



ROYAL DANISH LEAKS

Gold Coast Arms Deal

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ISBN 87-999958-3-2 Royal Danish Leaks, Gold Coast Arms Deal

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INTRODUCTION.

Historic 19th century government documents reveal how the Danish crown wrapped up its slave trade past by ceding to the British crown its slave trade guns and military installations in the gold coast. King Frederik VII of Denmark and Queen Victoria of England transacted a historic arms deal through their respective crown proxies, Count Reventlow and Viscount Palmerston. The condition of the deal was a sum of £10,000 *The economic power value of that income or wealth today is about £32,880,000.00. The British Monarch agreed to pay. In return, Denmark ceded to her Britannic Majesty all military inventory (guns, ammunition), barracks, store houses, with fixtures contained in the military installations comprising of Fort Christianborg *now the seat of the Ghanaian government, Fort Augustaborg, Fort Fedensborg, Fort Kongeensteen and Fort Prindsenstein. All these items and properties had been used by Denmark in the trading of slaves. The historic documents also acknowledge that the traffic of slaves was still ongoing as late as 1849, long after the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807.

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PAPERS

RESPECTING THE

CESSION TO THE BRITISH CROWN

OF THE

DANISH POSSESSIONS

ON

THE COAST OF AFRICA.

*Presented to the House of Commons in pursuance of their Address of the 7th of
March, 1850.*

LONDON:

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Papers respecting the Cession to Great Britain of the Danish Possessions on the Coast of Africa.

No. 1.

Count Reventlow to Viscount Palmerston.

M. le Vicomte,

Légation Danoise, le 7 Juillet, 1849.

EN ayant l'honneur de me référer à la conférence que j'ai eue avec votre Excellence il y a quelques jours, et dans laquelle je lui ai exposé les motifs qui le rendent particulièrement désirable à mon Gouvernement sous les circonstances actuelles, de céder à une autre Couronne ses possessions sur la côte de Guinée, je m'acquiesce par la présente de l'ordre de ma Cour d'en offrir l'acquisition au Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique.

Les tribus indigènes qui se trouvent dans la dépendance de cette colonie ont depuis longues années été l'objet de la sollicitude paternelle du Gouvernement Danois, qui a travaillé avec constance à leur conversion et à leur civilisation; vous sentirez, par conséquent, M. le Vicomte, les raisons pourquoi le Gouvernement Danois préférerait de beaucoup de transférer sa souveraineté des dites possessions à la Cour de St. James, qui ne recule jamais devant les sacrifices qu'exige la poursuite de ces nobles tâches, et avec laquelle le Gouvernement Danois a toujours coopéré dans celle de l'abolition de la Traite des Nègres.

La circonstance que nos possessions dans ces hémisphères lointaines sont limitrophes à celles de l'Angleterre pourrait peut-être lui en rendre recommandable l'acquisition pour autant que les commerçans Anglais seront mieux en état que ne l'ont été les nôtres, d'exploiter les ressources de ce vaste terrain, et d'entretenir un commerce lucratif avec les indigènes.

A peu de frais et avec une faible garnison, les forts de la colonie continueront sous la domination Anglaise à empêcher le trafic scandaleux et l'exportation des esclaves.

Sachant que la maison Forster et Smith, de la cité de Londres, a une part très considérable dans le commerce sur la côte d'Afrique, j'ai remis au chef de cette maison, Mr. Forster, Membre du Parlement, les cartes, plans et les inventaires nécessaires pour se former une idée générale de la colonie à céder.

Suivant une évaluation très modique faite des bâtimens, casernes, canons, &c., la valeur de ces biens, meubles et immeubles, monte à 10,000*l.* sterling, dont le versement est la seule condition que demande le Gouvernement Danois pour la cession de la souveraineté de ces possessions, en se déclarant prêt à s'entendre avec le Gouvernement Anglais sur les termes à en fixer.

J'ai l'honneur, &c.
(Signé) REVENTLOW.

(Translation.)

My Lord,

Danish Legation, July 7, 1849.

