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SERGEANT MAJOR AYALA Y ESCOBAR AND THE THREATENED ST. AUGUSTINE MUTINY

by WILLIAM R. GILLASPIE

On the morning of June 19, 1712, the Spanish *presidio* of St. Augustine narrowly escaped a mutiny against the crown's constituted authority in Florida, Governor Francisco de Corcoles y Martinez. The threatened uprising, which involved the governor's second-in-command, Sergeant Major Juan de Ayala y Escobar, vividly illustrated the principal weakness in the colonial administration of Spanish Florida - the formation of a power structure headed by the sergeant major which continuously threatened to undermine the power and authority of the governor. The development of this extra-legal body, climaxed by the "sordid affair" of June 19, took on added significance when viewed in its broader historical setting.

The period extending from 1670 to 1713 was the first of three critical phases in the eighteenth-century European rivalry over North America. Beginning in 1670, England challenged Spanish exclusivism in the southeast by founding the settlement of Charleston. From Charleston English traders and settlers expanded westward and southward into the "debatable land" of Georgia. The English and Spanish waged undeclared war for a period of thirty years in which Gaule (eastern Georgia) served as the principal battlefield.¹ Meanwhile, as France advanced southward into the Louisiana territory and toward the Gulf coast, the Spanish crown having formerly ignored the area, ordered the occupation of Pensacola Bay.

During the thirty-year interim the French and English intrusions appeared as giant pincers which threatened to engulf the Florida provinces. Cognizant of this menace, Spain selected St. Augustine, the seat of the governorship of Spanish Florida since 1565, as the main bastion for defense and authorized the building of a massive fort, the Castillo de San Marcos. Work on this fortification commenced in 1672. Fortunately for

1. Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Ann Arbor, 1956), *passim*; Herbert E. Bolton, ed., *Arredondo's Historical Proof of Spain's Title to Georgia* (Berkeley, 1925), *passim*.

Spain and its Florida dependency, the Castillo was completed, or nearly so, by the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession at the turn of the century.²

In 1700 the Hapsburg king of Spain, Charles II, died without an heir and willed the throne to Philip of Anjou, grandson of the Bourbon French king, Louis XIV. The Hapsburg claimant to the throne, Archduke Charles of Austria, challenged the will. In the ensuing dynastic conflict, England, apprehensive over the possibility of an eventual union of Spain and France under a Bourbon monarch, supported the Hapsburg cause. This War of the Spanish Succession extended to North America where it became known as Queen Anne's War.

In the southeastern campaigns of the American phase of this international conflict, the giant pincers were now reversed. The Franco-Spanish alliance now threatened to engulf English Carolina. Indeed the French governor of Louisiana proposed a joint Franco-Spanish offensive against Carolina with St. Augustine serving as the base of operations. But the plan was never implemented and put into effect. Instead, the English and their Indian allies, under the leadership of Carolina Governor James Moore, seized the initiative and joined forces in an expedition designed to strike and eradicate the Spanish bastion at St. Augustine. En route to Florida the expedition destroyed the few remaining Franciscan missions and the Spanish outposts in eastern Georgia. Due largely to the defensive measures employed by Florida Governor Jose de Zuniga y Cerda, Governor Moore failed to wrest the Castillo from the Spanish.³ However, most of St. Augustine was burned and sacked, and many of the Indians who accompanied Moore's expedition remained in Florida to menace the Spanish populace.

By the time the newly-appointed governor of Florida, Francisco de Corcoles y Martinez, had arrived to succeed Zuniga in 1706, the *presidio* of St. Augustine was the last vestige of Spanish power in Florida. Corcoles would eventually regret the day he set sail from Spain for Florida. During his ten year interim as governor, St. Augustine reached its most impoverished

2. Albert C. Manucy, *The Building of the Castillo de San Marcos* (Washington, 1942), *passim*.

3. Charles W. Arnade, *The Siege of St. Augustine in 1702* (Gainesville, 1959), *passim*.

state. The year following his arrival in Florida, he was writing, "may God not permit the enemy to attack and find me without supplies." Conditions steadily worsened to the point that Corcoles notified his superior, the viceroy of New Spain, in Mexico City, that St. Augustine "kill be lost, not by enemy attack, but by the delays in provisioning the *presidio*." ⁴

