news from the Southern theater of the war, as well as copies of dispatches from both George Washington in the north and Benjamin Lincoln in the south. Through contact with ships arriving at port, Miralles gathered information as well, and it was in this way in November of 1779 that Miralles learned of the military victories of Gálvez and his forces along the Mississippi.\textsuperscript{61}

Although proficient in his observation and intelligence gathering, no official diplomatic title or designation was forthcoming from Havana or Madrid, which prevented Miralles from engaging in official diplomatic activities. Working through the French ambassador, Miralles pushed for a joint Continental-Spanish army attack on St. Augustine, East Florida. Going so far as to reach out to his friend General Washington and committing to a financial aspect of Spanish support,

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid, 128.

\textsuperscript{60}Calleja Leal, \textit{Gálvez and Spain}, 134.

\textsuperscript{61}Cummins, \textit{SpanishObservers}, 133.
Miralles advocated for a southern attack. General Philip Schuyler personally carried Miralles’ plan and correspondence to General Washington, but while Washington agreed that a strike against Britain in Florida would please him, he did not see the strategic advantage of bypassing the British-controlled city of Savannah, Georgia. Stymied by the American inaction in the south, he then wrote to General Lincoln in South Carolina, offering him to draw a personal bill of exchange on Miralles for the amount of $140,000.00 to purchase much needed supplies for his Continental troops.\textsuperscript{62} By this gesture Miralles hoped to further entice Congress to agree to a joint American-Spanish attack on East Florida, but it never materialized.

Juan de Miralles enjoyed the friendship and mutual respect of the most prominent members of American government, and as a gesture of friendship, General Washington invited him to a troop review at army headquarters on April 17, in Morristown, New Jersey. Miralles and the French ambassador enjoyed the military review but on the way back to Philadelphia, Miralles contracted pulmonic fever. Washington provided his own physician and quarters at Ford House for the comfort and care of Miralles, but on April 28, 1780, Miralles died.\textsuperscript{63} General Washington was particularly moved at the death of his friend, and held a military memorial service at headquarters in Morristown, as well as wrote a letter to Captain-General Navarro in Havana praising the character of Miralles. With the passing of Miralles, American interests lost a powerful voice at the Spanish Court. Juan de Miralles’ secretary Francisco Rendon would attempt to carry on his mission, but with the formal entry of Spain as a combatant

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid, 157.

\textsuperscript{63}Ibid, 162.
in June 1779, and the flow of trade between American ports and Havana already having been established, the need for an observer and clandestine intelligence gathering all but dissipated.

While tensions between Spain and Britain escalated along the Gulf Coast of North America, the situation with France, Spain, and Britain across the Atlantic grew increasingly tense as well. Having declared its support for the American cause in February of 1778 with the Treaty of Alliance, France effectively declared war on Britain. Britain returned the favor in March of 1778 with a formal declaration of war on France. While a blessing for the Americans who desperately needed French aid, diplomats like the Comte de Vergennes hoped for a situation in which France could draw on aid from its allies in the event of an all-out war with Britain, and not the current proxy war in the American colonies. In June of the same year off the coast of Cornwall, England, a British warship fired on a French frigate which fired back at the British ship and managed to escape. France now could show to its citizens and more importantly allies that the British acted aggressively and France should receive the support of its allies in any future action. In the coming weeks, a back and forth series of naval engagements between France and Britain took place. Now engaged in planning for contingencies not only in the American colonies but in France’s possessions around the globe, French diplomats and military strategists hurried to plan for attack and defense. In addition to the preparations for increased conflict between the two nations, France and Spain entertained the idea of signing a more binding agreement particular to the new state of war between France and Britain. The situation must have been obvious to strategists in London, because King George III instructed the British cabinet to not negotiate any treaties with Spain, as he addressed Lord North:

64 Ferreiro, Brothers at Arms, 111.
I have no doubt next spring, Spain will join France, but if we can keep her quiet till then I trust the British navy will be in a state to cope with both nations.\textsuperscript{65} Spain, especially the Marques de Grimaldi’s replacement the Conde de Floridablanca, wanted to maintain the appearance of being neutral. Of course convert aid flowed to New Orleans to the Americans, but officially Spain still maintained neutrality, primarily to buy time for a fleet of troop transports to return from Buenos Aires with troops that fought in Brazil, and for the annual treasure fleet to reach Spain from the port of Veracruz in New Spain, present day Mexico. This particular treasure fleet, loaded with the equivalent of 50 billion dollars in today’s money was vital to the Spanish economy.\textsuperscript{66} While wanting to come to France’s aid as a Bourbon Family member, the Conde de Floridablanca also wanted to ensure that Spain had every advantage going in to any negotiations. France, with the planning and urging of the Comte de Vergennes, entered into an alliance of mutual defense with the American colonies on February 6, 1778, but Spain’s response to France’s alliance with the American colonies was to wait on their two fleets to arrive back in Spain and then formulate any decision to formally enter the war or not. The court in Madrid also received information from their posts in the Indies that it would take time and planning to reinforce positions before declaring war on Britain.\textsuperscript{67} By the end of 1778, both fleets had arrived safely in Spain. The stage was now set for Spain to act on its frustration with Britain and to also come to aid of its closest ally, France. Spain wanted Gibraltar and Minorca back, lost to the British at the end of the Seven Years’ War, and they also wanted Britain out of East and West Florida, as well as completely out of Central America. Floridablanca saw that the naval

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid, 113.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid, 114.

\textsuperscript{67} Ferreiro, \textit{Brothers at Arms}, 120.
duels back and forth between Britain and France amounted to nothing in way of decisive
victories for either side, and decided to use the fact that Spain had a formidable navy that could
combine with France’s navy and defeat the British. In exchange for helping France protect its
possessions in the Caribbean and North America from the British navy, Spain wanted France to
agree to help with an invasion of Britain so that the British would agree to leave Florida and
Central America and return Gibraltar and Minorca. France agreed to the proposal and on April
12, 1779, the Conde de Floridablanca and the French ambassador Comte de Montmorin signed
the “Treaty of Defense and Offensive Alliance Against England” at the palace of Aranjuez. The
treaty, commonly known as the Treaty of Aranjuez, preceded Spain’s declaration of war on June
21, 1779. In the treaty, Spain detailed its objectives in a war with Britain:

The Catholic King has the intention to acquire by war and the future peace treaty
the following advantages: 1st, the restitution of Gibraltar; 2nd, the possession of the
river and the fort on Mobile; 3rd, the restoration of Pensacola with all the coast of
Florida near the Bahama Channel, expelling from it all foreign domination; 4th,
the expulsion of the British from the Bay of Honduras and the fulfillment by them
of the prohibition stated in the 1763 Treaty of Paris to establish neither there nor
in any other Spanish territory any kind of settlement; 5th, the revocation of the
privilege granted to the British of cutting logwood [palo de tinte] on the coast of
Campeche; and 6th, the restitution of the island of Minorca.68

Spain, now officially at war with Britain, could move forward with aid for the American patriots
and begin military operations against the British along the Mississippi River and Gulf Coast.
Governor Bernardo de Gálvez wasted no time in planning an attack on the British is Louisiana.

68 Quintero Saravia, Bernardo de Gálvez, 144.
Chapter Five

ACTIVE SUPPORT FOR THE PATRIOT CAUSE

For several years up to the summer of 1779, Spain had provided covert aid to the patriots. Through agents such as Oliver Pollock in New Orleans, and the Spanish government officials in Spain, Cuba, and Louisiana, gunpowder, arms, cloth, and other supplies made their way to the Continental Army. By late June of 1779 however, all covert assistance from Spain to the Continental Army ceased; Spain officially declared war on Great Britain on June 21, 1779. Spain wanted to gain control of both East and West Florida, and put an end to the threat of British attacks on New Spain (Mexico) and Cuba once and for all. A month before the official declaration of war, the administrator for Spain’s commercial and military activities in the Indies, José de Gálvez, wrote to his nephew Bernardo de Gálvez in New Orleans. The elder Gálvez’s letter to his nephew the governor of Louisiana stated that war with Britain was imminent, and that within two months’ receipt of the letter, Bernardo de Gálvez was to commence hostilities with British forces.69 From observers and agents in New York and Florida, Governor Gálvez knew that British regular and Loyalist troops and supplies had been sent to posts in Florida and along the Mississippi River at Fort Bute located at Manchac.70 Governor Gálvez, being both a politician and military man, understood that an impending declaration of war and sudden enemy troop movements in his territory could only mean that an attack on New Orleans was imminent. To plan for an offensive against the British posts in Louisiana, in July Gálvez called for a junta de generales, or a meeting of generals, to formulate plans and decide on a preferred course of

69 Ferreiro, Brothers at Arms, 160.

70 Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez, 149.
action. After convening the meeting, Gálvez and his officers agreed that New Orleans was vulnerable to attack on several fronts and that the city needed to be made more defensible.\textsuperscript{71}

