

## **Louisiana, as seen from 18th Century Spanish Texas**

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This paper, schematic and brief by necessity, is focussed on the relations between the Spaniards and the French, in Louisiana, north-east of the Northern Border of the Vice-reign of New Spain. The paper is limited also to the 18th Century; therefore the first French attempts to be present on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico or on the northernmost Spanish border and the final period of Louisiana, linked to Spain and France just before its sale to the USA by Napoleon, shall be just mentioned.

As the relations between the Spaniards and the French in North America were strongly conditioned by the general relations of both countries in Europe, my analysis is made on three levels. The first one summarizes the general trends of the foreign relations between Spain and France, joining the second that reflects those relations on the frontier of the American northeast. A third level enumerates a series of historical facts, illustrating the peculiarities of the relations between Spanish and French in the Texas-Louisiana area.

Louisiana, was for the Spaniards in America, the French neighborhood, a neighborhood existing also between the two countries in Europe. The Mississippi Valley in America was therefore a border such as the Pyrennees still are one in Europe. This vicinity, however, was much more complex in the American lands than in the old continent. Spaniards in the New World saw the French as intruders, violating the Spanish rights to control the American continent since the initial years of the Spanish presence in America, Spain considered itself the owner of the New World, as established in the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed with Portugal and ratified by Pope Alexander's Bulls. What's more, the presence of the Frenchman La Salle in the Mississippi area and the San Bernardo Bay was considered specially illegal, as that soil was discovered by

Pineda and de Soto in the beginning of the sixteen century.

The final years of the Spanish 17th Century contemplate the pathetic end of the reign of the last Spanish King of the Austrian dynasty, unable to engender a successor. Besides the uncertainty of the future of that dynasty in Spain, the country was also suffering an extreme economic crisis. The main rivals that Spain had in Europe, such as England, Holland and France, didn't hesitate in anticipating the repartition of the failing Spanish empire. So it was agreed with the secret Treaty of The Hague in 1698. Nevertheless, those expectations allowed Louis XIV to prefer exerting his influence on the "bewitched" King of Spain, and thus obtain the rights of succession to the Crown of Spain for a French Bourbon prince, challenging the rights to the succession of a prince of the Austrian dynasty. For this reason, France restrained herself in the last years of the 17th Century from creating too much trouble for Spain, since Louis XIV was seriously considering keeping the Spanish Empire intact for the French royal family. Ever since, and practically during the entire 18th Century, the alliance between France and Spain was almost constant, though not without different degrees of intensity.

The relations between both countries in America were oscillating between rivalry and co-operation, both countries always maintaining a deep distrust of each other. It must also be mentioned that in the background of these Franco-Spanish relations there was always the presence of England, the major rival of France on the American land. This rivalry would finish with the triumph of England and the subsequent expulsion of France from all its continental territories in America. In this contention between French and English, Spain was not a mere witness, but a main protagonist almost always close to France against England. Meanwhile at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Spain would be the only one of the three European countries, with territories in North America since the 16th Century, maintaining its empire virtually intact. After the disappearance of France from North America, England's would soon follow, in a way, when the thirteen North American provinces achieved their independence.

In order to better understand the Spanish point of view on what Louisiana represented in those years, it is necessary to mention the main conflicts of the 18<sup>th</sup>. Century, in which France and Spain were major players, and their incidence in the common American border.

The 17<sup>th</sup>. century ended with France and Spain openly confronting each other with deep hostility and a mutual rivalry dating from the times when Father Marquette sailed down the Mississippi, lasting until the tragic final venture of La Salle ending in 1689. From then on, France's ambitions grew from the establishment of the province of Louisiana, in 1699, towards the vindication of the whole Mississippi Valley for the benefit of the concessionaire trade companies established in those territories. An especially important period of

Spanish activity in eastern Texas followed at the end of the century, when Franciscan missionaries there established thought they could be supplied by their French neighbors, then closer to Spain.

