

Venezuelan-American Diplomacy - Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Navigation and Commerce Between the United States and Venezuela; May 31, 1836

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The United States of America and the Republic of Venezuela desiring to make lasting and firm the friendship and good understanding which happily prevails between both nations have resolved to fix in a manner clear, distinct, and positive the rules which shall in future be religiously observed between the one and the other, by means of a treaty of friendship, commerce and navigation. For this most desirable object the President of the United States of America has conferred full powers on John G. A. Williamson a citizen of the said States, and their Charg, d'affaires to the said republic, and the President of the Republic of Venezuela on Santos Michelena a citizen of the said Republic, who after having exchanged their said full powers, in due and proper form, have agreed to the following articles:

Article 1

There shall be a perfect, firm, and inviolable peace and sincere friendship between the United States of America and the Republic of Venezuela in all the extent of their possessions and territories, and between their people and citizens respectively, without distinction of persons or places.

Article 2

The United States of America and the Republic of Venezuela desiring to live in peace and harmony with all the other nations of the earth, by means of a policy frank, and equally friendly with all, engage mutually not to grant any particular favor to other nations in respect of commerce and navigation which shall not immediately become common to the other party, who shall enjoy the same freely, if the concession was freely made, or on allowing the same compensation if the concession was conditional.

Article 3

The two high contracting parties being likewise desirous of placing the commerce and navigation of their respective countries on the liberal basis of perfect equality and reciprocity, mutually agree that the citizens of each may frequent all the coasts and countries of the other and reside and trade there in all kinds of produce, manufactures and merchandize. And they shall enjoy all the rights, privileges and exemptions, in navigation and commerce which native citizens do or shall enjoy, submitting themselves to the laws, decrees, and usages there established, to which native citizens are subjected. But it is understood that this article does not include the coasting trade of either country, the regulation of which is reserved by the parties respectively according to their own separate laws.

Article 4

They likewise agree that whatever kind of produce, manufactures or merchandize, of any foreign country, can be from time to time lawfully imported into the United States in their own vessels, may be also imported in vessels of the Republic of Venezuela, and that no higher or other duties upon the tonnage of the vessel and her cargo shall be levied and collected, whether the importation be made in the vessels of the one country or of the other. And in like manner that whatever kind of produce, manufactures or merchandize, of any foreign country, can be from time to time lawfully imported into the Republic of Venezuela in its own vessels may be also imported in vessels of the United States, and that no higher or other duties, upon the tonnage of the vessels and her cargo, shall be levied or collected, whether the importation be made in vessels of the one country or of the other. And they agree that whatever may be lawfully exported or reexported from the one country in its own vessels to any foreign country, may in like manner be exported or reexported in the vessels of the other country. And the same bounties, duties, and drawbacks shall be allowed, and collected, whether such exportation or reexportation be made in vessels of the United States, or of the Republic of Venezuela.

Article 5

For the better understanding of the preceding article, and taking into consideration the actual state of the commercial marine of the Republic of Venezuela, it has been stipulated and agreed that all vessels belonging exclusively to a citizen or citizens of said Republic and whose captain is also a citizen of the same, though the construction or crew are or may be foreign, shall be considered for all the objects of this treaty as Venezuelan vessels.

Article 6

No higher or other duties shall be imposed on the importation into the United States of any articles the produce or manufacture of the Republic of Venezuela, and no higher or other duties shall be imposed on the importation into the Republic of Venezuela of any articles, the produce or manufacture of the United States, than are or shall be payable on the like articles being the produce or manufactures of any other foreign country, nor shall any higher or other duties, or charges be imposed in either of the two countries, on the exportation of any

articles to the United States, or to the Republic of Venezuela respectively than such as are payable on the exportation of the like articles to any other foreign country; nor shall any prohibition be imposed on the exportation or importation of any articles the produce or manufactures of the United States or of the Republic of Venezuela to or from the territories of the United States, or to or from the territories of the Republic of Venezuela, which shall not equally extend to all other nations.

Article 7

It is likewise agreed that it shall be wholly free for all merchants, commanders of ships and other citizens of both countries to manage themselves their own business in all the ports and places subject to the jurisdiction of each other, as well with respect to the consignment and sale of their goods and merchandize by wholesale or retail, as with respect to the loading, unloading, and sending off their ships, they being in all these cases to be treated as citizens of the country in which they reside or at least to be placed on a footing with the subjects or citizens of the most favoured nation.