For almost a decade the extent of the Spanish holdings in Florida was the range of the Castillo's cannon. In 1707, Governor Corcoles reported that those who dared venture without protection into the forests to collect firewood, to care for small patches of maize, or to dig for roots, were either killed or carried off by the Indians. As a result, women and children, at night and protected by the soldiers, ventured out from their scant and unfurnished shelters surrounding the Castillo, and walked sometimes as much as twenty to twenty-six miles, north and south, in search of oysters, other shell fish, and roots. By 1712 the St. Augustine populace had resorted to eating cats, dogs, and horses. ⁵ Conditions became so drastic that the governor violated mercantilistic restrictions and was forced to engage in contraband trade, ironically enough with the enemy - the English. The opportunity for such illegal trade arose during the governorship of Corcoles' predecessor, Jose de Zuniga. First contact with the English traders occurred during the exchange of prisoners which followed the siege of St. Augustine. Soon afterwards, however, the exchange became a one-way affair with the Indians delivering Spanish captives, mostly soldiers, to the governor at St. Augustine who paid the English commander twenty pesos per captive. The amount was subsequently deducted from the soldier's annual pay. In the process of the exchange the English envoy sold the *presidio* flour, beef, rice, and hard-tack. ⁶

4. Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, November 16, 1707, Archivo General de Indias (cited hereafter as AGI) estante 58, cajon 1, legajo 28/folio 23; April 25, 1712, AGI 58-2-3/56. All documents cited as AGI from the John B. Stetson Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

5. *Ibid.*; Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, July 17, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/105.

6. Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/103; July 17, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/105; July 24, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/106; Council of the Indies to crown, Madrid, November 10, 1713, AGI 58-1-20/134; July 19, 1730, AGI 58-1-20/207; Benavides to crown, St. Augustine, August 3, 1719, AGI 58-2-4/26.

While Queen Anne's War did not cause the poverty of Spanish Florida, it greatly aggravated conditions. The St. Augustine *presidio* was almost completely dependent upon outside sources for its supplies, including foodstuffs. The basic cause of the economic privation of Florida was the inadequacy of the Spanish system to furnish the *presidio* with its needs. The crown provided the *presidio* with an annual subsidy to be collected from officials in New Spain (Mexico), the amount depending upon the authorized strength of the *presidio*. By 1708 this was 355 men, and the annual subsidy amounted to 73,029 pesos. Each year the Florida governor appointed a collector of the subsidy, who, upon his arrival in New Spain, presented a certification denoting the authorized strength to the crown's official (until 1702 the official was the viceroy - afterwards the Bishop of Puebla). The official then issued a warrant from the royal treasury. Upon its receipt the Florida collector contacted merchants and purchased those supplies requested by the governor. The balance of the hard specie represented the pay of the military personnel.⁷

Theoretically the amount of the subsidy was adequate. However, it was often delayed and rarely was it paid in full. On at least four occasions between 1708 and 1714, the collection of the subsidies required from twelve to twenty-two months. Further, the debts owed the *presidio* from previous subsidies mounted steadily. By 1703 the subsidies in arrears had soared to 456,959 pesos. Consequently, not only was the pay of the soldiers delayed, but the Florida governor was also often obliged to look to the Caribbean for supplies and foodstuffs. In the last decade of the seventeenth century Havana served as a source of supplies for Florida, and for several years merchants there granted credit until the collector had returned to St. Augustine from New Spain. Since the Florida governor was not always able to meet his obligations with any degree of regu-

7. Luis R. Arana draws a distinction between the authorized and actual strength of the *presidio*. Many of those listed among the authorized personnel were incapacitated and unfit for soldiering. Luis R. Arana, "The Spanish Infantry: The Queen of Battles in Florida, 1671-1702" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Florida, 1960), *passim*. *Recopilacion de leyes de los reinos de las Indias* (Madrid, 1756), Libro 3, Titulo 9, Ley 7, 10; Benavides to crown, St. Augustine, January 20, 1719, AGI 58-2-4/21; crown to treasury officials of Florida, Barcelona, March 8, 1702, AGI 58-1-23/131.

larity, the Havana merchants became increasingly reluctant to extend further credit.⁸ These were the exigencies of Florida which afforded Juan de Ayala y Escobar with the opportunity to enhance his military career and estate.