The war of succession for the Spanish Crown lasted from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>. century till the signing of the Treaties of Utrecht. France and Spain were allies during that long war. Confronting both of them were Austria, who aspired to the Spanish crown, Holland, and England, all three countries united since 1701 for this purpose. They were joined by Portugal, who broke its commitment established in the Treaty of Lisbon of the same year. A system based on "continental equilibrium" and "freedom of navigation", a traditional Anglo-Dutch thesis, was established in Utrecht. Spain was in fact excluded by France when the adopted preliminary agreements were signed in London in 1711, thus forcing Spain's acceptance of the subsequent agreements: Spain signed peace with England on July 13th 1713, with Holland the following year, and with Portugal in 1716. After the Treaties of Utrecht, Spain was able to obtain the stability of the new dynasty, and to maintain the integrity of the Spanish-American empire, though it lost its European dominions. During all those years, the alliance between France and Spain could be divided in two phases. The first one was a period of total submission by the King of Spain to his grand-father , Louis XIV, lasted till 1709. The second phase was one of major autonomy and better defense of Spanish national interests.

During this first formal rapprochement of the Spanish and French dynasties, the interest in the border of Louisiana was maintained mainly by the Spanish Franciscan friars, with not too much effect amongst Spanish civilian and military authorities, despite the close alliance of Spain and France during the first years of the 18th Century. The Spanish authorities were convinced that France only wanted to control Spanish Texas so as to facilitate the French access to New Mexico and to the rich mining areas of northern Coahuila, which were scantily defended. For this reason the Spanish authorities ordered the establishment of missions and a military fort as close as possible to the French camp on the Frontier: Natchitoches on the Red River, a tributary of the Mississippi and new frontier between the two countries in North America. Despite the good diplomatic relation, the Spaniards never were too much cooperative with the French in that area. In 1718 Spain founded a first missionary establishment on the San Antonio River, half-way between the Spanish missions in eastern Texas and the settlements of San Juan Bautista on the Rio Grande, which was the base of military and missionary operations for the Spanish expansion in Texas.

During the war of the Quadruple Alliance, second mayor conflict in Europe of the century, the intention of Felipe V to revise the Utrecht system, mainly in Italy, and at France's expense, would lead to France aligning herself with her old

enemies in the war of the Spanish Succession. The conflict would last from 1719 to 1720, when truce was established, and would have special repercussions on the Spanish frontier between Texas and Louisiana. A period of great hostility followed along the American frontier between the two countries in 1719. The military incident provoked by the French in the Spanish settlements of east Texas was clearly minor, but it implied the abandonment of the Spanish missions and presidio by the few astonished Spanish missionaries and soldiers who were ignorant of what was happening between France and Spain in Europe. These violent incidences finished with the truce of 1720, and were followed by the biggest stabilizing effort made by Spain in Texas, which was the “Entrada” of the Marquis of Aguayo, in 1721. The Spaniards recuperated the missions which had been abandoned, and the new capital of Spanish Texas was founded in Los Adaes, facing the French post of Natchitoches. Aguayo fostered the construction of new Missions on the San Antonio River and reinforced the whole frontier east and north of the Vice-kingdom. This was the time of the first confrontations between Spaniards and Apaches in Central Texas. Meanwhile, the alliance between Spain and France was formally reestablished with the Treaty of Seville, signed November 9th, 1729.

The formal peace achieved in Europe coincided with the end of the inspection of the Northern frontier of New Spain by Brigadier Don Pedro de Rivera. As a consequence of his final report, which tried to rationalize and reduce military expenses on the frontier, the Spanish missionary establishments of the east were abandoned for the third time. Nevertheless, the missions on the San Antonio River were reinforced. As for Louisiana, it would depend directly on the French Crown from 1731 on, due to the scarce economic output that the concessionaire companies had obtained till then. At this time, Spain had a very active policy of populating the San Antonio area as well as making alliances with the native tribes of central Texas.

The war of succession to the throne of Poland, from 1733 to 1738, led to a solemn treaty between the Crowns of France and Spain: the “First Pacto de Familia”, as the Treaty of El Escorial is known, signed in 1733. A few years later there followed the war of succession to the Austrian throne, aggravated with the Anglo-Spanish conflict of 1739, known in England as the war of Jenking’s ear. Both contentions lasted till 1746. In both cases, France was allied to Spain to such a point, that in 1743 a Second “Pacto de Familia” was underwritten, also known as the Treaty of Fontainebleau.

