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Mr. Webb
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Robado del Archivo del Dr. Antonio Rafael de la Cova

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Washington December 1854

Hon. Mr. William L. G. Barry
Secretary of State
of the United States
Washington

Sir,

I send you herewith enclosed some interesting communications made to me by Estrampes which are worthy of note. But as an American citizen, culpable as he admits himself to be, he is entitled to a fair trial. Both he and Felix were transferred from the Jail to the Morris Castle on the 28th inst and again debarred from communication with their friends. I am however permitted to communicate with Felix only, and have visited him today. How long this state of things is to continue, it is difficult to say. Mr Felix to me still asserts his innocence, and Estrampes assures me that he (Felix) had nothing to do with the affair. Not having access to any of the

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testimony I am bound to consider him innocent, until the contrary is proved, and thus being but one witness, as far as I can understand, with whom he has been confronted in fact, not in open Court, (a strange way of complying with the treaty) he cannot be condemned, because the law requires that there shall be two creditable witnesses, even before a military Court. It seems to me that the only witness the Government can produce, the fellow Hernandez, who is more deeply implicated than any other, a traitor to his own brother and nephew, can ^{not} be considered a creditable witness. Still the prosecution rely upon his testimony to convict the accused.

It is my intention to have an interview with the Captain General tomorrow, and endeavor to ascertain why the prisoners have been placed again incommunicado, and the reason that his order allowing me to communicate with Felix did not include Estrampes. I will also try to learn the intentions of the Government towards the prisoners and when their trial is to come.

on, and what facilities will be
allotted to the fighting force.
I am pretty certain that no Comandante,
other than a military officer, will
be permitted to defend them.

I have the honor to be
Sir, With great respect,
Your obedient servant

Wm H. Harrison
Colonel

Whole
Copy

with 156

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The Military Commission yesterday. I was brought before them, and they accused me of conspiring against the rights of the Queen of Spain in this Island. They asked me if I had any thing to say. I replied that I had only to repeat what I had on my honor and in truth already declared. That I was the only one concerned in this affair, and that no one else had the slightest participation. This was ~~my~~ ^{the} substance of my interview with the Military Commission.

The Fiscal afterwards came accompanied by his Secretary to make the charges against me, and to take further declarations. He still repeated that there were no other persons implicated, and that all the declarations made by the traitor Mr Francisco. Hisander were false with the exception of three counts against myself. viz: 1st - that I had said to him that if I was taken prisoner and brought to Havana I should be lost. 2ndly. that I conspired with him upon the best method to land the arms. 3rdly. that I had a written Commission as Chief, and that this Commission I destroyed; that

I declared it to demonstrate to the
"fiscal" that if I denied what in
reality was false in all the other
statements made by said Hernandez,
it was not because I thought that
the declarations of Mr. H. could
increase my danger, but because
I did not wish that a cowardly
liar should have the satisfaction
of giving weight to his infamous
falsehoods. I demanded of the
"fiscal" that Mr. Hernandez should
be brought before me that he might
in my presence repeat what he had
already declared. They then asked
me if I was in connection with the
Cuban Junta for the mentioned purpose.
I replied that I was not, that the
projects of the Cuban Junta were
opposed to mine, that they wished
to obtain the independence of the
island, by expeditions, whilst I
always wished that the revolution
in Cuba should be brought about
by the Cubans themselves. Being
asked who presented me the tri-
-colored banner which I had acquired,
I replied that a lady whose name
I should suppress, as a lady's name
should always be respected. They also

asked me why I persisted in denying the complicity of Don Felix in this affair, when Mr. Demander had shown that he was second in Command to myself? Replying that this statement was false and made through fear, and that if it was my intention to revolutionize that part of the Island, I should select in that place some person interested in the affair, and competent to fill the position of my second in Command, and not one who was entirely ignorant of military matters, speaking imperfectly the language, and without any prestige. They asked me if I knew that it is a crime to conspire against the Spanish Government? I answered, I know it is considered a crime according to the Spanish laws, but by the laws of nature it is not a crime to desire Liberty.

Real Cárcel of Havana 22 of December 1854.

The Captain Genl made his yearly visit to the Prison, and I had a moment's interview with him. I wished to speak to him, but he denied me utterance, saying that he already knew what

I had to say, that he knew the
object of my visit to the Island.
that no objection was expected
from me, and that my case
should proceed until its termination,
and when I told him that all
the other prisoners were innocent
he silenced me, saying that it
was my duty to say so.

(signed) Francisco Estrampes
Real Cárcel de la Habana 23 Dec 1854.