According to historians Guillermo and Gregorio Calleja Leal, Gálvez devised a plan that:

\ldots consisted of preparing the defenses of the city, but the main priority was forming an expeditionary army with all their available forces to seize the initiative in the campaign and attack the enemy directly before they had the chance \textit{[to attack New Orleans]}.\textsuperscript{72}

While one officer suggested that Spanish posts in more remote areas should consider surrender if confronted with British forces, one Spanish official wanted a more aggressive plan; Bernardo de Gálvez felt that a quick attack on the nearest British outpost would work better than waiting for the enemy to prepare for their own offensive. Gálvez kept his plan for an attack on the nearest British outpost at Fort Bute at Manchac a secret from all but his most trusted officer. Juan Antonio Gayarré, Gálvez’s confidant, collected necessary supplies for the expedition. As commissary of war, similar to quartermaster, Gayarré assembled arms, ammunition, food, and commandeered several small vessels to serve a gunboats.\textsuperscript{73} The plan to depart New Orleans for the attack on Fort Bute on August 23, 1779 was interrupted by a force more powerful than an enemy attack or an order from Madrid; a hurricane struck the New Orleans area, sinking all the gunboats and damaging several structures in the city, as well as ruining crops. Instead of postponing the campaign indefinitely, Gálvez met with the \textit{junta de generales} and told them of his plan to attack Fort Bute. Historian Gonzalo Quintero Saravia states that:

Any other governor would have used the hurricane as an excuse for staying in New Orleans while trying to recover. Instead, Gálvez argued that if before the hurricane the

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid, 150.

\textsuperscript{72}Calleja Leal, \textit{Gálvez and Spain}, 124.

\textsuperscript{73}Caughey, \textit{Bernardo de Gálvez}, 151.
British could hardly believe that the Spaniards were going to attack, now, ‘because of the destruction of the hurricane, they will certainly believe that we are almost defeated.’ Thus, it was the perfect opportunity for a surprise attack.\(^{74}\)

He then commandeered more small vessels from the area, loaded ten cannon on them as well as munitions, and sent the small fleet up the Mississippi River. Captain Julian Alvarez commanded the river force while Governor Gálvez commanded the land forces with Jacinto Panis, Estevan Miró, and Manuel Gonzales serving as officers. The force consisted of 170 trained regular soldiers of the Príncipe, España, and Fixed of Havana regiments, 330 recruits from Mexico, 20 riflemen or carabineros, 80 free blacks or persons of mixed race, and 7 American volunteers.\(^{75}\) Oliver Pollock, financier and personal friend of Gálvez, was among the American volunteers. He declined an offer of an officer’s commission in the Spanish ranks, preferring to consider himself American and carry the American flag into battle alongside the Spanish banner.\(^{76}\) Conspicuously absent from the troops’ supplies were tents or shelters. According the Gálvez, the force consisted of:

…men of all conditions, nations, and colors, without an engineer or artillery officer,” and Pollock, “an agent from the Congress, who made with me the whole campaign.”

Governor Gálvez intended to make the attack of Fort Bute a quick and decisive affair. As the forces marched north toward Manchac, volunteers swelled their ranks. Upwards of 600 colonists and 160 natives joined Gálvez’s expedition and brought the total number of the force to over 1400. After marching nearly 120 miles in 11 days, a third of the force was sick or incapacitated but the objective was reached on September 6.\(^ {77}\)

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\(^{74}\) Quintero Saravia, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, 146.

\(^{75}\) Calleja Leal, *Gálvez and Spain*, 138.

\(^{76}\) Ibid, 138.

When the troops were within sight of Fort Bute, Gálvez halted the advance and sent a courier to announce to the British garrison that Spain was now at war with Britain, a fact with which the British were unaware. To prevent the British at Fort Bute from sending a messenger to Baton Rouge, Gálvez ordered the road to be guarded, and the Spanish camped for the night. The following day, the order to attack the fort was issued. Troops under officer Gilbert Antoine de Saint-Maxent attacked, but were surprised to find that the majority of the garrison had been evacuated and moved north to Baton Rouge, per the orders of British Lieutenant Colonel Dickson, commander of the garrison at Baton Rouge. All in all, the Spanish did not suffer a single casualty in the attack on Fort Bute, and captured one captain, one lieutenant, and eighteen soldiers.78

With the first battle behind them and having had the morale boost of a victory, albeit a small one, the Spanish marched toward Baton Rouge. The fortifications at Baton Rouge presented a more difficult challenge for Gálvez and his men than the smaller Fort Bute. Within a relatively short period of time, the 400 British troops evacuated from Fort Bute joined with the 100 or so troops already stationed at Baton Rouge and constructed fortifications that included a defensive ditch eighteen feet wide and nine feet deep, with an earthen wall inside the ditch and a circle of palisades outside of the ditch.79 Gálvez’s ten artillery pieces faced off against thirteen pieces of similar size inside the British fort, and Gálvez decided against an all-out frontal attack, favoring a siege so as to avoid unnecessary casualties. After several days of siege, Gálvez and his officers decided on a plan to defeat the British with a diversion and bombardment. On the

78 Calleja Leal, Gálvez and Spain, 139.
79 Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez, 155.
night of September 20th, Spanish troops created a diversion by appearing to construct fortifications on one side of the British fort. Felling trees, hammering, and creating as much noise as possible caused the British to direct musket and artillery fire in the direction of the supposed construction. With so much attention being given to the diversion, the British did not notice the Spanish artillery being moved closer and closer to the opposite side of the fort. On the morning of the 21st, the British realized their folly and began to fire on the newly constructed redoubts; it was too little too late. The Spanish artillery shelled the fort for several hours, creating a breach in a wall through which the infantry was to charge with fixed bayonets. By mid-afternoon, the British bargained for a truce. Gálvez demanded surrender and Lieutenant Colonel Dickson and his 375 remaining troops surrendered after a short time to bury their dead. A contingent of colonists was allowed to return to their homes, “because of the generous heart of the commander and because of the impossibility of guarding them.” As part of the terms of surrender, Gálvez compelled the British commander to forfeit Fort Panmure at Natchez. The fort had a garrison of eighty Grenadiers and an excellent strategic position, and Gálvez sent Spanish Captain Juan Delavillebeuvre and fifty men, along with British Captain Barber and a letters from Lieutenant Colonel Dickson and Oliver Pollock to finalize the surrender at Natchez. The fort formally surrendered on October 5, 1779 without incident with the garrison of eighty men including commander Captain Anthony Forster, their arms, and colors. While at Natchez, the letter from Pollock was read and it succeeded in getting the citizens of Natchez to swear an oath of loyalty to His Majesty King Carlos III. In his letter, Pollock also informed the inhabitants that Spain recognized the United States’ independence and:

… [he took] this first occasion of congratulating you, knowing that your favorable sentiments toward the glorious Cause of Liberty will now have an opportunity of being distinguished, and securing the enjoyment of the good protection of his Most Catholic Majesty’s Arms.  

Figure 1  

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81 Caughey, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, 158.

82 Calleja Leal, *Gálvez and Spain*, 444.
Another of the early successes for the Spanish against the British occurred not on land, but on water. Britain had always valued control of the region’s waterways. The Mississippi River, the jewel in the crown of North American waterways, provided access to the Gulf of Mexico in the south and the fertile lands along its banks to the north. The Ohio and Missouri Rivers could be reached from the Mississippi as well, allowing access both west and east with relative ease compared to overland routes. Other waterways of vital importance to trade and commerce existed, however, two of those waterways being Lakes Borgne and Pontchartrain. Both lakes are situated to the north and north east of the city of New Orleans, and by sailing from the Gulf of Mexico west into Lake Borgne, through the Rigolets Pass, past the Pearl River and into Lake Pontchartrain, a large area of fertile farmland can be easily accessed. This geographic area had been settled by European planters since the days of New Orleans’ founding and inhabitants included not only French, Spanish, and Germans, but Anglos from the British colonies as well. The presence of Anglos loyal, or at the very least sympathetic, to the British Crown caused some concern for Spanish authorities in New Orleans before the official declaration of war with Britain in May, 1779. The presence of inhabitants particularly sympathetic to Britain had been noted by American colonists familiar with the area around the commercial center of Natchez, in what is now Mississippi. A local merchant, James Willing, attempted to incite action against the British inhabitants of the Natchez area shortly after learning news of the revolution, to no avail. A native of Philadelphia, Willing returned to the east coast and offered his services to the Continental Congress to lead a military expedition to clear the Mississippi River valley of British threats to the vital waterway. Congress issued orders for the new Captain Willing to purchase a small boat and proceed down the Ohio River with an escort of
about thirty Marines. Willing and his party quickly made their way down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, raiding plantations and settlements loyal to the British Crown and gathering plunder along the way. When Captain Willing’s men reached vicinity of Lake Pontchartrain, they captured a British corvette that was moored at Manchac, on the western edge of Lake Pontchartrain. The Americans took the corvette, a smaller vessel of fifty to sixty feet, and sold her to the American agent Oliver Pollock in New Orleans. As the official agent in Louisiana for the Continental Congress, Pollock had the authority to purchase the prize and change her name from the Rebecca to the Morris in honor of the Philadelphia financier Robert Morris, and place the ship under the command of Continental Navy Captain William Pickles. With the rechristened ship and a small compliment of guns, four two and a half pound and one one and a half pound guns, Captain Pickles and fifty sailors set out to hunt British ships in and around the Lake Pontchartrain area.