Born in Havana in 1635, Ayala spent his early adult life serving aboard merchant vessels in the Caribbean, and he familiarized himself with its trade routes, harbors, and channels. At the age of forty Ayala married the daughter of the adjutant to the sergeant major of the Havana *presidio* and decided upon a career in the military. In 1683 he was assigned to the *presidio* of St. Augustine where he served as lieutenant of the Castillo with the corresponding rank of captain *reformado* (an honorary rank without command of troops). During the next twenty years Ayala often demonstrated his zealotness and bravery to the Spanish crown and to the governors of Florida.

In the face of enemy attack and in command of unseaworthy vessels, Ayala willingly sailed on numerous relief missions to Havana, Campeche, and Vera Cruz at times when no one else would dare volunteer. Where others failed, Ayala always seemed to succeed. His voyages were not limited to the Caribbean; on three occasions he sailed the stormy Atlantic, once without protection of the convoy, to purchase goods and solicit the crown of Spain for men, arms, and supplies desperately needed for the preservation of Florida.⁹ In return for services rendered during his second and third voyages, the crown rewarded Ayala with promotions and commercial concessions. In 1687, during

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8. Testimony relative to the payment of the subsidy for Florida, Puebla de los Angeles, 1703, AGI 58-2-3/21; Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, April 24, 1714, AGI 58-2-4/5; Quiroga to crown, St. Augustine, August 25, 1689; crown to Torres and treasury officials, Buen Retiro, May 29, 1696, AGI 58-1-22/384.
 9. Under contract with the Florida governor and treasury officials to purchase designated provisions for the *presidio*, Ayala made his first trans-Atlantic voyage in 1683, and returned to St. Augustine in 1685. During this voyage Ayala violated his license and committed infractions against Spain's commercial policy and laws. (House of Trade to the crown, Seville, March 28, 1684, AGI 54-5-15, No. 4; House of Trade to the crown, Seville, April 4, 1684, AGI 54-5-15, No. 6; Governor Juan Marquez Cabrera to the crown, St. Augustine, April 28, 1685, AGI 54-5-15, No. 16.) After reviewing the charges against Ayala, the crown exonerated him from "whatever crime he may have committed as he acted in good faith and brought aid, thereby alleviating the misery of the *presidio's* infantrymen." (Crown to the treasury officials of Florida, Madrid, April 7, 1687, AGI 58-1-22, No. 15.)

Ayala's second mission to Spain, the crown appointed him captain and commander of an infantry company. On his third mission (1702-1705), which coincided with Moore's siege of St. Augustine, he secured desperately needed provisions and a promotion to the rank of sergeant major. Upon his return, according to the Franciscan friar Simon de Salas, the residents of St. Augustine cried out in unison, "Ayala is the father of our country because he has always helped us in our greatest needs."¹⁰

Fully aware of his vital and seemingly indispensable role, Ayala flagrantly violated virtually every law governing the conduct of Spanish commerce and military personnel. Although prohibited by the Laws of the Indies, his activities within the *presidio* were more those of a merchant than a soldier. Ayala had adapted himself well to the underlying postulate of Spain's commercial policy. If a merchant was willing to undergo physical and monetary risks, the government rewarded him with concessions and privileges from which he could profit. The crown and the governors of Florida apparently classified Ayala's activities as those of a private citizen performing such vital services by provisioning the provinces of Florida. Ayala's most lucrative reward was his immunity from punishment.

Upon the return of Ayala from Spain in 1687, the governor dispatched him on numerous local missions to procure supplies on the *presidio's* account. As commander of the *presidio's* vessel Ayala also began purchasing goods on his own account and proceeded to sell them to the residents of St. Augustine. Having converted his house into a store, he stocked dry goods such as beaver hats and stockings for the soldiers and silk and fine linen for their wives. He quickly learned that the basic necessities of life provided much more profit, and so he expanded his inventory to include food products. Since the soldiers' pay was almost always in arrears, he had to devise means for them to pay for the merchandise. With the governor's approval Ayala extended credit to the soldiers. When the subsidy collector returned from New Spain, he presented their signed vouchers, and

10. Junta of War to crown, Madrid, March 15, 1687, AGI 58-1-20/30; AGI 58-1-22/7; Junta of War to Juan de Ayala y Escobar, Buen Retiro, June 12, 1703, AGI 58-1-23/226; Quiroga to crown, St. Augustine, April 18, 1692, AGI 54-5-15/89; Simon de Salas to crown, St. Augustine, June 14, 1705, AGI 58-1-27/79.

the governor would issue a warrant to Ayala for the total amount, payable from the royal treasury. Treasury officials would deduct this amount from the soldier's pay. In 1689, Ayala grossed 1,500 pesos from the sale of his goods.¹¹ The effects of Queen Anne's War yielded far greater profits for him.