IN having the honour to refer to the conversation which I had some days since with your Excellency, and in which I explained to you the reasons which render it particularly desirable, under present circumstances, for my Government to cede to another Crown their possessions on the coast of Guinea, I now acquit myself of the instructions of my Court in offering them to the Government of Her Britannic Majesty.

The native tribes which are subject to that colony have for many years been the object of the paternal solicitude of the Danish Government, which has laboured with constancy at their conversion and civilization; you will conse-

quently perceive, my Lord, the reason for which the Danish Government would greatly prefer to transfer the sovereignty of the said possessions to the Court of St. James', which never shrinks from the sacrifices required by the pursuit of these noble objects, and with which the Danish Government have always co-operated as regards the abolition of the Slave Trade.

The circumstance that our possessions in those far distant regions border upon those of England may perhaps recommend their acquisition to that country, inasmuch as the English merchants will be more able than ours have been to develop the resources of that vast district, and to carry on a lucrative trade with the natives.

Under the dominion of England the forts of the colony would at small cost and with a weak garrison continue to hinder the scandalous traffic of the export of slaves.

Knowing that the house of Forster and Smith, of the city of London, has a considerable interest in the trade on the coast of Africa, I have communicated to Mr. Forster, M. P., the maps, plans and inventories necessary to form a general notion of the colony which it is proposed to cede.

According to a very moderate valuation of the buildings, barracks, cannon, &c., the value of this moveable and immoveable property amounts to 10,000*l.* sterling, the payment of which is the sole condition put by the Danish Government to their cession of the sovereignty of these possessions, they being ready to come to an understanding with the English Government as to the period of payment.

I have, &c.
(Signed) REVENTLOW.

No. 2.

Viscount Palmerston to Count Reventlow.

M. le Comte,

Foreign Office, December 21, 1849.

I HAVE not failed to communicate to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies your note of the 7th of July last, conveying an offer on the part of the Government of His Majesty the King of Denmark to cede the Danish Possessions on the coast of Guinea to the British Crown, in consideration of the payment by Great Britain to Denmark of the sum of 10,000*l.* as the value of the guns and stores contained in the forts to be ceded; and I am now able to inform you that Her Majesty's Government accept that offer, and are ready to submit at the earliest practicable period an application to Parliament for a vote of 10,000*l.* to enable them to carry the arrangement into effect. As it is, however, of importance that the cession, if made, should be made at once, and that Sir W. Winniett, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Gold Coast, who is about to proceed to his post on the 1st of January next, should be authorized to take possession of the Danish forts and property on his arrival on the African Coast, Her Majesty's Government would suggest that the Danish Government should at once send out orders to their authorities to make over the forts and property in question to the British Colonial authorities, on condition that if, contrary to the expectation of Her Majesty's Government, Parliament should decline to make the proposed grant, the forts and other property should be restored to the Danish Government in the same condition in which they may be when made over to the British Government.

Trusting that you, M. le Comte, may find yourself at liberty to agree to this conditional arrangement, I inclose for your consideration the draft of a protocol to be signed immediately, for the purpose of recording the same; and as soon as Parliament shall have sanctioned the grant of 10,000*l.*, it will be my duty to propose to you that a convention, of which I also inclose a draft, shall be concluded between Her Majesty and the King of Denmark, for carrying the intended cession and purchase into effect in a formal manner.

I am, &c.
(Signed) PALMERSTON.

Inclosure 1 in No. 2.

*Draft Protocol of a Conference held at the Foreign Office, December , 1849,
between Viscount Palmerston and the Count de Reventlow.*

THE Count de Reventlow, &c., and Viscount Palmerston, &c., having met at the Foreign Office ;

The Count de Reventlow stated to Viscount Palmerston that His Majesty the King of Denmark is willing to cede to Her Britannic Majesty all the Danish Forts and Possessions on the Coast of Guinea, in consideration of the payment of the sum of 10,000*l.* sterling, that sum being the estimated value of the guns and stores contained in those forts and possessions.