I arrived at Baracoa with a false
- post, bearing the name of Ernest
La Costa, on the 22^d of October 1854.
disembarked on the 23^d and was
arrested on the 24th. My mission was
a great one. My intentions were to
place myself at the head of the re-
-volution in the Eastern part of the
Island. I brought with me the arms
and munitions which I had deem-
-ed necessary to commence the enter-
-prise. Being bearer of important
documents, my first act was to
place them in the hands of the
person for whom I brought a
letter of introduction from his
brother. On the morning of the
24th the Captain came to inform
me that the Custom House officers
were searching the Schooner with
the utmost scrutiny, and that
all the harbor was occupied
by the soldiers of the garrison.
But a short time had elapsed
when the intelligence was brought
to me that the arms were discover-
-ed, and that the Captain & crew
of the S. S. White were arrested.
I loaded my revolver and with
my bowie-knife I waited moment.

-arily my own arrest, as the Captain, believing that the contraband was merchandise, declared it to be my property, my first impulse was to defend myself to the last, and die rather than fall into the hands of the Spaniards, but a moment's reflection convinced me that my position imposed upon me a sacred duty, and that I ought to save others who were entirely innocent, and who would suffer in my place had the Government been prevented by my death from knowing the truth. I was not deceived in my apprehensions, about 4 o'clock in the evening a police officer came accompanied by ten soldiers, and arrested me in the name of the Queen. I was conducted to the barracks and immediately locked up in the Calabozo where I passed the night, and remained until the afternoon of the day following, when a loud uproar arose in the barracks accompanied by the trumpet of alarm and the disorderly cries of the terrified officers to the soldiers to prepare arms. at the same time I was

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dragged from the Catiboro, and immediately surrounded by a host of soldiers who were firing pistols with bayonets at my breast, while my arms were pinioned behind with cords. Then secured I was marched in the centre of a numerous escort in the direction of the harbor, where a Government boat was waiting to conduct me on board of the Chalberti (Spanish Schooner) where I was placed in the hold with both feet in the stocks, exposed during the whole night to a heavy rain. The next day I was taken from the Schooner, bound as before, and reconducted to the barracks where I made my first declaration, but being well aware of the brutality and the excesses often committed by the petty Authorities when empowered by the Superior Government I thought it best to act the part of a veritable know-nothing. From eleven o'clock until seven in the afternoon the Military Final detained me making declarations and when he had concluded he caused me to be again secured & escorted to the public prison where I was

placed in a damp & infected cell and
heavily ironed. On entering the prison
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whatever arms I might have
secreted on my person, but instead
of arms he found the sum of a
hundred dollars which I had
reserved when previously robbed
of my money.

The cause of the noise in the barracks
already mentioned was a report
that twenty five armed country men
were descending the river in boats,
when they heard that I was a
prisoner.

The next day I went for the fiscal
to show him the treatment I was
receiving, and he told me that
he could not help it. I then told
him that in the dark ages prisoners
were treated with more humanity.
He lowered his eyes & wished me
good morning. But a few
moments had transpired after
his departure when an individual
accompanied by the jailer and three
soldiers came to my cell, released
me from the irons, bound my arms
and commenced stripping me. They
then replaced me in the irons and

removed my shirt. All my clothes
were taken away and torn in
pieces in the hands of my guards
and attendants. The next day I wrote to
the Lieut Governor, as follows.

" Mr Lieutenant Governor
" Sir I believe you to be worthy
" of the position which you occupy and
" I am certain that you are ignorant
" of the treatment that I am receiving.
" I beg of you to take the trouble to
" come & see me, but do not think
" that it is to ~~take~~ ask of you any
" favors or concessions derogatory
" to my dignity as a man and a
" gentleman. I wish only to invoke
" the laws of humanity which are
" recognized in this age of enlightened
" civilization, throughout the entire
" universe, but which seem to be
" unknown in a country which
" had thought civilized. I have the
" honor to be Sir, yours &c.

(Signed) Ernest Lay Costa.

I remained in Parícuta until the
8th of Novr without any alleviations,
and was then embarked on the war
steamer Chervo. Pinarro, where I was
again placed in irons, but more humanely
treated by the Commander. The following

day in the evening we arrived at the
harbor of Santiago de Cuba, where
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with a sentinel constantly watching
every movement. Another Fiscal was
appointed in Santiago de Cuba to
take further declarations, but I
pursued the same policy I adopted
at Baraisa. I remained here until
the 3d of Decr when I was again em-
barked on the war ship Francisco
de Asis. Here I was conducted to the
Infirmary of the ship, a narrow &
infected place about the size of the
forecastle of a small schooner.
Heavily ironed and upon the bare
floor and drenched by the water
washed in from the gun deck above,
sickened by the pestilential atmosphere
and by the food which consisted of a
sea biscuit & a piece of raw pork
daily, I passed six days & five nights.
I was forbidden to smoke, not
from any danger of fire as the sailors
& soldiers around me were constant-
ly smoking, but simply to aggravate
the misery of my position. All re-
freshments were unheeded, and I
was obliged to endure in silence the
insults and abuse heaped upon me.