As the stability of the Louisiana frontier grew, the Spanish policy of occupying Texas increased. Missions for the “norteños” tribes were projected along the San Gabriel River, the Nuevo Santander province was occupied and settled in the south of the Rio Grande, and the first plan for settling Apaches at the San Sabá River, north of San Antonio, was implemented. Only the second one of these three projects would prove to be a success. The deficient missionary

administration was responsible for the failure of the San Gabriel Mission project, and the conflicts between tribes, among other reasons, would prove to be the undoing of the third one.

Three years after the end of the conflicts, the first Bourbon king of Spain was dead and was succeeded by Fernando VI, whose Minister, José de Carvajal, enacted a policy of neutrality, therefore distancing Spain from France. This was precisely what he had been advocating for since 1745 when he conceived his “Testamento Político” or Political testament, almost a program of Government. The Spanish king himself seconded him and his policy of neutrality when it became obvious that the Treaty of Aachen of 1748, which put an end to the conflict over the Austrian succession, was being agreed upon beforehand, between the French and the English delegates, without the presence of the Spanish delegate, who could only accede to what had previously been agreed. For this reason, Spain couldn’t obtain a bilateral agreement with England such as the one France had signed with England without Spain finding out. Even though the end of the war was a Spanish priority, the means by which this peace was achieved led to the end of the “Second Pacto de Familia”. King Fernando VI maintained this neutrality during his entire reign, concentrating on two mainstays of the Spanish politics: the peninsula, and the Indies, hoping in this way to enhance their administration and defense.

Despite the formal friendship and peace between France and Spain in those years, the supposed bad faith and ill will of the French for the Spaniards was constant. Accusations of France being an ally of the native enemies of the Spaniards, justifying any Spanish failure, are patent in many contemporary Spanish documents. In the middle of the century, Carlos III came to the throne, abandoning the policy of neutrality maintained by his predecessor, and at the same time boosting important changes in the general policy held by Spain in Europe and in America.

This new political position, together with the war against England that France maintained in Europe and in America, made the alliance of Spain and France again inevitable. The English-French conflict on American soil, initiated in 1755, was a preoccupying matter to the new Spanish monarch, specially after seeing England’s initial successes and despite the fact that during the mid 18th Century France had a stronger position in America than Great Britain did. The French population was larger, their troops were better prepared, and their dealings with the native Americans were privileged to the point of trusting the natives to join the French ranks in battle. But the fact is that in 1759 when France lost Quebec to England, the French had been pressuring Spain, for over more than a year, to become an ally against England. Therefore, it doesn’t seem surprising that France, who was threatened in America, and Spain, who didn’t have any hope of reaching a pact over pending problems with England, should reach what was called the “Third Pacto de Familia” on August 15th, 1761 after the English

refused Spanish mediation over their conflict with the French. Spain was going to a war, a war that was to be lost before it was begun, and though Spain received Louisiana in return, important Spanish losses in America were added to those suffered in Europe. The “Third Pacto de Familia”, contrary to the prior “Pactos”, proved to be an enduring one, and lasted till the Nootka conflict between Spain and England on the Pacific coasts of Canada, at the end of the century.

This war finished with the Peace of Paris in 1763, Louisiana became Spanish as a gift from the French King to his Spanish cousin in 1762, as a compensation for his help in the war against England. Spain did not occupied Louisiana until 1769. The occupation was difficult, in spite of a wise policy of continuity set forth by the Spanish authorities, but from now on the French menace in the East had ceased, although tensions between inhabitants of Louisiana and the authorities of Texas were always patent, mainly as a consequence of the imposed difficulties in trade between the two provinces. This war also revealed the fragility and vulnerability of the Spanish frontiers in America to the Spanish authorities. Since then, administrative and military reforms were installed. The policy in America was closer to the “enlightened” mentality than to the traditional Spanish one, as had been intended since the 16th Century. The new reforms in the Indies were especially important between 1760 and 1776: the expulsion of the Jesuits, the free market policy, and the establishment of the “Comandancia General de las Provincias Internas” in the north of New Spain as a frustrated new Vice-reign, among others, took place. In 1769, the Marquis of Rubí, with a deep commitment to military reforms, led the inspection of the Northern Frontier. Following Rubí’s inspection, there was a decision to have the Northern tribes and the Comanche merge with the Spaniards against the Apache in the wars of 1772. It was this year precisely when the Franciscan Missionaries from Queretaro abandoned Texas and their work, and moved to California.