Article 8

The citizens of neither of the contracting parties shall be liable to any embargo, nor be detained with their vessels, cargos, merchandizes or effects, for any military expedition, nor for any public or private purpose whatever, without allowing to those interested a sufficient indemnification.

Article 9

Whenever the citizens of either of the contracting parties, shall be forced to seek refuge or asylum in the rivers, bays, ports or dominions of the other with their vessels, whether merchant, or of war, public or private, through stress of weather, pursuit of pirates or enemies, they shall be received and treated with humanity, giving to them all favour and protection for repairing their ships, procuring provisions, and placing themselves in a situation to continue their voyage, without obstacle or hindrance of any Kind.

Article 10

All the ships, merchandize, and the effects belonging to the citizens of one of the contracting parties, which may be captured by pirates, whether within the limits of its jurisdiction, or on the high seas, and may be carried or found in the rivers, roads, bays, ports, or dominions of the other, shall be delivered up to the owners, their proving in due and proper form their rights before the competent tribunals, it being well understood that the claim should be made within the term of one year by the parties themselves, their attorneys, or agents of the respective Governments.

Article 11

When any vessel belonging to the citizens of either of the contracting parties, shall be wrecked, foundered, or shall suffer any damage on the coasts, or within the dominions of the other, there shall be given to them all assistance and protection in the same manner, which is usual and customary with the vessels of the nation, where the damage happens, permitting them to unload the said vessel, if necessary of its merchandize and effects, without exacting for it any duty, impost, or contribution whatever, until they may be exported, unless they be destined for consumption.

Article 12

The citizens of each of the contracting parties shall have power to dispose of their personal goods within the jurisdiction of the other by sale, donation, testament or otherwise, and their representatives, being citizens of the other party, shall succeed to their said personal goods, whether by testament, or ab intestato, and they may take possession thereof, either by themselves or others acting for them, and dispose of the same at their will, paying such dues only as the inhabitants of the country, wherein the said goods are, shall be subject to pay in like cases. And if in the case of real estate, the said heirs would be prevented from entering into the possession of the inheritance, on account of their character of aliens, there shall be granted to them, the term of three years to dispose of the same, as they may think proper, and to withdraw the proceeds without molestation, nor any other charges than those which are imposed by the laws of the country.

Article 13

Both the contracting parties, promise, and engage formally, to give their special protection to the persons and property of the citizens of each other, of all occupations, who may be in the territories subject to the jurisdiction of the one or the other, transient or dwelling therein, leaving open and free to them the Tribunals of Justice for their judicial recourse on the same terms which are usual and customary with the natives or citizens of the country in which they may be; for which they may employ in defence of their rights such advocates, solicitors, notaries, agents, and factors, as they may judge proper in all their trials at law; and such citizens or agents, shall have free opportunity to be present at the decisions and sentences of the Tribunals in all cases, which may concern them, and likewise at the taking of all examinations and evidence which may be exhibited on the said trials.

Article 14

The citizens of the United States residing in the territories of the Republic of Venezuela, shall enjoy the most perfect and entire security of conscience without being annoyed, prevented, or disturbed on account of their religious belief. Neither shall they be annoyed, molested, or disturbed in the proper exercise of their religion in private houses, or in the chapels or places of worship appointed for that purpose, with the decorum due to divine worship, and with due respect to the laws, usages, and customs of the country. Liberty shall also be granted to bury the citizens of the United States who may die in the territories of the

Republic of Venezuela, in convenient and adequate places to be appointed and established by themselves for that purpose, with the knowledge of the local authorities, or in such other places of sepulture as may be chosen by the friends of the deceased. Nor shall the funerals or sepulchres of the dead be disturbed in any wise nor upon any account.

In like manner the citizens of Venezuela shall enjoy within the Government and territories of the United States a perfect and unrestrained liberty of conscience, and of exercising their religion publicly or privately within their own dwelling houses or in the chapels and places of worship appointed for that purpose agreeable to the laws, usages and customs of the United States.

