

# ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH CROMWELL

## Consejo de Estado

to Felipe IV (1605–1665), King of Spain (1621–1665)

Madrid, 12 April 1654

The Council met today in pleno, as Your Majesty had ordained, and took cognizance of two letters from Don Alonso de Cárdeñas,<sup>1</sup> dated 6 and 13 March, and also of one letter from his lordship the Archduke,<sup>2</sup> dated 21 March. In all these letters, reports are given of the interviews which Don Alonso has had with Cromwell in reference to the alliance between Your Majesty and the Commonwealth of England, as well as with Cromwell himself; of the manner in which Don Alonso made this proposition to Cromwell; how Cromwell received it with great eagerness; how it was agreed that he should send Don Alonso an answer by the Secretary of State, which he afterwards did; and how he consented to conclude an alliance with Your Majesty in the form proposed by Don Alonso, without agreeing himself to determine the sums which he would desire to obtain from Your Majesty by way of subsidy.

His Highness, the Archduke, on his part, in the letter which Secretary Augustus Navarro wrote by his order to Don Alonso, has stated that if Cromwell would declare war against France, Spain would give him 50.000 Crowns a month, payable at Saint Sebastian, and that the first offer should be 30.000 or 40.000 Crowns. His Highness further observes in his letter to Your Majesty that the advantages which would result from the conclusion of such an alliance are so great that he thinks it impossible to refuse to grant this assistance to Cromwell.

The Council discussed this question at some length, regarding it as the most important that could present itself at any time, and more especially under existing circumstances, for in the present position of Your Majesty's affairs in the whole Spanish monarchy, and in the midst of the dangers which threaten them, this alliance of Your Majesty with the English would be a means of safety. And a declaration of war on their part against France, made on such conditions as might be agreed upon, would be very advantageous to the English themselves, not only because their interests are opposed to those of the French, but also because of the residence of King Charles in France, which King Charles will always seek to recover the Throne of England, in which the French will not fail to assist him as soon as circumstances permit. It should also be borne in mind that, however costly this alliance may be, it will not be more so than the efforts which Your Majesty will have to make to defend your Kingdoms and states.

The greatest difficulty which the Council see in the way of this negotiation is the want of resources; for it will be absolutely indispensable scrupulously to fulfill towards Cromwell all the stipulations that may be agreed on. If this were not done, and if we appeared to distrust him, we should furnish him with reasons for a rupture—a contingency to which it is most important not to give rise; and it would certainly occur if we did not fulfill our engagements towards him, for the English are very exact and very avaricious.

Having carefully considered all these things, the Council are of opinion that an acknowledgment of the receipt of his letters should be sent immediately to Don Alonso, that he should be most specially thanked for having made this proposition to Cromwell, as well as for the discernment and prudence with which he made it, and that he should be recommended to continue the negotiation, without allowing it to drop for a moment.

Answers to the same effect should be sent to both the Archduke and Don Alonso stating that much consideration has been given to the fact that Cromwell expects to receive large sums to make war against France. When two states conclude a league and alliance, each should contribute to it as far as it is itself

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<sup>1</sup> Don Alonso de Cárdeñas, Spanish Ambassador to the Commonwealth (1644–1655)

<sup>2</sup> Charles Joseph (1649–1664), Archduke of Austria and son of Ferdinand III (1608–1657), Holy Roman Emperor (1637–1657)

concerned, according to the interests which it has at stake in the country where the war is to be carried on. But England has great interests at stake in France, not only on account of pretensions which date from past ages, but also on account of the residence in France of King Charles, who is protected by that country and by the King of France, whom the English ought to trust neither now, nor at any time.

Nevertheless, Your Majesty permits the Archduke to act liberally, and to offer as much as the 50.000 Crowns which he mentions in his letters. Moreover, the affair being so important and calculated, if it should succeed, to lead to such fortunate and valuable results, both to the English and to the Spanish monarchy, it should not be allowed to fail for a sum of 10.000 Crowns a month, more or less; as soon as the galleons are arrived, which, if it please God, will be during the course of June, we shall deliver to the consul at Cadiz, or to the person or persons provided with the necessary powers from the Parliament and the Protector, 200.000 or 300.000 Crowns in bars of silver.

In making this communication to the Archduke, Your Majesty will deign to inform His Highness of the order which will be sent to Don Alonso, and of the offers which he is authorized to make, in order that His Highness may limit or extend them as he may think fit; adding that he must always strive to pull in his purse strings, and to offer as little as possible, that the conditions may be more easily performed on the part of Your Majesty.

The Council are likewise of opinion that we should send 30.000 Crowns to Don Alonso at once in order that, with such a sum at his disposal, he may treat and secure the favor of his friends and such other persons as he may deem it advisable to conciliate in order to bring this alliance to a satisfactory termination and to hasten it as much as possible, by employing to this end all his discernment, prudence, and address. He should also be recommended to inform the Archduke of all he does, and to act in conformity with his advice. In any case, the Council would desire to be informed of the orders sent to Don Alonso, so as to be able to make observations thereon, if occasion required.

The Duke de Medina de las Torres, while agreeing with all that has already been decided, is of opinion that we should not allow such an opportunity as the present to escape for uniting with the Commonwealth of England and the Protector in the manner proposed by Don Alonso, and that for this purpose we should make all imaginable efforts to perform the engagements we might contract, even should it be necessary to attempt impossibilities. For nothing less is at stake in the conclusion of this affair than the security of the realms and states of Your Majesty, as well as the possessions of Your Majesty's great vassals, who should all, as in duty bound, assist you, to their utmost power, to fulfill this duty.

The opinion of the Duke is that in order to conclude this affair as quickly as possible, Don Alonso should even offer 100.000 Crowns a month. For when we consider the dangers which are to be feared for this monarchy, in its present state, this sum does not appear to him exorbitant.

The Marquis de Velada, also agreeing with what has been determined, adds that the sum which the Archduke has empowered Don Alonso to offer, and even twice that amount, should be employed to obtain the object now desired. For if once Your Majesty is allied with England, you will no longer have to send such large supplies to Flanders, Italy, Catalonia, and Portugal. We should also consider the condition in which we should be placed if we allowed such an opportunity to escape. To attain this object, the Marquis offers all the capital he possesses and declares that he could wish it were more considerable that he might lay it at Your Majesty's feet, as he now lays what he has.

The Count d'Onate said that, even if we should not afterwards keep all our promises to Cromwell, he would not the less continue, on his part, to perform all he had agreed to do, no less on account of his own interest in the whole affair than on account of the measures which will have been taken by him against the French. For when once a rupture between them has been consummated, they will not easily become friends again.

Your Majesty will, however, ordain whatever may seem good to you on this subject.

*Let the advice of the Council of State be acted upon; and, with reference to the amount of assistance to be sent to Cromwell, and the period of its payment, I have ordered Don Luís de Haro to write to Don Alonso de Cárdeñas to inform him in what measure this assistance can be afforded. In other respects, I fully appreciate all the Council states on the subject of the advantages and importance of this affair.*

*Yo, el Rey*

M. Guizot, *History of Oliver Cromwell and the English Commonwealth* (London: Bentley, 1854), II:385–388.