The British sloop HMS West Florida had patrolled shipping on the lakes near New Orleans, Lake Pontchartrain in particular, since 1777. Under the command of Captain Payne of the Royal Navy, the West Florida had been instrumental in enforcing anti-smuggling operations from the Natchez area to the markets in New Orleans, and as a British naval vessel, also acted as a deterrent to American rebel attempts to smuggle supplies from New Orleans across Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne. After taking command of the Morris in 1779, Captain Pickles sought to eliminate British supremacy on the lakes and help rid the area of British threats to trade between New Orleans and the patriot cause. The captain and crew of the Morris patrolled the waters of Lake Pontchartrain and finally spotted the sails of HMS West Florida on September

10, 1779. Captain Pickles then employed a ruse in order to get closer to the *West Florida*. The crew of the *Morris* raised a British flag and announced that it was a merchant ship and as the ships came closer, Captain Pickles struck the British colors, ran up a Continental flag and opened fire. The crew of the *West Florida* had little time to react before a boarding party under Lieutenant Rousseau of the *Morris* attempted to take control of her. Repulsed by the British crew, Lieutenant Rousseau and his men attempted to board a second time and succeeded. When the boarders took control of the *West Florida*, they saw Captain Payne leap over the side of the ship and swim to safety.\(^{84}\) Pickles and his men took the remaining crew prisoner and Lieutenant Rousseau assumed command of the *West Florida* and followed the *Morris* to the north shore of the lake. With the defeat and capture of HMS *West Florida*, British naval power on the lakes around New Orleans ended. Pickles then landed a party of his men on Lake Pontchartrain’s north shore between the settlements of Bayou Lacombe and the Tangipahoa River and compelled the inhabitants to sign an oath of loyalty to the United States. The signers affirmed that, “We do hereby acknowledge ourselves to be natives as well as true and faithful subjects to the United Independent States of North America.” The defeat and capture of a British warship and the acknowledgement of the area’s inhabitants of the supremacy of the Continental government was added to by another victory near Manchac, in which Spanish Captain Vicente Rillieux and fourteen Creole sailors captured a British ship transporting fifty six soldiers of the Waldeck Regiment and ten to twelve sailors. With this handful of victories on and around Lake Pontchartrain, Spanish and patriot superiority was cemented.\(^{85}\)

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\(^{84}\) Calleja Leal, *Gálvez and Spain*, 141.

\(^{85}\) Ibid, 142.
Within the space of less than two months, the incredibly diverse and motivated forces under Governor Gálvez eliminated the entire British military threat along the Mississippi River. When news of the surrenders Baton Rouge and Natchez reached the British at Pensacola, the chaplain of the Waldeck infantry regiment wrote, “Isn’t this one cursed country where most of the army units can be taken prisoner in five weeks and 200 miles of the country captured by the enemy and the commanding general doesn’t even know for certain that it’s true?”

After securing the Mississippi River and Natchez District, Gálvez turned his attention to British forts at Mobile and Pensacola. Both installations consisted of larger fortifications and artillery batteries and larger numbers of British troops than had been encountered in the Mississippi campaign. Gálvez, upon requesting additional troops and ships for the assaults on the two objectives, received orders from Spain:

> The king has determined that the principal object of his forces in America during the war against the English shall be to expel them from the Gulf of Mexico and the banks of the Mississippi where their establishments are so prejudicial to our commerce and also to the security of our more valuable possessions.

Noting then that he should eliminate all British military installations along the Gulf Coast and not just along the Mississippi, Gálvez looked east toward Mobile and Pensacola. General John Campbell, commander of British forces in West Florida at Pensacola, had been busy with preparations for a British attack on New Orleans after receiving news of the Spanish declaration of war. Campbell assembled a group of five vessels, two flatboats, and 500 men, supplies, and

86 Calleja Leal, 140.  
87 Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez, 171.
trade goods to placate native tribes along the way. Unfortunately for General Campbell, he received word of Lieutenant Colonel Dickson’s surrender at Baton Rouge and Fort Panmure, as well as the defeat at Fort Bute. Plans for an attack on the Spanish in New Orleans quickly changed to plans for the defense of Mobile and Pensacola.

The Spanish successes along the Mississippi River had an unsettling effect on British garrisons at near as Mobile and Pensacola and as far away as St. Augustine in East Florida. General Campbell, commander at Pensacola even regarded the news of Captain Dickson’s surrender at Baton Rouge as false until it was confirmed by a second messenger. Lieutenant Colonel Füser, commander at St. Augustine, wrote to Sir Henry Clinton in New York that, “[We] should we receive a similar visit from Havana, I shall do what ought to be done; but I have not the gift to perform miracles.”

All told, the reaction of British officers along the Gulf coast and East Florida showed that the threat of Spanish attack, whether from New Orleans or Havana, was very real. Small garrisons like Mobile would be most vulnerable, but posts like Fort George at Pensacola could shore up defenses and request more supplies from other posts. The royal decree from Carlos III rang in the ears of Gálvez and his officers that the main object of the Spanish in the war against the British was to push them from the Gulf of Mexico and the banks of the Mississippi River.

While the British commander pivoted from an attack mindset to one of defense, the Spanish in New Orleans faced challenges of their own. Even before the expedition up the

88 Starr, Tories, Dons, and Rebels, 147.

89 Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez, 171.

90 Ibid, 171.
Mississippi River to their victories at Fort Bute, Baton Rouge, Fort Panmure, and the capture of HMS *West Florida* on Lake Pontchartrain, Bernardo de Gálvez had worked on plans for taking the British installations at Mobile and Pensacola. Long before the Spanish declaration of war against Britain in June 1779, Governor Gálvez sought intelligence on British defenses at Mobile and Pensacola. To that end, he sent Captain Jacinto Panis of the Spanish army to both Mobile and Pensacola to deliver a written complaint to the Governor of West Florida, Peter Chester in February, 1778. In reality, the cover of courier for Governor Gálvez’s complaint of “repeated insults committed on the Mississippi River by the English”\(^\text{91}\) was an opportunity for Panis to view the defenses, gun emplacements, and troops with the eyes of a military strategist. While friction between English and Spanish traders along the Mississippi did in fact exist, the bigger picture was to gain useful military intelligence about both British strongholds. As anticipated, Captain Panis’ mission succeeded, and he reported back to Governor Gálvez in July of the same year. First, Captain Panis reported that in Mobile, “The fortifications are in a very bad condition and the barracks are in an equally bad state. The walls are going to ruin. Almost all the artillery is dismounted, and the trenches in some places are choked up.” In contrast, according to Panis the fortifications at Pensacola were being repaired and artillery was being fitted with new mounts.\(^\text{92}\) From Captain Panis’ reports, an experienced officer like Gálvez would see immediate opportunity and acted accordingly. With a lack of adequate ocean going vessels to transport sufficient troops, and a real need for a larger quantity of supplies for a larger number of troops, Gálvez looked to Havana for assistance. Havana, Cuba was the first major port in the Indies, and all material, men, and supplies that Gálvez would need for an expedition would come from there.

\(^{91}\) Ferreiro, *Brothers at Arms*, 136.

\(^{92}\) Ibid, 137.
Colonel José Manuel de Ezpeleta traveled to Havana to petition the Captain-General of Cuba, Diego José de Navarro de Valladares, for the necessary troops, ships, and supplies and also to act as administrator or quartermaster to assemble the components of the expedition. Gálvez sent Ezpeleta to Havana with written instructions for the needed troops and supplies to be delivered to the War Council in Havana. Captain-General of Havana Navarro agreed to send troops to support Gálvez at Mobile, but not in the quantity requested by Ezpeleta or the second messenger sent by Gálvez, Esteban Miro. The Captain-General decided that his own garrison could not bear the reduction of the 1,300 to 2,000 men that Gálvez requested, and instead agreed to send 567 men of the Navarra Regiment to join with the Louisiana Battalion. Four ships with the men and requested supplies departed from Havana on February 10th, en route to rendezvous with Gálvez.\(^93\) Meanwhile, Governor Gálvez understood that the wheels of government bureaucracy often turned slowly, so he set about preparing for an attack on Mobile with what he had available in New Orleans.\(^94\) He rechristened the HMS *West Florida*, taken by Captain Pickles as a prize on Lake Pontchartrain, as the *Gálvestown*. Along with other ships acquired in the area and fitted with guns, Gálvez had a small seagoing fleet of fourteen vessels ready.\(^95\) Gálvez and his fleet set their course for Fort Charlotte, the British post in Mobile Bay, on January 11, 1780. The Spanish navigators knew that Fort Charlotte and Mobile lay about 200 miles to the east of New Orleans, so they could expect a relatively short journey.