Article 15

It shall be lawful for the citizens of the United States of America and of the Republic of Venezuela to sail with their ships with all manner of liberty and security, no distinction being made who are the proprietors of the merchandizes laden thereon, from any port to the places of those, who now are, or hereafter shall be, at enmity with either of the contracting parties. It shall likewise be lawful for the citizens aforesaid to sail with their ships and merchandizes before-mentioned, and to trade with the same liberty and security from the places, ports, and havens of those who are enemies of both or either party, without any opposition or disturbance whatsoever, not only directly from the places of the enemy before-mentioned to neutral places, but also from one place belonging to an enemy to another place belonging to an enemy whether they be under the jurisdiction of one power or under several. And it is hereby stipulated that free ships shall also give freedom to goods, and that every thing shall be deemed to be free and exempt, which shall be found on board the ships belonging to the citizens of either of the contracting parties, although the whole lading or any part thereof should appertain to the enemies of either; contraband goods being always excepted. It is also agreed in like manner that the same liberty shall be extended to persons who are on board a free ship, with this effect, that although they be enemies to both or either party, they are not to be taken out of that free ship, unless they are officers or soldiers, and in the actual service of the enemies. Provided, however, and it is hereby agreed, that the stipulations in this article contained, declaring that the flag shall cover the property, shall be understood as applying to those powers only, who recognise this principle; but if either of the two contracting parties, shall be at war with a third, and the other neutral, the flag of the neutral, shall cover the property of enemies, whose governments acknowledge this principle, and not of others.

Article 16

It is likewise agreed that in the case where the neutral flag of one of the contracting parties shall protect the property of the enemies of the other by virtue of the above stipulations, it shall always be understood that the neutral property found on board such enemies' vessels, shall be held and considered as enemies' property, and as such, shall be liable to detention and confiscation, except such property as was put on board such vessel

before the declaration of war, or even afterwards, if it were done without the knowledge of it: but the contracting parties agree, that two months having elapsed after the declaration, their citizens shall not plead ignorance thereof. On the contrary if the flag of the neutral does not protect the enemies' property, in that case the goods and merchandizes of the neutral embarked in such enemy's ship, shall be free.

Article 17

This liberty of navigation and commerce shall extend to all kinds of merchandize, excepting those only, which are distinguished by the name of contraband, and under this name of contraband or prohibited goods, shall be comprehended:

1st. Cannons, mortars, howitzers, swivels, blunderbusses, muskets, fusees, rifles, carbines, pistols, pikes, swords, sabres, lances, spears, halberds and grenades, bombs, powder, matches, balls, and all other things belonging to the use of these arms.

2d. Bucklers, helmets, breastplates, coats of mail, infantry-belts, and clothes made up in the form, and for military use.

3d. Cavalry-belts, and horses with their furniture.

4th. And generally all Kinds of arms and instruments of iron, steel, brass and copper, or of any other materials, manufactured, prepared, and formed expressly to make war by sea or land.

Article 18

All other merchandises and things not comprehended in the articles of contraband, explicitly enumerated and classified as above, shall be held and considered as free, and subjects of free and lawful commerce, so that they may be carried and transported in the freest manner by the citizens of both the contracting parties, even to places belonging to an enemy, excepting only those places which are at that time besieged or blockaded; and to avoid all doubt in this particular, it is declared that those places only are besieged or blockaded, which are actually attacked by a belligerent force, capable of preventing the entry of the neutral.

Article 19

The articles of contraband before enumerated and classified, which may be found in a vessel bound for an enemy's port, shall be subject to detention and confiscation, leaving free the rest of the cargo and the ship, that the owners may dispose of them as they see proper. No vessel of either of the two nations shall be detained on the high seas on account of having on board articles of contraband: whenever the master, captain or supercargo of said vessel, will deliver up the articles of contraband to the captor, unless the quantity of such articles be so great, or of so large a bulk, that they cannot be received on board the

capturing ship without great inconvenience; but in this and in all other cases of just detention, the vessel detained shall be sent to the nearest convenient and safe port, for trial and judgment according to law.

Article 20

And whereas it frequently happens, that vessels sail for a port or places belonging to an enemy, without knowing that the same is besieged, blockaded, or invested; it is agreed that every vessel so circumstanced may be turned away from such port or place, but shall not be detained, nor shall any part of her cargo, if not contraband, be confiscated, unless, after warning of such blockade or investment, from any officer commanding a vessel of the blockading forces, she shall again attempt to enter; but she shall be permitted to go to any other port or place she shall think proper. Nor shall any vessel of either, that may have entered into such port, before the same was actually besieged, blockaded, or invested by the other, be restrained from quitting such place with her cargo, nor if found therein after the reduction and surrender, shall such vessel or her cargo be liable to confiscation, but they shall be restored to the owners thereof.