Viscount Palmerston stated to the Count de Reventlow, in reply, that Her Britannic Majesty's Government are ready to accept the said offer, and that they will, when Parliament meets, submit to Parliament an application for a grant of 10,000*l.* sterling, to enable them to carry the arrangement into effect; but as it is of importance that the cession, if made, should be made without delay, Viscount Palmerston requested that the Danish Government would at once send out to their authorities on the coast of Guinea instructions to make over the forts and possessions in question to the British Colonial authorities; on the understanding that if, contrary to the expectation of Her Majesty's Government, Parliament should decline to make the proposed grant, the forts and other property shall be immediately restored to the Danish Government in the same state in which they may be when made over to the British Colonial authorities.

The Count Reventlow, on the part of his Government, assented to this proposal, and engaged that the necessary instructions should be forthwith sent out to the Danish authorities.

It was then agreed that as soon as the British Parliament shall have enabled Her Britannic Majesty's Government to pay to the Danish Government the above-mentioned sum of 10,000*l.* sterling, a formal Convention shall be concluded between the Courts of Great Britain and of Denmark, for the purpose of transferring the forts and possessions in question to Her Britannic Majesty, in full property and sovereignty.

Inclosure 2 in No. 2.

Proposed Convention for the Sale of the Danish Forts on the Gold Coast.

HIS Majesty the King of Denmark having offered to cede to Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland all the forts and possessions belonging to the Crown of Denmark situated on that part of the coast of Africa which is called the Gold Coast, or the Coast of Guinea; and Her Britannic Majesty having resolved to accept that offer, Their said Majesties have named as their Plenipotentiaries to conclude a Convention for carrying such cession into effect: that is to say,

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, &c. ;

And His Majesty the King of Denmark, &c. ;

Who, after having communicated to each other their respective full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed upon and concluded the following Articles :—

ARTICLE I.

In consideration of the sum of ten thousand pounds sterling to be paid by Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland to His Majesty the King of Denmark, on the exchange of the ratifications of the present Convention, His Danish Majesty cedes to Her Britannic Majesty, to be possessed by Her Britannic Majesty, her heirs and successors, in full property and sovereignty, all the forts belonging to the Crown of Denmark which are situated on that part of the coast of Africa called the Gold Coast, or the Coast of Guinea, and which comprise Fort Christiansborg, Fort Augustaborg, Fort Fredensborg,

Fort Kongeensteen, and Fort Prindsenstein, with their appurtenances and all the guns and stores contained therein; together with all other possessions, property, and territorial rights whatever belonging to His Danish Majesty on the said coast.

ARTICLE II.

The present Convention shall be ratified, &c.

No. 3.

Count Reventlow to Viscount Palmerston.

My Lord,

Danish Legation, December 26, 1849.

I HAVE had the honour to receive your letter of the 21st instant, by which, in answer to the offer made in my official note of the 7th of July last, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to cede the Danish Possessions on the coast of Guinea to the British Crown, you inform me that Her Britannic Majesty's Government accepts the offer on the conditions proposed in the above note of the 7th of July; and that, it being of importance that the cession be made at once, Her Britannic Majesty's Government suggests that orders should at once be sent out to the Danish authorities, to make over the forts and property in question to the British Colonial authorities; on condition that if, contrary to the expectation of Her Majesty's Government, Parliament should decline to make the proposed grant, the forts and property should be restored to the Danish Government in the same condition in which they may be when made over to the British Government; and to effect which purpose, you have transmitted to me draft of a Protocol to be signed immediately, and of a Convention to be concluded between His Majesty the King of Denmark and Her Britannic Majesty, for carrying the cession and purchase into effect, when Parliament shall have sanctioned the grant of 10,000*l.* sterling, stipulated to be paid as the value of the guns, barracks, and store-houses, with their fixtures, contained in those forts.

I am now in possession of the necessary full powers to carry out the intention of my Government, and I have therefore the honour to inform your Lordship that I am ready to meet you at the earliest opportunity convenient, for the purpose of signing the Protocol proposed by you, with the slight alteration in the first paragraph as indicated in the annexed amended draft, viz., "estimated value of the guns, barracks, and store-houses, with their fixtures," instead of "estimated value of the guns and stores."

