

(Confidential.)

Arecibo, P. R. June, 6th., 1899.

Col. W. P. Hall,  
U. S. Army,  
San Juan, P. R.

My Dear Colonel:--

As my telegram informed you, I returned yesterday from my second investigation of the towns of Hatillo and Camuy. I considered it wise to examine Quebradillas as well.

The result of these investigations only confirms my opinion and that of every disinterested person, that the condition of these districts is peaceful and satisfactory. The reports in regard to the collecting of arms are especially false and mischievous. In Sept. 1898 the Alcaldes after the Americans came into these districts, collected from the Spanish proprietors( and perhaps from others) a number of arms--all they could find. These were put in charge of the U. S. Volunteers stationed at Camuy. In time a number of them were issued to the police of Quebradillas Camuy and Hatillo and receipts taken--I think it was ten guns to each town. When the Volunteers left I took charge and as I could not furnish ammunition for these Remingtons, I exchanged them by proper authority for Springfields. At present I think(without referring to my papers) that these Springfields are distributed as follows:

Isabella.....	6
Quebradillas.....	6
Camuy.....	10
Hatillo.....	10
Arecibo.....	42.

The Remingtons called in by me (some 36) are stored here except those turned over on receipt, to the original owners or to some poor frightened proprietor, who needed a gun and could not buy one. In every case the recipient of a gun was personally known to me as a law abiding steady man. Many of the guns -Remingtons- were carried to the United States as mementos by the Volunteers.....Any one going into any of these towns to-day will see in plain sight in the jail or in the city halls, the few rifles on hand for the use of the municipal police.

The original disarming of the Spanish proprietors was a mistake, but a natural one. I say a mistake and I mean this to apply to the American authorities and not to the civil officers. The Americans of course believed in disarming those who might be in sympathy with Spain--not at that time realizing the entirely unaggressive and quiet timid nature of these Spanish proprietors. They are hard working, generally ignorant, men who desire nothing but peace and protection. But the civil authorities had their own reasons for this disarmament. They were of the liberal party--opposed to the Spaniards--Jealous of their riches(?) smarting under old slights and injustices and seeking an opportunity to drive the Spaniards out of this island or at least get even for old scores. After disarmament their revenge began and some hundreds of the Spanish haciendas were burned.

Gen. Brooke was appealed to for protection, but replied that he "could not allow troops to be used for the protection of private property--that these men must learn to take care of themselves."

Such an answer would have served on our frontier where everyman is independent--a good shot-- and has arms; but among

these poor sheep, self protection was impossible—their arms generally were gone— they could not purchase others— and even had they possessed them, they could not use them to advantage. Where ranches were not burnt—Black-mail was levied. In many cases cattle and horses were stolen and others were ham-strung.

This whole savage movement was against the Conservative or Spanish party and particularly against those who had been Volunteers. You will be told to-day that this was not the case, that it was merely an attack on property, by the thieves and bad men and was directed impartially against all who had property. But I was here in this island through that period and have talked with all kinds of people and am confident my opinion is correct.

If any proof be needed just form a list of the ranches burned and the political party of the owners. Naturally in this time of license—through private revenge— a few 'liberal' ranches were also destroyed.

Under the old regime the proprietors could only possess arms by the annual payment of an outrageous tax— and there being no hunting in the island they did not become familiar with their use. The safe guarding of country property was turned over to the Guardia Civile— a sort of authorized banditti that served the good purpose of allowing no one but themselves to steal.

When the country troops were withdrawn and the arms also called in, the revenge of the liberals began and nearly every night in September last one could count from ten to twenty or more large fires.

I am speaking now of the west end of the island. The movement was well organized and I am quite sure the head of it was in Mayagüez.

Either because it was found that the Americans would not countenance this unlawful business, or because it dies a natural death from lack of material—or that the revenge was complete—I can not say— but it ceased in October last. After that a few scattering fires occurred.

At this time the Americans organized the town governments and practically without exception put in office locally prominent liberal leaders—men devoted to Muñoz Rivera. Among those put in office at this time were the present Alcaldes of,

Quebradillas,

Isabella,

Camuy,

Hatillo,

Arecibo. (Since changed for another Muñoz Rivera man.)

The old man at Isabella is a good old man—not particularly bright—but with no underhand motives of any kind and not political; very well suited to his quiet old village.

The Alcalde of Quebradillas is a man of good presence—sufficient intelligence—with no enemies to my knowledge. Very few complaints have ever come from his district. He is the leader and head of the liberal party there.

The Alcalde of Camuy—Estrella—is a lean individual—of excitable temperament, has a number of bitter personal enemies. He suffered at the hands of the Spaniards, two imprisonments for talking against the Spanish rule. His enemies mutter and hint that he was at the head of the incendiary and thieving element in his district but produce no proof whatever. He is a bitter liberal—head of the Muñoz party in his district—frequently absent (say three days in each week) presumably conferring

with other political chiefs--he talks a good deal and is not as careful in his statements as he should be. And though there is no proof that he had any concern in the burnings in and near his districts, it is difficult to believe that he did not know what was going on and who was doing it. If he would only learn wisdom and not talk so much, he would do where he is. Possibly this last investigation will have taught him this much. He is the natural leader of his district and can swing it as he wants. I should dislike to see him relieved by reason of this lying report of Captain Salgados'-that report is a political attack of which more hereafter.