Returning from Spain in 1705, Ayala found conditions in St. Augustine even riper for self-aggrandizement. He was aware that the soldiers and their dependents had but two alternatives: they could subsist on their daily and meager rations of one or two pounds of flour, shellfish, and roots, or they could purchase food from one of Ayala's well-stocked stores paying the exorbitant prices he charged. Ayala's chief source of supplies was Havana where one of his sons, Miguel de Ayala, and his agent, Juan Francisco Carballo, were providing him with an ample supply of maize, flour, beef, and salt pork. For the convenience of the St. Augustine residents, Ayala operated stores at two locations. One was managed by a local merchant, Jaime Barcelona. The other was Ayala's house, located on the main street, where another local merchant, Manuel del Campo, was in charge. In Havana he purchased two and one-half bushels of maize for two pesos and sold it for nineteen pesos in St. Augustine; he paid two pesos for twenty-five pounds of pork which he sold to the residents of the *presidio* for nine pesos. Between 1706 and 1712 Ayala grossed a total of 70,000 pesos.¹² This amount excluded his annual pay and freight charges on the goods transported for the *presidio's* warehouse. Further, Ayala, with tacit government approval, had succeeded in avoiding the payment of import duties on the goods he transported on his own account.

The Florida treasury officials, responsible for the collection of duties, reported this violation and Ayala's other activities to the crown. But instead of punishing the governor and Ayala, the king castigated the treasury officials for their negligence: "I severely reprimand and censure you for allowing the entry of goods without payment of duty and yielding to my Governor

11. Treasury officials of Florida to crown, St. Augustine, July 20, 1689, AGI 54-5-15/67.

12. Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, July 12, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/104; Council of the Indies to crown, Madrid, March 16, 1714, AGI 58-1-20/138; Francisco Menendez to crown, June 6, 1712, AGI 58-1-34/19; Benavides to crown, St. Augustine, January 20, 1719, AGI 58-2-4/21.

and Captain-general in the matter of not confiscating these goods. When you have knowledge of such fraud you are to act independently of the viceroys, presidents and governors. You are hereby warned that should this occur again you will be severely punished." The king paused long enough in his caustic reprimand to praise Ayala for the zeal he showed in volunteering for dangerous missions.¹³ Because of Ayala's vital role in provisioning the *presidio*, Spain seemed reluctant to curtail his illegal enterprises and activities. The Florida governors had an additional reason for not interfering. Ayala wielded great power, real and potential, within the hierarchic structure of the *presidio*.

The governors were *peninsulares* (Spanish-born) and were usually sent out directly from Europe. Unfamiliar with conditions in Florida, the governors relied heavily upon the unofficial *presidio* hierarchy, many of whom were *criollos* (American-born Spaniards). Many of the latter had been born in Florida or had served there for a long period of time. Because of Florida's impoverished condition, Spain found it extremely difficult to introduce new blood into the provinces. Except for the infrequent arrival of soldiers as replacements, the society of St. Augustine remained stagnant and closed. With the exception of the governorship, the *criollos* occupied all of the *presidio's* key administrative and military posts: the sergeant major, the two treasury officials (accountant and treasurer), and the company commanders. Governors came and went, but the power structure of the *criollos* for the most part remained static. Fearful of retaliation and reprisals at his *residencia* (a review trial of a royal official's term of office at which anyone could testify), the governors usually sought and heeded the advice of the *criollo* hierarchy, and they oftentimes overlooked their infractions of the Laws of the Indies.¹⁴ Within the *criollo* hierarchic structure, the sergeant major, in his official and extra-legal capacity, was the most dominant and powerful figure. In his official role, the sergeant major was the governor's second-in-command. In the event of the death or absence of the crown-appointed governor,