M. Carstensen, Governor of the said Danish Possessions, has arrived from Copenhagen on his way to the coast of Guinea, for the express purpose of carrying out the transfer of the Danish forts and property to the British Colonial authorities, and he is ready to accompany Sir W. Winniett on the 1st of January next, if such may be found convenient, and in that case I hope that a passage will be granted him in the vessel that takes out Her Britannic Majesty's Lieutenant-Governor.

I have, &c.

(Signed) REVENTLOW.

Inclosure in No. 3.

Amended Draft of Protocol.

THE Count Reventlow and Viscount Palmerston having met this day at the Foreign Office, the Count Reventlow stated to the Viscount Palmerston that His Majesty the King of Denmark is willing to cede to Her Britannic Majesty all the Danish Forts and Possessions on the Coast of Guinea, in consideration of the payment of the sum of ten thousand pounds sterling, that sum being the estimated value of the guns, barracks, and store-houses, with their fixtures, contained in those Forts and Possessions.

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No. 4.

Protocol of a Conference held at the Foreign Office, December 31, 1849, between Viscount Palmerston and the Count de Reventlow.

THE Count de Reventlow, &c., and Viscount Palmerston, &c., having met this day at the Foreign Office ;

The Count de Reventlow stated to Viscount Palmerston that His Majesty the King of Denmark is willing to cede to Her Britannic Majesty all the Danish Forts and Possessions on the Coast of Guinea, in consideration of the payment of the sum of ten thousand pounds sterling, that sum being the estimated value of the guns and stores contained in those Forts and Possessions.

Viscount Palmerston stated to the Count de Reventlow, in reply, that Her Britannic Majesty's Government are ready to accept the said offer, and that they will, when Parliament meets, submit to Parliament an application for a grant of ten thousand pounds sterling, to enable them to carry the arrangement into effect ; but as it is of importance that the cession, if made, should be made without delay, Viscount Palmerston requested that the Danish Government would at once send out to their authorities on the Coast of Guinea instructions to make over the Forts and Possessions in question to the British Colonial authorities ; on the understanding that if, contrary to the expectation of Her Majesty's Government, the British Parliament should decline to make the proposed grant, the Forts and other property shall be immediately restored to the Danish Government in the same state which they may be when made over to the British Colonial authorities.

The Count Reventlow, on the part of his Government, assented to this proposal, and engaged that the necessary instructions should be forthwith sent out to the Danish authorities.

It was then agreed that as soon as the British Parliament shall have enabled Her Britannic Majesty's Government to pay to the Danish Government the above-mentioned sum of ten thousand pounds sterling, a formal Convention shall be concluded between the Courts of Great Britain and of Denmark, for the purpose of transferring the Forts and Possessions in question to Her Britannic Majesty, in full property and sovereignty.

(Signed)

PALMERSTON.
REVENTLOW.

No. 5.

Lord Eddisbury to Count Reventlow.

M. le Comte,

Foreign Office, December 31, 1849.

WITH reference to what passed previous to the signature of the protocol for the conditional cession of the Danish Settlements on the Gold Coast, I have the honour, in Viscount Palmerston's absence, to transmit to you a copy of an instruction which has been addressed by Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies to Lieutenant-Governor Sir William Winniett, explaining the sense in which the term " stores," used in the Protocol, is to be understood.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

EDDISBURY.

Inclosure in No. 5.

Earl Grey to Sir W. Winniett.

Sir,

Downing Street, December 31, 1849.

IT is necessary that I should explain to you that the Danish Government, in undertaking to transfer all stores in the Danish Forts on the Gold Coast, expressly desires to be understood as excepting small arms, drums, colours, furniture, &c., belonging to the Governor's residence, all such articles, in short, as may be considered rather as private property than public stores.

I trust that no difficulty will arise on that head, and it is the desire of Her Majesty's Government that you should construe the terms of the agreement liberally.

I am, &c.
(Signed) GREY.