Soon after departing New Orleans, Gálvez’s expedition encountered a fierce winter storm that delayed their arrival to Mobile by almost two months. Arriving in late February from what


\(^94\) Calleja Leal, *Gálvez and Spain*, 147.

\(^95\) Ferreiro, *Brothers at Arms*, 163.
should have been a short trip down the Mississippi River and along a short stretch of coastline, the Spanish immediately encountered problems. Due to a storm, three of Gálvez’s ships ran aground on a sandbar at the entrance to Mobile Bay, and could not be freed while the storm still raged. One of the Spanish officers directed that the stranded ships be offloaded of anything heavy, such as cannon, munitions, etc., and two of the smaller ships were freed. Using the cannon from the remaining stranded vessel, the Spanish set up an artillery battery at the mouth of the bay to guard against incoming British vessels. According to historian John Caughey, Gálvez noted that he had encountered hardship with the loss of supplies and some artillery, but had a positive attitude and decided to attack Fort Charlotte rather than regroup and retreat to New Orleans.\textsuperscript{96} Gálvez received word by a small Spanish vessel that reinforcements would be arriving soon from Havana, and by February 25th, Gálvez and his men were encamped near Fort Charlotte as the back of Mobile Bay, joined by the ships and men from Havana. By March 1st, Gálvez and the British Captain Elias Durnford, commander of Fort Charlotte, began correspondence related to surrender of the fort. Spanish officer Francisco Bouligny, a personal friend of Durnford, delivered the correspondence from Gálvez and after a pleasant dinner and drinking a “cheerful glass” as a toast to each other’s kings, Durnford even sent Gálvez and his officers wine, mutton, fresh bread, and a dozen chickens.\textsuperscript{97} Governor Gálvez returned the British favor in kind with a cases of wine, boxes of fresh citrus fruit, a box of tea biscuits, and cigars.\textsuperscript{98} While the mood between the opposing forces was genial, even chivalrous, natives loyal to the British delivered intelligence that made Durnford feel that they could withstand a Spanish attack.

\textsuperscript{96} Caughey, \textit{Bernardo de Gálvez}, 176.

\textsuperscript{97} Ferreiro, \textit{Brothers at Arms}, 163.

\textsuperscript{98} Caughey, \textit{Bernardo de Gálvez}, 178.
Gálvez’s forces had suffered not only a setback with the storm on their way to Mobile, but some of the smaller ships had been damaged while navigating shallow waters. In a letter to General Campbell at Pensacola, Captain Durnford states:

As soon as Colonel Bolyny [sic] left me I drew up my Garrison in the square, read to them Don Gálvez’s summons, and then told them that if any man among them was afraid to stand by me, that I should open the gate and he should freely pass. The speech had the desired effect, and not a man moved. I then read to them my answer to the summons, in which they all joined in three cheers and then to our necessary work like good men.99

Gálvez and Durnford continued to politely correspond, all the while both making plans for defense on one hand and attack on the other. By communicating with his superiors at Pensacola, Captain Durnford no doubt hoped for reinforcements from the British garrison to the east. At the same time, Gálvez’s men began work on digging trenches and constructing emplacements for their artillery pieces, eight eighteen pounders and one twenty-four pounder. Two hundred Spanish troops guarded the three hundred troops working on the trenches and batteries.

On March 11th, General Campbell’s reinforcements arrived by land within several miles still of Fort Charlotte but near enough to hear the Spanish cannon bombarding the fort. According to native intelligence, the force from Pensacola consisted of 1,100 men, two larger cannon, a howitzer, and native allies from the Creek tribe. The Spanish found themselves in a precarious position with the ongoing bombardment of the fort and the prospect of attack from Campbell. Gálvez ordered an intense bombardment of the fort while guarding against an attack by the land forces under Campbell, and by the evening of March 12th, the British inside Fort

99Ibid, 178.
Charlotte raised a white flag and proposed surrender. Gálvez demanded the surrender of all combatants and the fort, and terms were agreed to two days later on March 14th. Captain Durnford sent a letter to General Campbell informing him of the surrender, and upon receipt of the letter, Campbell began a retreat back to Pensacola. In total, the British lost 200 killed in battle and an undetermined number of wounded, 307 soldiers and sailors surrendered, and thirty-five cannon, eight mortars, and a large quantity of gunpowder and munitions lost to the victorious Spanish. In a letter to his uncle at the Court of His Majesty Carlos III in Madrid, Bernardo de Gálvez stated that his men performed admirably and made mention that with proper reinforcements from Havana he could have begun the advance on to Pensacola. Upon receiving word of the Spanish victory over the British at Mobile, the king promoted Gálvez to not only Field Marshal, but Governor of Louisiana and Mobile, and commander of all military operations in North America. British post after British post fell before the Spanish, providing morale boost and much needed surplus weapons, powder, and munitions. The new Field Marshal’s uncle José de Gálvez wrote of his nephew’s victory at Mobile:

In fact, the capture of an important town, well-fortified and courageously defended is a praiseworthy action. But how much more does a great feat deserve to be lauded when carried out with in insufficient force, recently rescued from two shipwrecks, with barely any food supplies and burdened by fatigue, and even more when attack was made within sight of a superior enemy force….  

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100 Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez, 181.

101 Calleja Leal, Gálvez and Spain, 160.

102 Ibid, 160.
The next goal lay ahead, the defeat of Pensacola.

Days after the surrender of Fort Charlotte, Field Marshal Gálvez awaited a fleet from Havana. After weeks of delays and frustration, during which time Gálvez and his men defeated the British at Mobile and now sat idle, Gálvez still waited for work from Havana’s Captain-General and commander of the naval force, Admiral Juan Bautista Bonet. Neither Navarro nor Bonet wanted to spare ships or troops for an attack on Pensacola, feeling that the threat of attack from the British in Jamaica or in the West Indies was very real.

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103 Ibíd, 445.
After the victory over the British forces at Fort Charlotte, and the frustration felt by Gálvez over the lack of support from Havana for an immediate Pensacola expedition, Spanish officials in Havana received new information on British plans in the west. Britain still wanted to expel all American and Spanish settlements along the Mississippi River in order to control the waterway. Control of the Mississippi would mean control of the western supply routes to the Continental Army via the Ohio River, and an ample staging area when or if an attack on New Orleans occurred. In August, 1780, Juan de Urriza, comptroller of the Spanish army in Havana learned details of a British plan to attack St. Louis (Missouri) and then move southward to plan an attack on New Orleans.104 Urriza immediately notified José de Gálvez in Madrid of the British plot and its outcome. Months earlier in London, Lord George Germain, the Secretary of State for the American Colonies sent word to the commander of British forces in Canada to prepare for an attack on St. Louis from the north. General Frederick Haldimand, commander in Canada, tasked General Patrick Sinclair in Lower Canada (present day Michigan) with executing the plan, which consisted of three parts:

1. British Army to rendezvous with the natives from the Sioux, Menominee, Winnebago, Sauk, Fox, and Ottowa tribes at the mouth of the Wisconsin River on March 10, 1780.
2. British and native combined forces to conduct surprise attacks on military outposts of St. Louis in the northwest (Missouri).
3. British and native combined forces to continue down Mississippi River and attack Spanish forces guarding the approach to Natchez.105

General Sinclair set out with an initial combined force totaling 750 men, but as the expedition marched on, more volunteers joined the group. Reinforcements that should have come from Fort

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104 Calleja Leal, *Gálvez and Spain*, 169.

105 Ibid, 170.
George in Pensacola could not join because of uncertainty in the region following the defeat of forces at Fort Charlotte weeks before.

St. Louis presented a seemingly easy target for the large British and native American force. The settlement of St. Louis consisted of about 800 inhabitants, most of them involved in trade along the river and valley and occupied with the lucrative fur trade. Spanish commander of the post, Captain Fernando de Leyba, had a small garrison of twenty five soldiers and thirty five civilians with which to defend the town. A broad network of traders, river navigators, and other observers kept Captain Leyba well informed of the advancing forces, and with a call for financial help among St. Louis citizens, Leyba collected enough funds to improve the town’s fortifications. A new parapet, a watchtower, and a stockade were constructed in preparation for the impending attack. In addition to the physical preparations, Captain Leyba requested troops from New Orleans, but Governor Gálvez sent no aid from New Orleans. Despondent, Leyba sent a message to Continental General George Rogers Clark, pleading for immediate assistance. On May 9th, Captain Leyba’s network of informants reported a force of 300 British and 900 natives only eighty leagues distant (about 276 miles) from St. Louis. General Clark’s help was needed immediately. Colonel Montgomery and a Captain Clark, nephew of the general, arrived in St. Louis and promised aid in the form of boats, men, and munitions, but with the close proximity of the large enemy force, Leyba felt that the help would arrive too late. Captain Leyba immediately sent a request for help to Lieutenant Silvio de Cartabona, commander of the garrison at Fort St. Genevieve. Located sixty miles downriver from St. Louis, the garrison

\[106\] Ibid, 170.

\[107\] Caughey, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, 165.
boasted a force of sharpshooters, and Lieutenant Cartabona sent 150 riflemen to assist in the
defense of St. Louis. Upon arrival of the much needed sharpshooters, Captain Leyba arranged
his resources for defense; two boats, his sixty men, the 150 men from Fort St. Genevieve, and
five artillery pieces were situated in anticipation of the attack.