13. Crown to treasury officials of Florida, Madrid, July 20, 1689, AGI 54-5-15/67.

14. Quiroga to crown, St. Augustine, June 8, 1690, AGI 54-5-12/110; August 1689, AGI 54-1-26/1; Córcoles to crown, St. Augustine, July 12, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/104; July 17, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/105; Benavides to crown, Augustine, August 3, 1719, AGI 58-2-4/26; January 1, 1721, AGI 58-2-9/11.

the sergeant major became interim governor until the crown named a replacement. Sergeant Major Ayala frequently reminded the *presidio* populace of this possibility, and he informed them that should he become interim governor, he would appoint his eldest son, also named Juan de Ayala, as interim sergeant major. In his unofficial capacity the sergeant major, a *criollo* himself, was looked upon as the leader and spokesman of the *criollo* populace.¹⁵ Equally significant was the development of an unavoidable web of kinship among the *presidio* hierarchy - a factor which would have a direct bearing on the successful challenging of Governor Corcoles' authority in 1712.

Sergeant Major Ayala was related to the three company commanders of infantry. He was related by marriage through his first wife, Magdalena de Uriza, to Captain Francisco Romo de Uriza, and to his brother, Captain Joseph Sanchez de Uriza. The third company commander was the sergeant major's own son, Captain Juan de Ayala.¹⁶ Moreover, while none of the positions within the military or administrative hierarchy was supposed to be hereditary, theory and practice diverged.

Members of the Menendez family had held the post of accountant, one of the two treasury officials, for over a century and a half. In 1673, Tomas Menendez Marques succeeded his father as accountant, and he remained in office until his own death in 1706. Meanwhile, he had trained his son, Francisco Menendez, as his successor, and as the only qualified person the latter became interim accountant. Five years later the crown confirmed the appointment, and Francisco Menendez maintained the accountancy for at least another twenty years. Hoping to retain the accountancy in the family indefinitely, Francisco vainly solicited the crown, in 1720, for permission to appoint his successor.¹⁷

The relationship among the *criollo* hierarchy was not always cordial and harmonious. The Ayala and Menendez families had

15. Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, July 12, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/104; Menendez to crown, St. Augustine, June 12, 1712, AGI 58-1-34/19.

16. Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, July 12, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/104; July 17, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/105.

17. Ayala to crown, St. Augustine, April 22, 1692, AGI 54-5-15/90; Juan de Pueyo to crown, St. Augustine, October 20, 1706, AGI 58-1-28/11; Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, March 20, 1711, AGI 58-1-28/94; Menendez to crown, St. Augustine, February 23, 1720, AGI 58-1-34/29; July 16, 1722, AGI 58-1-34/37.

been feuding since 1685, when Tomas Menendez first reported Ayala's illegal activities. Until 1712 the governors had supported Ayala whenever a dispute arose between the antagonists. One such occasion arose in 1692 when Governor Diego de Quiroga, in defending Ayala against charges made by Tomas Menendez, chided the accountant and called him meddling and overpaid for the amount of work he did.¹⁸

Under Governor Corcoles this situation changed. Relations between Corcoles and Ayala were strained from the time the governor arrived in 1706. Although dependent upon the sergeant major for provisions, Corcoles frowned upon his sale of goods to the *presidio's* residents. Relations between the two deteriorated even more when rumors began to spread that the governor was receiving a percentage of Ayala's profits in return for not interfering with his enterprises. On the other hand, Ayala resented the governor's purchases of foodstuffs from the English traders; he regarded such trade as unfair competition to his own enterprises. It was Ayala's subtle attempt to halt the contraband trade with the English that led to the showdown between the governor and the sergeant major on June 19, 1712.

In a letter addressed to Dr. Villas, a resident of Mexico City, Ayala piously asked for advice concerning the propriety of permitting the heretical English envoys to enter St. Augustine in order to return prisoners and conduct trade. Ayala knew the information would be brought to the attention of the governor's superior since Villas was the brother-in-law of the viceroy of New Spain. On June 18, Governor Corcoles received a dispatch from the viceroy ordering him to explain the illicit trade with the English. That same day Ayala returned from Havana in the *presidio's* only vessel loaded with food, most of which was on his own account. Corcoles decided to use the occasion of taking muster the next morning in order to denounce Ayala and confiscate his goods.

At eight o'clock on Sunday morning, June 19, 1712, the governor ordered all those drawing pay from the annual subsidy to gather at the main guard house * where muster would be

* Located just south of the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine at the foot of the bridge, on the west side, spanning the Mantanzas River.