The Spanish – French Convention, signed in Aranjuez, in April 1779, was a secret treaty between France and Spain, conceived to coordinate their policy towards the American patriots who were at war against England, at that time a common enemy to both countries. The Treaty of Versailles, which put an end to the American war, allowed Spain to get even over what had occurred twenty years previously, as a result of the Peace of Paris.

The South of Louisiana would become, again, of utmost importance as consequence of the Spanish involvement in the War of Independence of the Colonies. The military victories of Bernardo de Galvez between 1779–1781 along the Mississippi and in Pensacola, and the assistance from Spain to the American Rebels with money, military equipment, and food, allowed Spain to recuperate a predominant position on the Mexican Gulf with the Peace of Versailles. From that point on, Spain wanted to reinforce the frontier of the Mississippi, and to establish a barrier on the river to stop the almost guaranteed expansion of the new independent country. And so it was from 1791: the Spanish Governor of

Louisiana, Baron Corondelet had three main objectives in the area: to reinforce the frontier on the river, to control the navigation in the Mississippi, and to achieve treaties with the indigenous people of the area in order to avoid their alliance with the Northern Americans against Spain.

But, in 1794, London made peace with the old colonists, signing a treaty in November of that year which remained secret to Spain who, at that time, was aligned with England in the European wars against the French Revolutionary Convention. The consequences of this peace were that the Spanish intention of getting closer to the USA was frustrated. The project elaborated by Godoy, strong man for Carlos IV, to promote an alliance between Spain, France and North America against England, , almost came to nothing. Godoy only managed to concede to almost all of the North American petitions, in the framework of the Treaty of San Lorenzo, signed between the two countries on October 27th 1795. As a consequence of the San Lorenzo Treaty, Spain had to accept the 31st parallel as the border limit of Western Florida and at the same time, the freedom of navigation in the Mississippi for Americans. Besides, Spain could not achieve a formal alliance with North America, and had to limit its agreement to be a simple Treaty of Friendship unable to guarantee the integrity of the Spanish Empire in America. It is said that with this Treaty was beginning the end of the Spanish Empire in America.

The 18th Century would finish with another alliance between Spain and the Revolutionary Directory in France. Both countries, at more opposite ideological ends than ever, agreed to confront the Austrian interests in Italy: one of the obsessions of the Spanish Bourbons which they maintained throughout that century. Finally, through this alliance, it was clear that France wanted to return to America, and specially wanted to recuperate Louisiana, as can be deduced from the signing of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, signed in San Ildefonso in August 1796. This alliance would become much more pernicious and evil due to the greater dependence of Spain towards France; it was now much stronger than the one existing when the first Bourbon King took the Spanish Crown at the beginning of the century. The 18th century ended therefore with Spain linked again to France, but this time almost as dependent as a Protectorate.

The third level of my analysis is focused on some particular examples epitomizing the difficult relationships prevailing between French and Spaniards along the Northern border of the Spanish empire. A peculiar perception is provided as of a pervasive latent rivalry and mistrust prevailing in spite of formal alliances in force between the two countries.

An original source illustrating these examples can be found at the Archives of Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is identified as # 462 of the catalog of its

manuscripts published in 1974, titled “Documentos y noticias históricas y geográficas colectadas para la averiguación de los límites entre las provincias de la Luisiana y Texas, en cumplimiento de la Real Orden de 20 de Mayo de 1805, por el Padre D. José Antonio Pichardo, comisionado por el Excmo. Sr Virrey de esta Nueva España”. There is no doubt that this is a compilation of sources at the base of the well known Tratado de Pichardo, published in Spain after 1808, it was edited in the United States by Charles Wilson Hackett, between 1931 and 1943 and published in Houston by Texas University Press.

The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ collection of documents is bound in eleven volumes. Three of them missing, most likely stolen, were dealing with the pivotal stages of the eighteenth century. Namely, those corresponding to the thirties, forties, the final fifties and the early sixties. In spite of the missing volumes, 73 listed items, most of them proceeding from other historical archives in New Spain, are available. Those original documents, ably selected and compiled, prove most useful as a source of information, not only on the borders between Louisiana and Texas, this being its main purpose, but also on the Spanish presence in New Mexico, and, more specifically in Texas with Louisiana in the background.