Article 21

In order to prevent all kind of disorder in the visiting and examination of the ships and cargos of both the contracting parties on the high seas, they have agreed mutually, that whenever a vessel of war public or private shall meet with a neutral of the other contracting party, the first shall remain out of cannonshot, and may send its boat with two or three men only, in order to execute the said examination of the papers concerning the ownership of the vessel without causing the least extortion, violence, or ill-treatment, for which the commanders of the said armed ship, shall be responsible with their persons and property: for which purpose the commanders of said private armed vessels shall, before receiving their commissions, give sufficient security to answer for all the damages they may commit; and it is expressly agreed that the neutral party shall in no case be required to go on board the examining vessel for the purpose of exhibiting his papers or for any other purpose whatever.

Article 22

To avoid all kind of vexation and abuse in the examination of the papers relating to the ownership of the vessels, belonging to the citizens of the two contracting parties, they have agreed and do agree, that in case one of them should be engaged in war, the ships and vessels belonging to the citizens of the other, must be furnished with sea-letters or passports expressing the name, property and bulk of the ship, as also the name and place of habitation of the master or commander of said vessel, in order that it may thereby appear that said ship really and truly belongs to the citizens of one of the parties: they likewise agreed, that such ship, being laden, besides the said sea-letters or passports, shall also be provided with certificates, containing the several particulars of the cargo, and the place whence the ship sailed, so that it may be known, whether any forbidden or contraband goods be on board the

same; which certificates shall be made out by the officers of the place, when the ship sailed, in the accustomed form; without such requisites said vessels may be detained to be adjudged by the competent tribunal, and may be declared legal prize, unless the said defect shall be proved to be owing to accident and satisfied or supplied by testimony entirely equivalent.

Article 23

It is further agreed that the stipulations above expressed, relative to the visiting and examination of vessels shall apply only to those which sail without convoy, and when said vessels shall be under convoy, the verbal declaration of the commander of the convoy on his word of honour, that the vessels, under his protection, belong to the nation whose flag he carries, and, when they are bound to an enemy's port, that they have no contraband goods on board, shall be sufficient.

Article 24

It is further agreed that in all cases, the established courts for prize causes, in the country to which the prizes may be conducted shall alone take cognizance of them; and whenever such tribunals of either party shall pronounce judgment against any vessel or goods, or property, claimed by the citizens of the other party, the sentence or decree shall mention the reason or motives, on which the same shall have been founded, and an authenticated copy of the sentence or decree, and of all the proceedings in the case, shall, if demanded be delivered to the commander or agent of said vessel, without any delay, he paying the legal fees for the same.

Article 25

Whenever one of the contracting parties shall be engaged in war with another state, no citizen of the other contracting party shall accept a commission or letter of marque, for the purpose of assisting or cooperating hostilely with the said enemy, against the said party so at war, under the pain of being considered as a pirate.

Article 26

If by any fatality, which cannot be expected, and which God forbid the two contracting parties should be engaged in a war with each other, they have agreed, and do agree now, for then, that there shall be allowed the term of six months to the merchants residing on the coasts and in the ports of each other, and the term of one year to those who dwell in the interior, to arrange their business and transport their effects wherever they please, giving to them the safe conduct necessary for it, which may serve as a sufficient protection until they arrive at the designated port. The citizens of all other occupations, who may be established in the territories or dominions of the United States and of the Republic of Venezuela, shall be respected and maintained in the full enjoyment of their personal liberty and property, unless

their particular conduct shall cause them to forfeit this protection, which in consideration of humanity, the contracting parties engage to give them.

Article 27

Neither the debts due from individuals of the one nation to the individuals of the other, nor shares, nor moneys which they may have in public funds, nor in public, or private banks, shall ever in any event of war or of national difference, be sequestered or confiscated.

Article 28

Both the contracting parties being desirous of avoiding all inequality in relation to their public communications and official intercourse, have agreed, and do agree, to grant to the envoys, ministers, and other public agents, the same favours, immunities, and exemptions, which those of the most favoured nation do or shall enjoy; it being understood, that whatever favours, immunities, or privileges the United States of America, or the Republic of Venezuela may find it proper to give to the ministers and other public agents of any other power, shall by the same act be extended to those of each of the contracting parties.