On May 23rd, the British and allied tribes commenced their attack. The attacking British
and natives launched what historians consider reckless or ill-planned, not counting on the
defenders being well prepared. Launching a frontal attack against accurate rifle fire and an
artillery bombardment, the combined forces retreated after a few hours and during the hasty
retreat, some of the Sioux and Winnebago warriors were caught in friendly fire crossfire,
resulting in more casualties. The defeat of the British forces at St. Louis compounded the
British losses in the west and along the Mississippi River and secured control of the river valley
for further trade between the Spanish and Continental armies.

Shifting to the remaining British presence in the region, for the rest of 1780 excuses,
delays, and political infighting made an expedition to capture Pensacola impossible. It would not
be until early 1781, when the appropriate amount of men, material, and ships would be available
for Gálvez’s long awaited offensive. On February 28, 1781, the fleet set sail from Havana with
favorable winds, and by March 9th, land was sighted. A detachment of grenadiers and light
infantry landed at night on the 9th to take possession of an artillery battery that was reported to
exist on the island. The British artillery battery, supposed to exist on the western end of the
island, proved to be three dismantled cannons and a run-down gun emplacement, abandoned by

108 Calleja Leal, Gálvez and Spain, 171.
109 Ibid, 171.
the British.\footnote{Winston de Ville, *Yo Solo. The Battle Journal of Bernardo de Gálvez During the American Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Provincial Press, 2010), 3.} Having taken control of the western end of Santa Rosa Island, strategically important because of its relation to the entrance to Pensacola Bay, the Spanish forces commenced building an artillery battery of their own. As part of the overall Spanish plan to capture the British installation of Fort George, the main garrison at Pensacola, they needed to also protect against any British reinforcements coming by sea either from Royal Navy ships at Jamaica or on patrol in the West Indies. Gálvez’s positioning of the artillery succeeded in causing the British to retreat further to the back of the bay in and around Fort George and as a result, Gálvez decided to take further initiative.\footnote{Quintero Saravia, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, 197.} The commander of the fleet, Captain José Calvo, attempted to enter Pensacola Bay in his flagship, the *San Ramón*, but ran aground in shallow water and crushed the keel of the ship. Gálvez, energized by the prospect of finally entering the bay that he had wanted to enter for years, suggested that the commander’s flagship be the last vessel to enter the bay and that a ship of Gálvez’s choosing force the entry. According to testimony from Spanish officer Francisco de Miranda, Captain Calvo considered the suggestion an insult and for a week, letters between Calvo and Gálvez on their respective ships were exchanged.\footnote{Ibid, 197.} Finally, on March 18th, Gálvez ordered that the banner signifying the chief of squadron be raised on his ship, the *Gálveztown* (formerly the HMS *West Florida*) and Gálvez and his crew sailed unopposed into Pensacola Bay, followed by the *Valenzuela* under the command of don Juan de Riaño and other gunships.\footnote{Ibid, 200.} For the rest of the day, the entire Spanish
fleets entered the bay and anchored, all except the damaged San Ramón. Gálvez addressed his men after his triumphant entrance into the bay, stating:

I, my sons, went alone to sacrifice myself, so as not to expose a single soldier, not a man of my army, and so the navy could see that there is no danger such as they say, and that I do not want to sacrifice such a respectable corps, despite all of the troubles they have caused me, and the deceptions that they have practiced from the beginning...in this predicament...I was forced to take this course of action to set an example, sending don José Calvo a message through the engineer don Francisco Gilabert, who carried the enemy’s cannonball, of the same caliber that they were firing, to tell him that those were the ones I was going to confront bare chested while forcing entry to the port, with those with the honor and courage to follow me; and although I hoped to see them following us, I found that they did not, since he [Calvo] ordered his ships not to move; answering me with all kinds of insults, calling me reckless, and saying that if the enemy’s cannonballs did not behead me, the king himself would chop off my head.114

Once inside the outer gate, so to speak, of the bay’s entrance, the actual attack could commence. The British garrison at Pensacola a collection of varied units and officers, all under the command of General John Campbell. The garrison consisted of the 3rd Waldeck Regiment with 310 men, the 16th and 60th British Infantry regiments with 282 men, Pennsylvania and Maryland Loyalists with 273 men, Royal Foresters totaling forty one men, and fifty four officers assigned throughout the units. In addition to the regular army and Loyalists, between 400-500 natives, another fifty free blacks, and 107 armed civilians of Pensacola brought the total garrison to between 1,517-1,617, excluding 139 Royal Navy personnel.115 With the Loyalists comprising about a third of the troops at Fort George and a good number of armed civilians in the garrison as well, it is important to note that West Florida had encouraged Loyalist immigration from the

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114 Ibid.
115 Ibid, 368.
America’s colonies as early as 1775. From London, the Earl of Dartmouth wrote to Governor Chester stating that:

His Majesty wishes to afford every possible protection to such of his subjects in the colonies in rebellion, as shall be too weak to resist the violences of the times, and too loyal to concur in the measures of those who have avowed and supported that rebellion; and it is hoped that the colony under your government may… prove a secure asylum to many such….

According to historian J. Barton Starr, by mid-1776, Loyalists from America’s northern colonies began to arrive in the haven of West Florida in large numbers. In contrast to the relatively small garrison of the British, the total number of troops under the command of Gálvez at the beginning of the siege of Fort George and Pensacola totaled almost 3,200, with 1,543 Army personnel alone. Besides the British and allied personnel, Pensacola’s defenses consisted of three main structures: Fort George, the Queen’s Redoubt, and the Prince of Wales Redoubt. Fort George itself was a brick structure shored up with earthen walls, like many forts of the period. The two redoubts were situated to the north of the fort.

While Field Marshal Gálvez directed his troops to dig trenches and construct gun emplacements for the artillery, he also readied himself for further reinforcements. Troops arrived not only from New Orleans and Mobile, but another 725 French soldiers as well. All told, Bernardo de Gálvez had almost 7,500 troops under his command by mid-April 1781. General Campbell sent correspondence to his Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Clinton in New

116 Starr, Tories, Dons, Rebels, 46.

117 Ibid, 48.

118 Ibid, 216.
York. In a telling letter, dated May 7, 1781, General Campbell laments the impending situation of the garrison at Fort George:

To conclude my Lord our fate appears inevitable. We are attacked by an armament that shows the importance of the conquest in the estimation of Spain. We have notwithstanding your Lordship’s repeated instruction to attend to the safety of Pensacola, been neglected by Jamaica—and the prospect, nay, even the hope for relief is now vanished. I shall however preserve this place to His Majesty, while I shall think resistance justifiable, and of any profitable advantage to the King’s interest. I apprehend, My Lord, my next will be the unpleasant and disagreeable task of reporting the triumph of Spain, and their acquisition of a province under their dominion. I only comfort myself with the hope that my endeavors, and those of the garrison under my command, for the defense [of Pensacola], will be acceptable to His Majesty.¹¹⁹

Judging by the tone of Campbell’s letter to Sir Henry Clinton, the bleak outlook for a viable defense of Pensacola must have been shared by most, if not all, of the garrison. At the time of General Campbell’s writing, work on Spanish trenches in the vicinity of the Queen’s and Prince of Wales redoubts had begun. For days, skirmishes in and around the trenches and redoubts occurred with several casualties, mainly on the Spanish and French side. As the artillery battery nearest the Queen’s Redoubt was completed, the Spanish artillery commenced a new bombardment of the Queen’s Redoubt. From Gálvez’s own battle journal historians know that at 6:00 AM on May 8th, “the fire from the Crescent (Queen’s Redoubt) was renewed, to which the redoubt with the two howitzers responded with great success, as one of our grenades set fire to the powder magazine, which in turn blew up the Crescent (Queen’s Redoubt) with its garrison of 105 men.”¹²⁰ In short, a lucky shot from a howitzer’s exploding shell hit the power magazine of

¹¹⁹Ibid, 211.
¹²⁰De Ville, Yo Solo, 29.
the Queen’s Redoubt and exploded, and in the ensuing confusion and carnage, Spanish light infantry rushed into the vacuum created and held the position. According to Gálvez’s journal:

The firing continued without interruption until 3 o’clock in the afternoon, at which time a white flag was hoisted by Fort George and an aide of General Campbell’s arrived to propose in his behalf a suspension until the following day in order to capitulate. The General went immediately to the place where an English officer waited for him, and not having agreed to the suspension, unless the English would begin to capitulate, Campbell proposed several articles, some of which were refused and others accepted. At 1 o’clock in the morning, both Generals came to an agreement.121

With the actions of May 8th, 1781, the last vestige of British power in the Gulf of Mexico region came to an end. Through the efforts of not only Field Marshal Gálvez, but his diverse group of officers, men, and sailors, and the French forces, within a relatively short period of time the British stronghold at Pensacola was defeated. The spoils of war included about 1,000 prisoners of war, four mortars, 143 cannon, six howitzers, forty swivel guns, thousands of artillery rounds, shells, grenades, and the like, 298 hundred-weights of gunpowder, and tens of thousands of infantry stores such as muskets, bayonets, swords, flints, and bullets.122 This material not only

121Ibid, 30.