18. Crown to Quiroga, Buen Retiro, June 25, 1690, AGI 58-1-22/146; Quiroga to crown, St. Augustine, April 18, 1692, AGI 54-5-15/89.

taken. The soldiers quickly provided a table for the official recording and chairs for the governor and the few clergymen who wanted to attend. The principal figures included the two treasury officials, Captain Francisco Menendez Marques, accountant, and Captain Salvador Garcia de Villega, interim treasurer; Ayala; the three company commanders of infantry; the company commander of the cavalry, Captain Joseph Primo de Rivera; and Captain Bernardino Nieto de Carvajal, interim commander of the artillery unit.

As soon as Captain Rivera had completed taking muster, Governor Corcoles ordered the soldiers to break ranks, sit down, and form a semi-circle around him. With biting sarcasm the governor began his brief talk: "Gentlemen, I have ordered you to gather around close in order to tell you that His Excellency, the Viceroy of New Spain, has been informed by the Father of the Poor of this presidio, who is present, that I have permitted trade between all of you and envoys of St. George [Charleston] when they brought prisoners. The one who informed him of this was Sergeant Major Juan de Ayala. He, you know, is the one who has such compassion in his heart for the poor, that he acclaims himself as the Father of the Poor. In lamenting your suffering, he is selling you a pound of salt pork for three reales, and a pound of beef for two and one-half reales. This, gentlemen, is the Father of the Poor. Now, he says his son [Miguel de Ayala] will shortly send a sloop from Havana with a cargo of food valued at between 4,000 and 5,000 pesos. With this, he will remedy the plight of the poor as he has so often done. You should be thankful for these good works. But this I want you to know. I have in no way taken part in his transactions with you. I would rather continue digging roots in order to survive, or perish."¹⁹

When the governor finished, no one uttered a word. Corcoles rose from his chair, walked over to the treasury officials, and told them to issue extra rations for the following day - that additional food would be available once the sergeant major's goods were confiscated. While they were still talking, Ayala approached the governor, and without addressing him as "Your Excellency," curtly requested permission to mount the guard.

19. Corcoles to crown, St. Augustine, July 12, 1712, AGI 58-1-28/104.

Before Ayala could turn to issue the order, Corcoles snatched the baton, the symbol of the sergeant major's rank and authority, from Ayala's hands and turned it over to Senior Captain Francisco Romo de Uriza. He then ordered Ayala's arrest on the charge of not having addressed him with proper respect. "That's the way I heard it," the accountant, Francisco Menendez, echoed. Ayala, in a burst of temper, turned to Menendez and shouted, "neither the king nor the Laws of the Indies require me to call him, His Excellency."²⁰

Again, Corcoles ordered Ayala's arrest and directed two sergeants to take him to the Castillo prison. Captains Romo de Uriza and Sanchez de Uriza interceded, pleading with the governor to rescind his order. The sergeants had not moved. Ayala walked away remarking that he needed no one to escort him to prison. "Besides," he called back, "the king will have me out in no time." Corcoles, shouting the order a third and fourth time, lunged toward Ayala. Captains Romo de Uriza and Sanchez de Uriza tried to physically restrain the governor by grabbing and holding on to his arms. Again, they urged him to countermand his order. Captain Juan de Ayala informed Corcoles that he had simply failed to hear his father address him as "Your Excellency." But before the governor could answer him, Francisco Menendez remarked: "Since you were not even present, how do you know?" With that Captain Ayala and the accountant began arguing and drew their swords.²¹

Governor Corcoles, still being restrained by his company commanders, lamented, "How could you do this in my presence?" Suddenly, Sanchez de Uriza released the governor's arm, drew his sword, and shouted "Long live Philip V." Ten soldiers drew their swords and responded, "Long live Philip V and our governor." Pandemonium broke loose for fifteen minutes. Those around the governor lifted him onto the table where everyone could see that he had not been harmed. When the shouting subsided, the fatigued governor stepped down from the table and asked for a drink of water. Meanwhile Romo de Uriza walked over to the sergeant major, who had stood motionless during the fifteen minutes of bedlam, and handed him the baton that he was carrying. In a gesture of all was forgiven, Ayala and