Article 29

To make more effectual the protection which the United States and the Republic of Venezuela shall afford in future to the navigation and commerce of the citizens of each other they agree to receive and admit Consuls and Vice-consuls in all the ports open to foreign commerce, who shall enjoy in them all the rights, prerogatives, and immunities, of the Consuls and Vice-consuls, of the most favoured nation; each contracting party, however, remaining at liberty to except those ports and places, in which the admission and residence of such Consuls may not seem convenient.

Article 30

In order that the Consuls and Vice-consuls, of the two contracting parties may enjoy the rights, prerogatives, and immunities, which belong to them by their public character, they shall, before entering on the exercise of their functions, exhibit their commission or patent in due form, to the government to which they are accredited, and having obtained their exequatur, they shall be held and considered as such, by all the authorities, magistrates and inhabitants in the Consular district in which they reside.

Article 31

It is likewise agreed that the Consuls, their Secretaries, officers, and persons attached to the service of Consuls, they not being citizens of the country in which the Consul resides, shall be exempt from all Kind of taxes, imposts, and contributions, except those, which they shall be obliged to pay on account of commerce or their property, to which the citizens and

inhabitants, native and foreign, of the country in which they reside, are subject, being in every thing besides subject to the laws of the respective States. The archives and papers of the consulates shall be respected inviolably, and under no pretext whatever, shall any magistrate seize or in any way interfere with them.

Article 32

The said Consuls shall have power to require the assistance of the authorities of the country for the arrest, detention and custody of deserters from the public and private vessels of their country, and for that purpose, they shall address themselves to the courts, judges, and officers competent, and shall demand the said deserters in writing; providing by an exhibition of the registers of the vessels, or ships-roll, or other public documents, that those men were part of the said crews, and on this demand so proved (saving however, where the contrary is proved) the delivery shall not be refused. Such deserters, when arrested, shall be put at the disposal of said Consuls, and may be put in the public prisons, at the request and expence of those who reclaim them, to be sent to the ships to which they belonged, or to others of the same nation. But if they be not sent back within two months, to be counted from the day of their arrest, they shall be set at liberty, and shall be no more arrested for the same cause.

Article 33

For the purpose of more effectually protecting their commerce and navigation, the two contracting parties do hereby agree, as soon hereafter as circumstances will permit them, to form a Consular convention, which shall declare especially the powers and immunities of the Consuls and Vice-consuls of the respective parties.

Article 34

The United States of America and the Republic of Venezuela desiring to make as durable as circumstances will permit, the relations which are to be established between the two parties, by virtue of this Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, have declared solemnly, and do agree to the following points:

1st: The present Treaty shall remain in full force and virtue for the term of twelve years to be counted from the day of the exchange of the ratifications and further until the end of one year after either of the contracting parties shall have given notice to the other of its intention to terminate the same; each of the contracting parties reserving to itself the right of giving such notice to the other at the end of said term of twelve years; and it is hereby agreed between them that on the expiration of one year after such notice shall have been received by either from the other party, this Treaty in all its parts relative to commerce and navigation, shall altogether cease and determine, and in all those parts which relate to peace and friendship it shall be perpetually and permanently binding on both powers.

2d. If any one or more of the citizens of either party, shall infringe any of the articles of this Treaty, such citizen shall be held personally responsible for the same, and harmony and good correspondence between the two nations, shall not be interrupted thereby, each party engaging in no way to protect the offender, or sanction such violation.

3d. If (what, indeed, cannot be expected) unfortunately any of the articles in the present Treaty shall be violated or infringed in any other way whatever, it is expressly stipulated, that neither of the contracting parties will order or authorize any act of reprisal, nor declare war against the other on complaints of injuries, or damages, until the said party considering itself offended, shall first have presented to the other, a statement of such injuries or damages, verified by competent proofs, and demanded justice, and the same shall have been either refused or unreasonably delayed.

4d. Nothing in this Treaty contained shall, however, be constructed, or operate contrary to former and existing public Treaties with other Sovereigns and States.

The present Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation, shall be approved and ratified by the President of the United States of America, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate thereof, and by the President of the Republic of Venezuela with the consent and approbation of the Congress of the same, and the ratifications shall be exchanged in the city of Caracas within eight months, to be counted from the date of the signature hereof, or sooner if possible.

In faith whereof, we the Plenipotentiaries, of the United States of America and of the Republic of Venezuela have signed and sealed these presents.

Done in the city of Caracas on the twentieth day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty six, and in the sixtieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, and the twenty-sixth of that of the Republic of Venezuela.

JOHN G. A. WILLIAMSON

SANTOS MICHELENA

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