I will just mention a few historical events of which reference can be found in these documents and some writings where rivalry or endeavors of cooperation between Spaniards and the French are dealt with. Chronologically, these events are:

- “ The La Salle expedition and several Spanish expeditions organized in its search, namely Alonso de Leon’s ( 1690 ) and Teran de los Rios’ (1692).
- “ The discovery and acknowledgment of the Texas river by Father Massanet and Governor Teran de los Rios (1691).
- “ The presence of Saint Denis and other Frenchmen in Coahuila (1715).
- “ Description of the ‘Tejas’ nation and of the Bay of the Holy Spirit and about “the convenience that this one be occupied by the Spaniards to avoid its occupation by the French” (1716).
- “ The French attack on the castle of San Carlos in Mobile and its recovery (1719), as well as reports on the crisis of the year 1719 on the frontier with the French, recommending the Spanish authorities the vigilance of “cities and presidios”.
- “ Report of the General Don Antonio Valverde about the preparation to travel “to the lands it is said recently occupied by the French in order to get then away” (Santa Fe 1720).



- “ Report of the Auditor Don Juan de Olivares to the Viceroy on “the attitude of the Apache from Texas influenced by the French from Louisiana and with indications about the oldest French settlements” (1724).
- “ Inquiry whether the Texas’ Governor Pedro del Barrio “had established illegal commercial links with the French”. In one of the documents of this file there is a reference in Los Adaes “ of French invasions under Indian coverage and protection” (1751).
- “ Report of the “Fiscal” Don Antonio de Andreu on the general situation in Texas. Reference regarding “the commerce with the French of New Orleans and other French colonies, with proposals in order to put a remedy” (1752). Of the same year are documents pretending to investigate “the attitude of the Indians towards the French”.
- “ Letter of Don Cesar Le Blanc, a French, to the Governor of Texas, Don Jacinto de Barrios, letting him know the state of relations between the territories of the Spanish Crown and the ones of France’s and about the need of a better understanding between them.” Answer of the Spanish Governor clarifying details about the frontier between the two countries (1753). Of the following year are other reports and minutes where the essay is made to “determine the limits between the territories belonging to Spain and to France”.
- “ The story relating the tragic destruction of the Mission for the Apache on the San Saba River in March 1758 is not reported in this collection of documents. It was probably included in one of the missing volumes. In the translated American edition of Pichardo’s work, the royal document of approval for the Apache project is mentioned. In the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ collection there is a secondary document related to the same project, like one on the possibility of the existence of silver mines in Los Almagres, in a way linked with the Mission Plan for the Apaches. Mention has to be made regarding Spanish accusations of alleged French involvement not only in the preparation of the joint attack of “Nortenos” and Comanche against the San Sabá river Mission, but also in helping the Taovaya tribe fortified settlement in repelling and neutralizing the Spanish 1760 attack, organized as a reprisal against the attacks on the San Sabá settlements established for the Apache.
- “ Proceedings on reciprocal commerce between the provinces of Louisiana and Texas; setting up of a harbor on the Texas coast; enlargement of Louisiana borders up to Sabinas river and other incidental points” (documents dated between 1778 and 1790).
- “ Special relevance has been given to the Texas Governor Ripperda proceedings, initiated in 1772, proposing war against the Lipan Apache. The proceeding is made up of forty seven documents. A few of them refer to Natchitoches Spanish

Governor, D. Atanasio de Mezzieres, related to indigenous people East and North of Texas.