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When we arrived in this place, Mr. Felix
& myself were bound separately, and
then together in such a way that
neither could move without inflicting
pain upon the other, and but for the
officer who conducted us & to whom I
addressed a remonstrance saying
to him that only in the days of
inquisition such treatment was
allowed, he released us & ordered us
to be more humanely secured. Al-
though we were conducted to the prison
through the streets, bound together
like common felons. Arrived here,
we were separated & placed in cells
in a state of in communication.
On the third day I was brought before
the Fiscal to make further declaration.
I told him that my name was Fran-
cisco Estrampes, but that I had
heretofore concealed it as it best
suited my purposes, and that I
was now disposed on my honor
to disclose my project, but that
my reason for so doing was not
from fear of the consequences, but
because innocent persons were
compromised by appearances which
I only could explain, that my
reasons for not doing so in my

first declarations were because of the
inhuman treatment I had received
at the hands of the Spanish of
Cienfuegos, and because I wished to be
brought to Havana, where I should
at least have men of some intelligence
to deal with. I then proceeded to inform
them of the true facts of the case, that
the arms were mine, that the Captain
had consented to take them having
first requested permission so to do
of the owners, and believing them
to consist of merchandise; that
my object in bringing those arms
was to commence a revolution
in that part of the island, and break
the chain of oppression which is held
ten thousand miles beyond the
sea; that I only was concerned
in the affair; that Mrs. Kelly had
no interest in it whatever, and
that all the other persons accused
were entirely ignorant of my intentions.
They showed me the tri colored banner
which I had brought with me,
and asked me if I recognized
it. I told them that I did, and that
it was the flag or banner of the
Independence of Cuba. They asked
me who designed it. I replied, a

great man, Genl. Lopez.

The declaration of Mr. Francisco Robado del Archivo del Dr. Antonio Rafael de la Cova
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The declaration of Mr. Francisco Robado del Archivo del Dr. Antonio Rafael de la Cova
from which I learned that he was
the traitor who had betrayed me to
the Government, & had put the Govt in
possession with his own hands, of all
the documents which I had brought
from his brother, and delivered to his
care with the most unbounded
confidence. He denounced as well the
two Schooners, Captain & crews, Mr
Felix, his own nephew (who was
shot in attempting to escape) and many
other innocent persons, saying amongst
other falsehoods that I had suborned
the whole Regiment of Cantabria,
officers included, & also the Commander
of the Morro Castle, but that the
Governor of said Castle was in-
corruptible; also that I had from
pieces of artillery concealed in
Puerto Principe, besides many other
fallacious & even more infamous
statements of his own brother.
He also said that Mr Felix was
my second in command and as deeply
interested as myself in the affair.
The defender appointed by the Military
Court has been to see me. My sister.

own with him was a short one.
I represented to him the fate of my
country, & the action which he knew
what an opinion was. He answer-
ed me in the affirmative. I told him
that the defence of an opinion that
slavery could be defended by logic
& sophistry, but that the question of
liberty presented a vast field of defence
and where the defender could distinguish
himself. I also told him that he could
draw an exact parallel between
myself & the Capt Genl Concha, six
months since, that I was prisoner
for loving the reality of that word which
he (Concha) had recently invoked in
Spain & which had brought him to
the distinguished position which he now
held. I also told him that now the
misfortune had no remedy, my fate
is decided, and I await with calmness
& resignation the moment of death
regretting only that I am obliged to leave
my beloved Cuba still in chains. I
reproach no one with the cause of this
disaster as it was a spontaneous
action of my own, to come to this Island
and deal my opinion with my blood,
to die or to be free, as a thousand deaths
are better than a life tormented with

the view of my country's enslavement,
when her liberties only depend upon
a little resistance to the duties which nature herself impose
upon man. The idea of liberty has never
been to me a mere illusion, but a
conviction of the mind & heart which
faithfully has accompanied me through
life. My ambition has never been
a gilded future obtained by the
sweat of the enterprise, because I
have always thought that I should die
in our revolution, a thought at which
I can smile, as to die in so holy
& noble a cause is a fate as glorious
as it is enviable.

(Signed) Francisco Estrampes
Realbanc del Habana Decr 2th / 852,

Copy
Col. Robertson.

U.S. Consulate at Havana
My dear Sir.

Mrs Felix and I are now in the
Morro Castle, without knowing the reason
for which we have been removed so abruptly.
We are again in communication. Mr.
Fina all, & in another. Will you ask
of the Capt. Genl what this means?
After having suffered so much, our
position as prisoners was sweeter in the

Royal Prison where relations of friends could
be us, instead that for a great many reasons
no friends or relations will come here.
do not forget your friends, and if
your influence could obtain for us to be
placed again in the Royal Prison we will
never forget such a favor.

Cherchez le Decr 28th 1854

(signed) Francis Estrampes.

Copy

I, Francis Estrampes, do hereby
Certify that the Arms seized by the
Spanish Authorities at Paracoa,
were my property exclusively,
and that said arms were shipped
in N. York on the Schooner J. G.
White whereof R. McCulloch
was master, by & with consent
of the owners of said Schooner,
they and the Captain Relieving the
shipment to consist of Fancy
Goods and jewelry.
(signed) Francis Estrampes
Royal Prison of Havana Decr 28th 1854.