122Starr, Tories, Dons, and Rebels, 212.
helped the Spanish war effort but denied its use by the British in Florida or other theaters.

Figure 3

\[\text{Calleja Leal, Gálvez and Spain, 445.}\]
Chapter Six
EFFECT OF SPANISH AID

Throughout the years of America’s rebellion against the British, America received foreign aid, most notably from France. The French contribution to American independence can be seen with the actions of the thousands of French troops on the ground at Yorktown, or the actions of the French fleet in the Atlantic, or by the leadership of the dynamic Marquis de Lafayette. Spain’s contribution to American independence, if known of at all, is not recognized as being of major significance. The reality of the matter is far different. The military actions taken by the Governor of Louisiana, Bernardo de Gálvez, had important and positive effects: one, the successive victories at Fort Bute, Baton Rouge, Fort Panmure (Natchez), Fort Charlotte (Mobile), and Fort George (Pensacola) had the effect of killing or incapacitating the enemy; two, the resulting military stores of artillery, small arms, munitions, gunpowder, etc. forfeited by the defeated enemy could be forwarded to American allies or used by the Spanish; and three, the successes of the Spanish forces created a second front along the Gulf Coast and Mississippi River that caused the British Southern Strategy to become ineffective, directly impacting the amount of aid General Cornwallis’ army could receive as it moved through the Carolinas and Virginia.

Examining the financial aid sent from Madrid and Havana to the American colonies, through agents such as Juan de Miralles in Philadelphia and Oliver Pollock in New Orleans, shows another vital aspect of Spanish aid to the new nation. The mother country, Britain, served as the financial hub of all legal colonial trade prior to independence in 1776. Shipping, insurance, currency minting and exchange, all major financial transactions had their origin with the banking, insurance, and governmental circles of London and the port cities in Britain. With
the beginning of war, declaration of independence by the colonies, and escalation of the conflict, the financial world of the colonies was turned upside down, if not almost shut down. The colonies lacked hard currency and individual colonies printed paper currency that had no backing except for the future tax earnings of the United States, which happened to be in a war with an uncertain outcome. In effect, Continental paper bills were promissory notes that merchants in the colonies and abroad were loath to accept. Merchants across the New World and Europe, however, gladly accepted payment in Spanish milled silver pesos. As the chief international currency, financial aid either loaned to the Americans or donated in some cases, was always quoted in pesos. For example, when Charles Lee traveled to France and Spain as a representative of the Continental Congress in 1777, he delivered a “wish list” of sorts to the Spanish foreign minister. Historians Guillermo and Gregorio Calleja Leal relate that:

The total value [of the list of supplies] came to 7,730,000 Tours pounds or 193,290 pesos. As a result of the request for assistance made by the Congress through Lee, the Spanish government granted an initial shipment of money and supplies valued at 12,500 pesos and the next month send the warship Fabby with supplies worth 3,000 pesos. Manuel Ortíz de la Riba, the treasurer of revenues, delivered 70,000 pesos from the Royal Treasury to [Spanish agent] Gardoqui so he could buy supplies and send to the rebel colonies from Bilbao on two of his ships and [Conde de] Aranda gave Lee 50,000 pesos in Paris to buy supplies for the Continental Army.

In Spain, Diego Maria de Gardoqui acted as the main point of contact for Spanish funds leaving Spain for eventual distribution in the American colonies. The funds often were transported on Spanish ships bound for Havana and then sent to New Orleans, but in the case of the aid provided to Charles Lee in 1777, sometimes fund were delivered directly. As Spain had


125 Calleja Leal, Gálvez and Spain, 381.
adopted a neutral stance early in the war and would not formally declare war on Britain until June 1779, all aid was delivered clandestinely. At the request of Benjamin Franklin, Spain provided another shipment of aid worth 118,363 pesos which included cannon, mortars, uniforms, munitions, and 30,000 stands of muskets with bayonets. This particular shipment found its way in a timely manner to be distributed to General Gates’ army before the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777.\textsuperscript{126}

Accounting for the shipments of money and supplies needed to be done in such a way as to appear legitimate. Officially, the funds were to replace funds used by the government of Gálvez in Louisiana; the medicine and cloth were to replenish stores at royal hospitals in New Orleans and Havana; the military supplies went to support the growing Louisiana Battalion at New Orleans and its outposts.\textsuperscript{127} Eventually, much of the American aid stayed off of the official accounting and was smuggled to the colonies with the aid of agents such as Miralles and Pollock. The expedition by Continental Army Captain Willing and his men from Fort Pitt to New Orleans achieved the goal of securing military aid in the form of a large quantity of gunpowder, medicine, weapons, and uniforms. In addition to the material aid, Governor Gálvez gave 24,023 pesos to Captain Willing for delivery to Robert Morris, Philadelphia business partner of Juan de Miralles and financial contact for the Continental Army. Earlier mention of Miralles’ close friendship with Henry Laurens of South Carolina most certainly figured in South Carolina as a colony receiving a 35,000 peso loan, and a loan of 155,000 pesos to the military commander at

\textsuperscript{126}Ibid, 381.
\textsuperscript{127}Ibid, 381.
While loans such as these were fairly commonplace from 1776 to 1779, after Spain entered the war officially in June 1779, both funds and military aid could flowed with more regularity and in greater quantity. For all the pesos and military aid provided from 1776 to 1781, a new opportunity to defeat the British once and for all arose in coastal Virginia. The series of events that would lead to the defeat of General Cornwallis started with his arrival in Charleston, South Carolina in 1780.

The British plan to put an early end to the rebellion in the American colonies first by negotiation with the Peace Commissioners, and then by sheer strength of numbers had devolved into somewhat of a stalemate by the late 1770s. Since the beginning of hostilities in 1775, most of the early engagements between British and American forces occurred in the northern and middle colonies. The siege of Boston, the defeat at Quebec, the loss of New York, and the defeat at Oriskany all seemed to drive the Continental Army to the breaking point; but with American victories at Trenton, Princeton, and Saratoga, the British learned that the rebellion would not be put down as easily or as quickly as first planned. The war in the northern colonies had ceased to move one way or the other, and the Continental Army was not faring well. In the latter months of 1780, Washington’s command had shrunk from 17,586 troops to 8,742; out of those, only 5,982 were fit for duty. With the strength of the Continental Army in the north waning, the British decided to turn their attention to the southern colonies of Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia. Historian Stanley Carpenter describes the British strategy as a:

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128 Ibid, 383.
…’clear and hold’ strategic concept that…called for retaking each colony in turn from south to north while establishing the conditions whereby local Loyalists could restore Crown authority and civil government.\textsuperscript{129}

On paper, the plan seemed sound; British regular troops and Loyalists fight the few Continentals and undisciplined militia, eliminate the ability of the rebels to continue to fight, and reassert the Crown’s control in the region. From his headquarters in New York, British commander Sir Henry Clinton decided to capitalize on British strengths in the southern colonies. The British had enjoyed generally good relations with Creek and Cherokee tribes, the Cherokee Wars of 1761 and 1776 notwithstanding, and he felt that the native allies could be counted on to help wage war on the colonists in the more rural, less populated areas of the Carolinas known as the backcountry. Sir Henry Clinton also received reports that large number of colonists in North and South Carolina supported the Crown and would assist regular British troops in their efforts to bring the southern colonies back under control.\textsuperscript{130} These loyal British subjects, or Loyalists, lacked support and direction from regular British army troops however, so Clinton sent Lieutenant-General Charles, Earl Cornwallis to subdue the rebels in the backcountry and bring the south under control. British forces had captured Savannah, Georgia in 1778 and with the capture of the port city of Charleston in May of 1780, the British had established a firm foothold in the south. Once Lieutenant-General Cornwallis arrived in South Carolina in the spring of 1780, he began his campaign through the Carolinas. With the British victory at Camden and small skirmishes throughout South Carolina, the British suffered humiliating defeats at King’s Mountain and Cowpens. A draw of sorts against the patriots in North Carolina at Guilford


\textsuperscript{130} O’Shaughnessy, \textit{The Men Who Lost America}, 261.
Courthouse cost Lieutenant-General Cornwallis men and material, though the battle was considered a British victory. Cornwallis realized that after losing roughly twenty-five percent of his men in the battle, and no rations or shelter for his men for two days after the battle, he decided to withdraw from the battlefield and make his retreat to Wilmington, North Carolina.