- “ Viceroy Bucareli’s letter to Texas Governor Baron de Ripperda, where mention is made that “ an exchange or purchase of cattle in the Texas province, as proposed by Louisiana Governor, D. Luis de Unzaga y Amezaga, should be fully prohibited” (1775). There is another document of the same year, in which the Governor of Texas asks the Viceroy for instructions on how to deal with some Frenchmen expatriated from Louisiana, “since it is forbidden to harbor French people on those territories”. Also from 1775 is a report from the “Fiscal” Areche, in which he authorizes the selling of merchandise brought in by the French to the San Antonio Bexar Presidio, “without it establishing a precedent”. The year after, however, the Vice-royal General Advisor report “advises not to allow any sort of commerce with Louisiana French people”.
- “ There is a curious report from D. Nicolas de Lamarche, French from Louisiana, to the General Commander of the Interior Provinces, D. Teodoro de Croix. The report describes Mr Lamarche’s project of particular war against the Apaches, following the required alliance with the Comanche. The Texas Governor will write him, in November 1778, saying that he will consider his project and thanking him for his availability.
- “ Of special significance is a folder containing seven documents relating to “the extension of Louisiana’s borders to the las Sabinas river.” The documents refer to years 1789 to 1791.
- “ Also worth highlighting is the seaside expedition, along the Gulf coast, undertaken by D. Jose de Hevia, from May 1785 to July of the next year. The expedition surveyed and analyzed the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, from Western Florida to Tampico.
- “ Among the documents are the Journals of Jose Mares and Pedro Vial. These were diaries of their journeys along the northern Vice-royal border between New Mexico and Louisiana in 1788. Other documents recount the voyage “made inland, from Veracruz to Louisiana, in 1801, by the Captain of Regiment, Celestino Saint Maxent and D. Honorato Fortier, neighbor of New Orleans.”
- “ The last documents of the summarized collection refer to reports on the boundaries between Texas and Louisiana. They are written by Father D. Jose Peredo in 1807, Father Fray Melchor de Talamantes, also in 1807, and by the Secretaries of Mexico’s Santo Oficio de la Inquisición, of that same year.

The preceding historical facts exemplify the complexities of Spanish-French relationships along the Northern Vice-royal frontier, even when Louisiana belonged to the King of Spain. These relations evolved from the initial rivalry

existing at the end of the preceding century to a closer collaboration. This collaboration was many times only sporadic, in spite of the alliances existing between France and Spain since the beginning of the 18th Century.

That French-Spanish rivalry should not only be seen on grounds of territorial craving on the part of the two countries for the same lands. Different methods of occupation and of dealing with native people are also a significant standpoint. To Spain, the Missionary method implemented with or without military support, net and grid upon which the Spanish empire was built, implied the a-culturization of the natives. The natives were expected to relinquish not only their beliefs and their deep-rooted social habits, such as polygamy, human sacrifices or cannibalism, but they also had to abandon primitive hunting and foraging and gradually learn the western productive methods. The aim of this whole process was not limited to provide cheap and docile manpower: in fact the natives were to become loyal subjects to the King of Spain, with the same rights as the inhabitants of all the Spanish lands. These native people would also become empowered as owners and harvesters of their own lands and cattle, and, above all, they were invited to become believers in God and strove for the salvation of their souls.

This last aim was pivotal to Spain, to the point of being considered not only a social or political goal, but the legal basis justifying the Spanish presence in America, all with the Pope's blessing, as top religious and legal authority on earth. No other country in Europe shared such concerns. Not even France, the "eldest daughter of the Church", whose main aim in America lied in setting up profitable trade relations with natives and controlling commerce usually originated in Spanish settlements. To that end, France needed the native people to become allied and trade counterparts in the trade of furs and other goods of interest to scant frontier markets. That is why France generously provided firearms and endeavored to cater to the material needs of the natives, disregarding in the process their cultural or spiritual issues. This was in fact in total contradiction to Spain's priorities.

As is well known, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century France and Spain would again become allied in Europe. This new alliance, qualified by some as a pact against nature ("contra natura") was established between a traditional and decadent monarchy and a new revolutionary and aggressive France. These circumstances together with Godoy's ambition, the inaction of King Carlos the Fourth, the Queen's recklessness and wickedness, and the deceitfulness of the Prince Heir Fernando, would lead the Spanish people losing confidence in the King and the royal family. The Bourbon family, which personified the Spanish crown, ended up sponsoring Spain's vassalage to Napoleon, by means of a tragicomedy played by the characters just mentioned, and heavily paid with blood by the Spanish people. The brief process of Spain's decadence resulted in the country's invasion by Napoleon troops and the substitution of the Bourbons by a brother to the

French Emperor. To this loss of national sovereignty the loss of the Spanish American continental empire would soon follow and there ensued an extremely deep internal crisis in Spain that would take decades to surmount.

We may conclude that Spanish-French relationship in the northern Vice-kingdom's border was at the same time, an expression of rivalry, sometimes violent and always mistrustful, but also a spur and a stimulus. That stimulus led Spain to occupy lands in the empire's periphery, which seemed to be attractive only when coveted by the French. That French presence, repelled initially by Spain, evolved as a catalyzing force, pivotal for occupying the unknown Spanish Texas lands.