As stated -Estrella- is frequently absent from Camuy-- Salgado ' says he is gambling or seeing cock-fights, I can not say where he goes or what he does. But I and perhaps you would <sup>him</sup> not 'cinch' <sup>^</sup> for a little quiet game. If he should cease to be Alcalde I consider that his successor should be a liberal--and recommend Juan Ramon Rivera of Camuy district for the place. He is a man of means and intelligence and would I think prove satisfactory to all factions. The reason I recommend a liberal is, that above ninety percent. of the voters belong to that party and it would be American to take a man from the majority.

The Alcalde of Hatillo is a young man who talks some English acquired in the United States. He is hardly old enough and lacks the discretion for an Alcalde. It is vaguely charged by his enemies that he was concerned in the burnings in his district--but no proof is produced.

He is about to be married and will then leave for the United States on an extended trip. His assistant is also young and at a rough glance hardly the man for the place. An older and

more settled man would be more satisfactory. He is of course a liberal.

The Alcalde of Arecibo is doing very well, we locked horns when I first came and the air was cool for some time but all goes smoothly now. I am of the opinion that he is an Alcalde for all--which is the main point. He is a man of sufficient intelligence and presence for the position. He is interested in a butcher shop which is carried on in the name of his brother.

Now in conclusion of this subject these Alcaldes are all in favor of the presence and rule of the United States. They are all--Excepting the Alcalde of Isabella--warm adherents of Muñoz Rivera.

And now one more subject and a serious one. You will notice that all the reports of trouble up this way have come through the Insular Police who have but recently come into these districts. These reports are that of Captain Salgado's about Camuy,-- That from Hatillo, regarding the collecting of arms,--(it being left to us to guess that an uprising is contemplated by a people who when ground down by Spain, never uprose) Others I have received from the same source reporting verbally the collecting of arms at Quebradillas, and the wrongful distributing of relief rations at that point.

Without exception these reports are false and I firmly believe instigated by some person higher up the line.

What is desired to accomplish is the removal of the Muñoz Rivera men as Alcaldes--trusting to further steps I presume to get in representatives of the new republican party. . It may be that these false reports are due to the youth and inexperience of the detachment leaders--but I do not credit it.

Before the war the island had two parties, a liberal or Muñoz Rivera party and a Spanish or conservative party. Naturally the war did away with the last party. This left only the liberal party which through internal dissensions divided into a liberal party for Muñoz Rivera and a liberal party against him.

But the latter party calls itself, the Republican party, taking in the old radical party and many of the conservatives who now that their own party is dead are joining anything in the way of a party that is against the liberal contingent that worked them so much harm.

Now I know it is a grave statement to make, but it seems to me that this Insular Police force is being moulded into a political force—it seems to be becoming a tool of the Republican party. When one considers that the head of the Corps is a German-American, and that the men were picked out on recommendations from responsible men this seems not possible. But Techter speaks no Spanish and the second in command as well as the Chief Secretary are Republicans. It looks as though these officials or others had weeded out those who came to them with liberal recommendations leaving in only the candidates of Republican belief or those who can be moulded to those principles.

I find that no recommendations for the force coming from the Alcaldes of this vicinity have been favorably considered. They are liberals.

I find that these false reports are against liberal Alcaldes.

That the friends and intimates of Selgado for instance in Arecibo, Camuy and Quebradillas are Republicans.

Upon questioning Salgado and others of the force, they tell me they belong to no party, but their actions do not affirm this statement. It would of course be a great injury to the Corps to give it a political spirit.

This is a serious matter and I can not say positively that I am right, but it looks suspiciously like it.

In regard to the carrying of arms, the Alcaldes up the road have orders from the Secretary of State dated May 23rd., to call in all permits and hereafter such will be issued by him of two classes; one for \$2.50 permitting arms in the house and another \$15.00 permitting a man to carry arms everywhere. These Alcaldes have acted on this order in some cases—one of them having already called in twenty-two permits.

As the few arms these persons had were left in their possession and the new permits have not been issued, these men are left in the position of having arms without permits. No orders on the subject having been sent post Commanders, they continue to issue permits and the Alcaldes have orders to call them in. I think it a mistake to put this power of issuing permits in the hands of anyone belong to a political party.

It seems to be safer to leave it in the hands of the District Commanders— the payment of money for the permit is a minor consideration and can be easily arranged.

It would be well to arrange this matter soon— for it is unpleasant for me to have my permits taken away and probably unpleasant for the takers when I require the permits to be returned.

An old Spaniard near Hatillo was disarmed recently for firing at night. His house is in a lonely place and he fired in



the air to warn away marauders.

The Police I understand, claimed he fired at them but it is not so.

And now in conclusion— is there anything further I can say to convince you that this country is—with the exception of occasional acts of the law breakers one finds everywhere— absolutely quiet? Such a thing as armed resistance against the warmest friend the nation ever had, is undreamed of and impossible.

It is a country given over to political squabbles—in which the anonymous letter and the false report are freely used. When the custom house laws change and the American Courts hold sway—the influx of Americans will give the islanders something else to occupy their attention.

When that time comes let us hope they will cease grinding wind.

I am, very truly yours,

A. Cullacomb.  
Capt. 5th., Cav.,

L.R. 557, D.P.R.

4379

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE  
DEPT. PUERTO RICO,  
RECEIVED  
JAN 30 1900

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Genl. Stn., Gov.,

*Impertante*

*Carta del Capt. MacLeod*