While at Wilmington, Lieutenant-General Cornwallis considered his options of how to handle rebuilding his army and resuming the fight against Major General Nathanael Greene, the Continental Army Commander of the Southern Department, and eliminating the rebels’ ability to continue the war. After careful consideration of options that included relocating to South Carolina, staying in Wilmington, or moving the army to Virginia, Cornwallis chose to move his army to an advantageous location in Virginia. According to historian Carpenter:

> The earl reasoned that the key to controlling the Carolinas lay in cutting off supplies and reinforcements coming through Virginia. He would later justify this thread in his strategic thinking in a report from Williamsburg in late June 1781, after he had left North Carolina and marched into Virginia, by informing Clinton that “the men and riches of Virginia [are] furnishing ample supplies to the rebel southern army.”

As was his plan in South Carolina and North Carolina, Cornwallis now wanted to devastate Virginia in such a way as to make the colony unable to continue the war. In his mind, Cornwallis thought that if the British army could shift focus from New York to Virginia, and defeat the wealthy colony, then an end to the war could be discussed. In a letter to Major-General Phillips, Lieutenant-General Cornwallis states:

> Now, my dear friend, what is our plan? Without one we cannot succeed…If we mean an offensive war in America, we must abandon New York and bring out

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131 Carpenter, *Southern Gambit*, 213.
whole force into Virginia; we then have a state to fight for, and a successful battle may give us America.\footnote{Ibid, 213.}

General Cornwallis moved his army to Virginia by May, 1781 and by August began fortifying the city of Yorktown. With Cornwallis and his army of roughly 7,500 men awaiting reinforcement from Britain, a combined force of Continental, militia, and French troops marched to Virginia.

Washington’s Continentals and a large French force laid siege to Yorktown, while the French fleet under the Comte de Grasse prevented the British navy from coming to the aid of the beleaguered garrison at Yorktown. Lieutenant-General Cornwallis and his men, running dangerously low on supplies, outgunned, and without hope of timely reinforcement, surrendered on October 19, 1781.

The British troops, artillery, munitions, and supplies required to hold the posts along the Mississippi River and Gulf Coast would have added much needed strength to Cornwallis’ forces at Yorktown. Throughout the Southern Campaign in Georgia and both South and North Carolina, the British forces faced challenges from both Continental troops as well as militia. Men and material from Fort Bute, Baton Rouge, and Fort Panmure along the Mississippi River could have added an extra 580 regular British troops and their arms and munitions, as well as almost two dozen artillery pieces with munitions and gunpowder.\footnote{Caughey, Bernardo deGálvez, 158.} Fort Charlotte at Mobile could have provided Cornwallis’ army with another 200 regular soldiers and sailors, as well as small arms, artillery, and munitions. Pensacola, the largest garrison of the region, could have

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\footnote{Ibid, 213.}
\footnote{Caughey, Bernardo deGálvez, 158.}
added an additional 1600 regular soldiers, four mortars, 143 cannon, six howitzers, forty swivel guns, and 298 barrels of gunpowder.\textsuperscript{134} In the space of a few months, the British losses in men and material along the Mississippi River and in Mobile and Pensacola not only deprived Cornwallis’ army in the South of much needed troops and supplies, but also strengthened the Spanish hold on the entire region. With the defeats at Fort Bute, Baton Rouge, Fort Panmure, Fort Charlotte at Mobile, and Fort George at Pensacola, the British simply did not have the resources to send to aid the British forces at Yorktown, forces that would prove critical with the arrival of the Continental and French troops.

When Washington and the Continental Army started to march south in late summer 1781, the Commander-in-Chief had a serious problem: his troops had not been paid in some time. The lack of timely payment of troops had resulted in a near mutiny before, one that Washington had to put down with executions. The troops, both American and French, needed to be paid. The army also needed gunpowder and other supplies. Washington asked Robert Morris, the army’s financial contact in Congress, for money to pay the troops with but was told that the Continental currency was not accepted by merchants and was not going to be accepted by the soldiers, either, as it was effectively worthless.\textsuperscript{135} In addition to the troops not being paid and the army needing supplies with which to attack the British at Yorktown, another financial crisis loomed. The French treasury had been strained since 1763, the end of the Seven Years’ War. The financially difficult times for the French government were compounded by the expense that they incurred by aiding the American colonists in their war for independence. With the ultimate goal of having Britain defeated and no longer able to pose a threat to France on the world stage, the treasury

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid, 212.

\textsuperscript{135}Ibid, 289.
gladly extended all the financial aid that it could. By 1781 however, France simply did not have
the funds to pay for Comte de Grasse’s operations, including the pay of the sailors and soldiers
under French command in America. The lack of funds posed a serious problem, and it seemed
that only the treasury of Spain could solve the financial issues that plagued the Americans and
French; unfortunately by 1781, the Spanish treasury did not think that loaning more money to the
Continental Congress made good business sense. By 1781, the exchange rate for one Spanish
silver *pesoto* Continental dollar was 1:500.\(^\text{136}\) Such a rate of inflation made Madrid nervous, and
the new Captain-General of Cuba, Juan Manuel de Cagigal, seconded that opinion. So with the
lack of funds to pay the back pay, and current pay for that matter, of the soldiers and sailors of
the allied armies and without sufficient supplies to stand up against and defeat the army under
Lieutenant-General Cornwallis, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to end the war would pass.
Luckily for the Americans and the French, a Spanish official had an idea that could hopefully
secure funding and deliver the means to defeat the British at Yorktown.

Francisco de Saavedra held the position of Royal Commissioner. He could act in the
King’s name in political and financial matters and had been in discussions earlier in 1781 with
Comte de Grasse regarding a proposed invasion of British-held Jamaica when the opportunity to
strike at Cornwallis in Virginia presented itself.\(^\text{137}\) According to historians the Calleja Leal
brothers, Saavedra did not agree with Captain-General Cagigal’s or the treasury’s decision to cut
financial aid to the Continental Congress and France. Saavedra felt strongly that the situation
with Cornwallis in Yorktown and his geographic situation could be exploited if done quickly, so

\(^{136}\)Ibid, 290.

\(^{137}\)Ibid, 288.
he attempted to find funds outside of Spain and the treasury. Saavedra personally traveled to Havana where he met with a contact that he felt could help secure funds for the Yorktown operation. Saavedra contacted the aide-de-camp of the Captain-General, Sebastián Francisco de Miranda y Rodríguez. Miranda was a veteran of the recent victory at Pensacola and had recently been promoted to lieutenant colonel and aide-de-camp, and was well connected among the Havana social elites. Saavedra and Miranda proposed a fund raiser of sorts with the help of an influential and wealthy family, the García-Menocal family. Francisco de Miranda knew the García-Menocal family and when the Royal Commissioner from Madrid and the war hero lieutenant colonel proposed a fund raiser for the defeat of the British, the response was overwhelming. Word of mouth in the salons of the high society ladies in both Havana and Matanzas resulted in a staggering amount of 30,000 pesos within two days. Historians James Lewis and Thomas Chavez disagree on the nature of the funds, stating that the funds were a loan, and that the Cubans were to be repaid in American wheat by the next harvest and from funds from New Spain. Whether a loan or a donation by the ladies of Cuba, the second part of the fundraiser gathered even more pesos. Royal Commissioner Saavedra did not let the positive public sentiment wane, and asked the general public in Havana to help the war effort and raised another 500,000 pesos in six hours. The effort by the public in Cuba astounded the French in Havana, including General Claude-Anne Rouvroy, the Marquis de Saint-Simony Montbleru,

138Ibid, 290.