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

Corcoles embraced, and the governor invited the treasury officials and officers to accompany him to his house. When all were seated in the living room, the governor turned to his officers and said, "I have done nothing which would discredit my honor in the eyes of the viceroy. Surely, my shabby dress would indicate that." The sergeant major explained that he had not written the viceroy directly and had simply asked for advice concerning the wisdom of allowing envoys from Charleston to enter St. Augustine. The viceroy, Ayala insisted, must have assumed that illicit trade was taking place.²²

Governor Corcoles learned a valuable lesson that Sunday morning. The measure of his power and authority would be determined by the will of the *criollo* hierarchy. Of course, Corcoles never forgave Ayala for his correspondence with the viceroy's brother-in-law and the threatened mutiny. Through the testimony of others the governor reported the incident and pleaded with the king to transfer Ayala and his son to Havana. The governor justified his request on the grounds of Ayala's insubordination, his activities as a merchant, and his old age. Corcoles reported that Ayala was now seventy-seven years old and incapable of performing the duties of a sergeant major.²³ The crown's response was not what the governor had anticipated. Instead of ordering an investigation of the illicit trade with the English and Ayala's activities, the crown stressed but one point - the inability of Governor Corcoles to command the respect and obedience of his men. The crown's solution to the *presidio's* maladies and the reoccurrence of another "sordid affair of June 19" was the immediate replacement of Corcoles. The king's procrastination in naming a successor delayed the "solution" for three years. Finally in 1716, Pedro de Olivera y Fullana arrived in St. Augustine. After having served only three months, Governor Olivera died, and Sergeant Major Juan de Ayala became interim governor of Florida.²⁴

Now saddled with the responsibility of governing the province, Ayala's activities as entrepreneur and merchant ceased. During

22. *Ibid.*

23. Council of the Indies to crown, Madrid, November 10, 1713, AGI 58-1-20/134.

24. Council of the Indies to crown, Madrid, November 10, 1713, AGI 58-1-20/134; November 11, 1713, AGI 58-1-30/25; March 16, 1714, AGI 58-1-20/138; 1716, AGI 58-2-1/1.

the two years in which he served as interim governor, correspondence from the officials and residents of St. Augustine to the crown was generally free of complaints. The most serious charge was Ayala's frequent illnesses and old age. He continued his predecessors' practice of trading with the English, only more openly now that peace had been restored and after having consulted the *presidio* hierarchy. Ayala's principal accomplishment as interim governor was his success in winning back the loyalty of many of the Indian chiefs who had defected to the English.²⁵

Spanish justice, which moved in slow and mysterious ways, finally caught up with Juan de Ayala. In 1718 Antonio de Benavides arrived at St. Augustine to replace Ayala. An overly zealous reform governor, Benavides immediately conducted an investigation which led to the brief imprisonment of Ayala in the Castillo prison and to his eventual exile to Havana. The sergeant major could no longer depend upon his former supporters. Between 1712 and 1718 new family alliances had been formed. The sergeant major's wife, Magdalena de Uriza, had died; Captain Romo de Uriza had married a sister of Accountant Francisco Menendez; and Captain Sanchez de Uriza had married the accountant's sister. Governor Benavides was assured of having adequate supporting testimony in his charges against Ayala.

Ironically, the governor's charges had nothing to do with Ayala's business enterprises or his insubordination. Rather, the governor charged Ayala with having carried on contraband trade with the English while he was interim governor of Florida. The case against Ayala began in 1718 but was not resolved until 1731. The crown concluded that Ayala was technically guilty, but because of inadequacies in the normal channels of trade, he and the former governors of Florida were justified in trading with the English. The charges against Ayala were dropped. Unfortunately for this entrepreneur, he would not live to witness his exoneration. In 1727 Juan de Ayala y Escobar died at the age of ninety-two.²⁶

25. Clergy of St. Augustine to crown, St. Augustine, November 29, 1716, AGI 58-2-14/73; Ayala to crown, St. Augustine, November 22, 1717, AGI 58-1-30/66; Council of the Indies to crown, Madrid, July 19, 1740, AGI 58-1-20/207,

26. Benavides to crown, St. Augustine, August 12, 1718, AGI 58-1-30/79/80; Council of the Indies to crown, Madrid, July 19, 1730, AGI 58-1-20/207; Crown to Benavides, Seville, March 2, 1731, AGI 58-1-24/230.