139Ibid, 291.

commander of the French Army. The French general was stunned, and letters from him and Comte de Grasse to Admiral Rochambeau attest to that. Rochambeau stated that:

…the million [1.2 million Tours pounds] the women of Havana gave to Saint-Simon to pay the troops, can truly be considered as the foundation on which the independence of North America was built.\textsuperscript{141}

The amount of 30,000 \textit{pesos} satisfied the amount that would pay the French and Continental troops what they were owed. In one forty-eight hour period, the financial problem that had plagued General Washington and Saint-Simon had been solved. The overall plan of striking at Yorktown and defeating the British still needed funding and Saavedra had a solution for that as well with his “extra” 500,000 \textit{pesos} raised. Saavedra, flush with cash to hand over to the French in Havana, now proposed a three point plan:

1. De Grasse should depart with his ships and meet at an as yet undisclosed place on the latitude of Matanzas where he would await an escort
2. Saavedra would personally leave on a fast frigate to pick up the funds and then deliver the money to De Grasse
3. De Grasse would pay the money owed to the sailors and soldiers and continue to sail on to Chesapeake Bay with the remainder of the money\textsuperscript{142}

The French frigate \textit{L'Agriette} loaded all the \textit{pesos}, and after a short visit by Field Marshal and Governor Gálvez who came to wished the mission good luck and inform the French that he had requested 1,000,000 more \textit{pesos} from New Spain, the ship sailed to meet Comte de Grasse’s flagship, the \textit{Ville de Paris}\textsuperscript{143}. The French fleet then sailed toward Chesapeake Bay, where they

\textsuperscript{141} Stephen Bonsal, \textit{When the French Were Here} (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, Doran, and Company, 1945), 119.

\textsuperscript{142} Calleja Leal, \textit{Gálvez and Spain}, 293.

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid, 295.
famously would defeat the British fleet at the Battle of the Virginia Capes on September 5, 1781 and prevent reinforcement or evacuation for Lieutenant-General Cornwallis’ army.

The additional funds from the Royal Treasury of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, suggested by Governor Gálvez and approved by Carlos III, arrived at the port of Havana on the frigate Amazona on August 20, 1781. The silver pesos came to Havana via Veracruz (Mexico) and no sooner had the funds been offloaded that a fleet departed for the Chesapeake Bay area with money, weapons, munitions, and other supplies for the Continental and French forces. When the funds arrived, the soldiers and merchants were paid and any lingering complaints about funds or pay were settled. The army could now focus on the mission of defeating the British army.

The financial commitment to the Continental Congress by Spain represented a great effort not only by Spain but by her possessions in the Americas. Spanish citizens and inhabitants of not only Spain but Cuba, New Spain (Mexico, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas), Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, and Louisiana all made sacrifices to fund the war effort against Britain. Carlos III authorized a special one-time tax in 1780 that amounted to, “one peso for every Indian and other castes, and two pesos for each Spaniard and noble, to support the present war.”

The missions and presidios in Texas furnished Gálvez and his Louisiana Battalion with cattle for beef, as well as horses, donkeys, and mules. The first of what today would be recognized as cattle drives happened because Gálvez’s troops needed to supply themselves and American rebels with beef. The governor of New Spain sent orders to soldiers at San Antonio de Bexar and the presidios at Cibolo and La Bahía (present day Texas) to escort ranchers as they drove cattle and draft animals from what is today south Texas to posts at Nacogdoches,

144 Ibid, 387.
Natchitoches (Los Adaes mission), and Opelousas (Louisiana) where troops from the Louisiana Battalion would take receipt of them. From 1779 to 1783, over 10,000 head of cattle and draft animals would be sent from present-day Texas to Louisiana. Monetary contributions from far flung outposts in what are now the states of New Mexico, Arizona, and California as well as Mexico itself also helped the Spanish war effort. According to Spanish records, California contributed 4,216 pesos, with the governor donating 2,000 pesos himself, and the Franciscan missions donating 1,000 pesos. Father Junípero Serra, “Father of the Missions”, arranged for the church to pay the tax for all native Americans in the California missions. The ordinary soldados, or soldiers of the frontier posts, contributed as well; Monterrey with 833 pesos, Santa Barbara with 249 pesos, and San Diego with 515 pesos. Arizona soldados contributed 429 pesos, and the State of Sonora (Mexico) contributed 22,420 pesos. The amount of money contributed and the amount of aid purchased and then shipped to the American colonists and Continental Congress was vital to the overall war effort and success of the Spanish, French, and Continental military forces, as proven by the listed contributions from all areas of Spanish and colonial society.

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145 Ibid, 387.

146 Ibid.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Kind of aid</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Garroqui sent letters of</td>
<td>24,023 pesos.</td>
<td>Provisions.</td>
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<td>Diego Garroqui for the</td>
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<td>rebel colonists.</td>
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<td>October 1780- March 1781:</td>
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<td>Uniforms.</td>
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<td>12,000 pesos.</td>
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<td>Destined for the French fleet of Count de Grasse.</td>
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<td>1,000,000 pesos and</td>
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<td>Expedition to Chesapeake Bay against General</td>
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<td>June 1781 – March 1782:</td>
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<td>26,000 pesos.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 1781.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1781.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1782.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4

147 Calleja Leal, *Galvez and Spain*, 390.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Kind of aid</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/17/1776</td>
<td>Grimaldi sent one million Tours pounds to Aranda, ambassador in Paris, for the rebel colonists.</td>
<td>1,000,000 Tours pounds was equal to 25,000 pesos.</td>
<td>Via Madrid – Paris – Santo Domingo – Thirteen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/12/1776</td>
<td>Aranda received the money.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/7/1776</td>
<td>Aranda delivered the money.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January-February 1777: Gardoqui sent a shipment to Oliver Pollock. March 1777: Pollock received the shipment in New Orleans.</td>
<td>9,000 yards (varas) blue cloth material, 1,710 yards while cloth material, 2,992 yards while serge (canvas), 7 boxes metal buttons, 2 boxes quinque weighing 6 arrobas, 100 hundred-weights of gunpowder, 300 rifles with bayonets and sheaths.</td>
<td>Via Havana – New Orleans (Louisiana).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/25/1777</td>
<td>Floridablanca ordered his treasurer Pedro M. de Ortiz de la Riva to deliver money to Gardoqui for the rebel colonists.</td>
<td>50,000 pesos.</td>
<td>Via Madrid – Bilbao – Thirteen Colonies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 1778: Shipment by Gardoqui.</td>
<td>9,612 pesos.</td>
<td>In Havana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/30/1778</td>
<td>Floridablanca ordered his treasurer Pedro M. de Ortiz de la Riva to deliver money to Diego Gardoqui for the rebel colonists.</td>
<td>53,000 pesos.</td>
<td>Via Madrid – Bilbao – Thirteen Colonies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5

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Ibid, 391.
Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

Careful research into government records, personal correspondence, and historiography of the topic of Spain and the American Revolution showed that through the efforts of characters such as Bernardo de Gálvez, Oliver Pollock, Thomas Willing, José de Gálvez, the Conde de Aranda, Juan de Miralles, and others, Spain planned to not only deal a blow to its rival and enemy Britain, but also to help advance the cause of liberty in America. These relatively unknown but larger than life personalities each in their own way pushed the cause of American liberty forward. Not only notable individuals but whole populations of cities and regions felt a sense of patriotism and wanted to contribute in whatever way they could. Creoles, natives, free people of color, merchants, sailors, as well as gentlemen were all represented in the ranks of Gálvez’s Louisiana Battalion. Soldiers from presidios in far flung areas of New Spain helped guard cattle drives to feed not only Spanish but American troops as well. The famous contributions of the ladies of Cuba and the merchants of Spain all helped direct military and financial aid to where the clandestine observers such as Miralles identified it would be most useful. Historian Larrie Ferreiro accurately states that: “The creation myth that America bootstrapped itself from colony to nation, that it fought the war and gained independence all by itself, was never correct and was never a good fit.”

Ferreiro’s statement does not detract from the heroism and sacrifice by patriot men, women, and children in any of the original thirteen colonies; rather, the statement offers a more honest introduction to further research. Through research efforts of historians we know that clandestine assistance from nations such as France and Spain existed, and that over ninety percent of the

149 Ferreiro, *Brothers at Arms*, 335.
weapons used by American rebels originated from overseas sources.\textsuperscript{150} One shipment of

\begin{flushleft}
One shipment of gunpowder from New Orleans to Captain Willing tripled the amount of all the gunpowder available to Washington’s troops in 1775.\textsuperscript{151} The mass infusion of Spanish silver \textit{pesos} during the wartime years so positively affected the fledgling American economy, that Spanish silver would be used as a benchmark for the United States dollar until the 1840s, after many veterans of the revolution had long since passed. Personal relationships forged between the Spanish observers, diplomats, military men, civilians, and financiers and their American counterparts would help shape foreign policy for a new American nation. Whether expressly joining the effort to support the Continental Congress and the patriot cause or joining the effort to deal a blow to their enemy Britain, Spanish officials, soldiers, sailors, and citizens all provided help to a struggling new nation when it was most needed. With the defeats at Fort Bute, Baton Rouge, Fort Panmure, the losses on Lake Pontchartrain, Fort Charlotte at Mobile, and Fort George at Pensacola, the British simply did not have the resources to send to aid the British forces at Yorktown, forces that would have been crucial to strengthen Cornwallis’ forces with the arrival of the Continental and French troops. Without the timely financial, military, and material aid provided by Spain during the American Revolution, success along the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi River valley and overall victory at Yorktown would have been uncertain at best.
\end{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, 335.

\textsuperscript{151} Paul, \textit{Unlikely Allies}, 89.
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Secondary Sources:


