

Miguel Valverde's Abortive War: An Episode in Amazonian Geopolitics

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South America's international relations have always been complicated by the question of ownership of the Amazon basin area east of the Andes Mountains. Ill-defined colonial period borders resulted in a particularly bitter dispute between tiny Ecuador and her large southern neighbor Peru.¹ Peru's claims included over half of what Ecuador claimed as national territory, much of it in the Amazon basin.² In 1887 Peru and Ecuador agreed to binding Spanish royal arbitration of disputed territories extending from the Pacific Ocean all the way into the interior of the Amazon basin area, known as the "Oriente."³ Colombia and Brazil also laid claim to some of the same parts of these disputed regions.⁴ Hence, there arose the opportunity for diplomatic intrigue and collusion among the nations contesting ownership of the western Amazon region. What follows is an account of the ambitious Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Miguel Valverde's attempt to obviate the possibility of an adverse Spanish arbitral award on Ecuador's territorial claims by substituting an aggressive pact with powerful Brazil. Valverde's proposed treaty would have divided up the Amazon claims in a manner which would have almost certainly provoked war with Peru.

In 1904 Radical Liberal Party President Leonidas Plaza Gutiérrez and his Minister of Foreign Relations Miguel Valverde were confronted by an increase of tensions in the western Amazon interior areas contested by Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Brazil.⁵ During the first decade of the twentieth century Brazil's foreign relations were being handled adeptly by the famous José Maria da Silva Paranhos, commonly known by his title: the Baron of Rio Branco. Rio Branco's sagacious treaties with Brazil's Spanish American neighbors resulted in their legal recognition of Brazilian possession of enormous chunks of previously contested areas in the South American interior. In 1904 Rio Branco

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strengthened contact with the Ecuadorians by re-establishing a Brazilian legation in Quito, under the direction of *Chargé d'affaires* Graccho de Sa Valle.⁶ It was this seeming new closeness, and mutual interests in the Oriente, which Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Valverde was to seek to exploit.

In 1894 the Ecuadorians, Peruvians and Colombians had signed a Tripartite Additional Arbitration Convention. This agreement was to include Colombia as a participating member in the Spanish royal arbitral award agreed to by Ecuador and Peru in their 1887 treaty. Brazil also claimed some of the area being contested in the Spanish arbitration. Subsequently, the Ecuadorian congress refused to ratify the 1894 treaty allowing Colombian participation. Meanwhile, as the twentieth century began, the Peruvians and Brazilians had bilateral discussions regarding mutual claims in the Oriente region. In 1903 the Ecuadorians sought a bilateral agreement with Colombia regarding their mutual claims in the Oriente, but the Colombian government was preoccupied with the Panamanian independence revolution crisis.⁷ In January 1904 the Peruvian legislature rescinded its earlier approval of the 1894 Additional Convention including Colombia in the Spanish arbitration. Ecuador soon signed the Valverde-Cornejo Protocol with the Peruvians, which provided for a renewal of the Spanish arbitration of the Peru-Ecuador territorial dispute. But Foreign Minister Miguel Valverde had plans for alliances with Brazil and Colombia which would make Spanish arbitration of little consequence.

Early 1904 found Carlos Tobar Borgono, Ecuador's First Secretary of the legation in Rio de Janeiro, pursuing a limits agreement with Foreign Minister Rio Branco. A territorial agreement with the Brazilians would make them an even stronger potential ally than the recalcitrant Colombians would have been. A mutual defense treaty to guarantee an Ecuadorian-Brazilian usurpation of the contested Amazon basin area would be a diplomatic coup for militarily inferior Ecuador.

When Foreign Minister Valverde learned of Peru's rejection of the attempt to include Colombia in the Spanish arbitration he cabled Tobar in Rio de Janeiro that the Ecuadorian Minister in Spain would be instructed to delay the reinstatement of the Spanish arbitration while the Ecuadorians sought treaties of

limits and mutual defense with Brazil and Colombia.⁸ Further, Valverde sought a secret treaty with Brazil, the details of which were at least initially to be kept even from the participating nations' congresses.⁹ Since securing Brazil's backing of an alliance with Ecuador would probably mean conceding some lands claimed by Ecuador as well as those claimed by Peru (Ecuador certainly could not offer military strength to entice the Brazilians), Valverde probably sought to present his nation's congress with the treaty as an accomplished fact, lest the inevitable cries of alienation of national territory be allowed to jeopardize implementation of the treaty and Valverde's grand diplomatic alliance design. Moreover, the Brazilian Congress might prove reluctant to enter into a treaty with Ecuador when a similar deal might well be struck over the same territories with Peru, which would also be a more powerful ally than Ecuador.¹⁰

Tobar wired to Valverde on March 26, 1904, that Rio Branco was willing to accept the Ecuadorian proposals for both a mutual defense treaty and a limits agreement, but the Brazilian Foreign Minister was worried about Ecuador's desire to consummate the treaties without the approval of either nation's legislature.¹¹ On May 6, 1904, Tobar was able to report the signing of the two accords:¹²

Today we signed alliance and treaties [of] limits, first [for] mutual defense territory possessed 1810 . . . both nations will submit [for] Congressional approval simultaneously; second recognizes Ecuador Brazil limits whose frontiers later we understand I will tell [.] Peace ["Aama" (sic-Amistad)] or war Peru will be decided according to the terms of Perubrazilian [sic] Treaty [of] 1851.

A jubilant Valverde congratulated Tobar on his "triumph."¹³ Seeking to exploit Ecuador's apparent position of new strength resulting from her defensive treaty with Brazil, Valverde quickly dispatched another message to Tobar asking that a Brazilian warship be sent to Guayaquil to be appropriately received by the Ecuadorians. Tobar was offered a position in Spain as a confidential agent to help arrange Ecuador's presentation to the Spanish arbitrators in conformity with the latest Brazilian treaty

developments.¹⁴ Later diplomat Tobar was to relate in his brief work *La Palabra de un ex-Ministro en el Brasil* that the treaties with Brazil "greatly exceeded that for which the Government of Ecuador had hoped. . . . Thanks to that accord, Ecuadorian Diplomacy was able to exercise action together with the skilled [diplomacy of Rio Branco] of Brazil, in relation to the common question of limits with Peru."¹⁵ Contrary to some claims, wrote Tobar, accord with Brazil was not meant to produce war with Peru but to ensure that the Peruvians would see that their wisest course would be a peaceful solution to the territorial dispute with Ecuador.¹⁶

In their moment of apparent triumph the Ecuadorians were rudely shocked by word of a Colombia-Peru (Tanco-Pardo) treaty signed in Lima a week after the Ecuador-Brazil (Tobar-Rio Branco) accords. Minister Tobar wired from Rio de Janeiro that previously friendly Colombia incomprehensibly seemed on the verge of concluding a treaty which would ignore the possibility that Ecuadorian territories existed between the borders of Peru and Colombia.¹⁷ Valverde replied from Quito that the Ecuadorian Minister in Bogotá, Julio Andrade, would be protesting the Tanco-Pardo Treaty,¹⁸ which ignored Ecuador's rights in the Oriente (Amazon basin). Despite subsequent Colombian assurances to the contrary, the Ecuadorians suspected a possible secret Peru-Colombia agreement (as part of the Tanco-Pardo accord) to divide the disputed Amazon basin territories between themselves at the expense of Ecuador.¹⁹ When Ambassador Andrade wrote from Bogotá expressing this fear he was informed for the first time of Ecuador's fortuitous, or prescient, diplomatic maneuver of signing the defensive alliance with Brazil "against Peru".²⁰

The Ecuadorians quickly sought to remove the threat of a Peruvian ally to Ecuador's north by negotiating a preemptive treaty with Colombia which would cause the Bogotá government to decide not to ratify the Tanco-Pardo Treaty just signed in Lima. However, the Colombians were perturbed because the recent Tobar-Rio Branco limits agreement had conceded Brazil the Apaporis Triangle (where one of Brazil's Amazonian sovereignty claims converged with those of all three of her Spanish American Amazon basin co-claimants).²¹ The Colombians

had previously made an unyielding claim to the area. Nevertheless, the Colombian government apparently was anxious to make a treaty with Ecuador which would ensure that Colombia would not have to contest the Brazilians over areas which might have been dealt with in the Tobar-Rio Branco accords, whose contents were not yet fully known to the Colombians. On May 17, 1904, Ambassador Andrade cabled Quito that the Colombian Foreign Minister was proposing specific territorial agreements to the Ecuadorians as well as that there might be joint Colombian-Ecuadorian "offensive and defensive action against Peru based upon [the] 29 [1829] Treaty."²²

Bolstered by the welcome news from Bogota of a possible second anti-Peruvian alliance, Foreign Minister Valverde revealed his aggressive intentions more fully. He cabled Tobar in Rio de Janeiro, on May 21, that it was probable that within fifteen days diplomatic relations with Peru would be ruptured. The Ecuadorians were preparing expeditions into the disputed Oriente area.²³

On May 23, 1904, word received from Minister Andrade in Bogotá seemed to indicate the impending triumph of the Ecuadorian strategy. In response to Ambassador Tanco's enthusiastic revelation from Lima that Peru seemed ready to commit itself to the Tanco-Pardo Treaty, which Colombian Ambassador Tanco deemed advantageous to Colombia, the Colombian Foreign Minister's reply was caustic. Ambassador Andrade had learned that the Colombian Foreign Minister had told Tanco that since he had signed the Peruvian treaty without instructions it would not be ratified by Colombia.²⁴ (Actually, the Tanco-Pardo Treaty was relatively innocuous, merely agreeing on Spanish arbitration of Colombia-Peru territorial disputes and the temporary withdrawal of troops from contested areas.) Given this apparently friendly signal to the Ecuadorians, Ambassador Andrade settled into serious negotiations with the Colombian Foreign Minister, disturbed only by the hurried arrival in Bogotá of the Peruvian diplomat Hernán Velarde. Velarde had been sent by the Peruvian government to attempt to persuade the Colombians to accept the Tanco-Pardo Treaty.²⁵ Ecuador now had the upper hand in negotiations with Colombia, though Quito was warned that Ecuadorian recognition of the new United States

supported Panamanian government would result in Colombia's acceptance of the Tanco-Pardo Treaty.²⁶ Colombia's assertions of territorial sovereignty in the Amazon areas were based largely on the same documents and arguments as those of Ecuador.²⁷ Peru was more of a contender for Colombian territories than was Ecuador. Thus an alliance with Ecuador, which was already in league with Brazil against Peru, was the most natural course for the Colombians. In November 1904 the Ecuadorians and Colombians decided not to negotiate their border differences directly but to submit the matter to arbitration by the German government.²⁸

During the Colombia-Ecuador limits treaty negotiations the Ecuadorian government sought to maximize its benefits from its treaty with Brazil by exerting pressure on both Peru and Colombia. The governments in Lima and Bogotá were to be appraised of Ecuadorian-Brazilian cooperation by the sending of Brazilian ships to visit Ecuador's outposts in the contested Aguarico River region.²⁹ On June 9, 1904, the Ecuadorian Foreign Minister sent a coded telegram which he ordered the Ecuadorian legation in Rio de Janeiro to translate carefully. He had good reason. In the message Valverde alluded to a desire to use Brazil's strength to gain Ecuador's ends:³⁰

Without [a] declaration of war Ecuador [and] Brazil can initiate [a] defensive frontiers campaign occupying Iquitos and recouping our territories to Ucayali [River]. Ecuador [is] ready [with] a thousand men to embark [at the] mouth [of the] Curaray [in] Brazilian ships.

There could be little doubt of Miguel Valverde's aggressive intentions.

In August 1904 Valverde ventured the opinion that Chile, Peru's mortal enemy to the south,³¹ was impressed enough with the Brazil-Ecuador alliance that her secret help could probably be counted on "to reinforce our action in execution [of the] secret pact [with] Brazil."³² The time appeared at hand, to Valverde, when many of South America's most powerful countries could be tied into Ecuador's schemes against Peru.³³

The Ecuadorian Foreign Ministry's euphoria over her newly acquired diplomatic position was short-lived. The only agreement

the Ecuadorians were able to reach with the Colombians in November 1904 was not the hoped for limits agreement reinforced by a mutual defense treaty, but instead a decision to submit their differences to German arbitration.³⁴ Then the Brazilians proved to be not very enthusiastic about baiting the Peruvians into a conflict which could be used as an excuse to take their territories in the Amazon basin. In fact, Brazil's Foreign Minister Rio Branco signed a protocol with the Peruvian diplomat Hernán Velarde for the beginning of bilateral negotiations on their territorial claims.³⁵ With Valverde's chances for a powerful, bellicose system of anti-Peruvian alliances apparently slipping away, the Ecuadorians felt compelled to sign a January 27, 1905, protocol with the Peruvians in which Ecuador agreed not to implement her German Arbitration Treaty with Colombia until after the Spanish king's arbitral award on the Peru-Ecuador territorial dispute.³⁶ Suddenly Ecuador seemed to be reversing herself and relying on the Spanish arbitration to attain her territorial aims. Ecuador's distinguished diplomat handling the Ecuadorian arbitration case in Spain at this time, Honorato Vázquez, described this 1903-1905 period of Ecuadorian diplomacy as "pandemonium" in which Ecuador's diplomats had lost their compass on the sea of international relations.³⁷

This peaceful turn of events only temporarily inhibited Miguel Valverde's decision to rely on an allied war on Peru to secure Ecuador's territorial claims rather than hope for a favorable decision from the Spanish arbitration. By August 1905 Valverde had managed to secure a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation with the Colombians, which Valverde intended as a means of reviving Article 26 of an 1856 Colombia-Ecuador treaty in which both nations had agreed on a common defense against any attack on the old territorial limits (Colombia's and Ecuador's perception of them) of the original Gran Colombian confederation of Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador.³⁸ Miguel Valverde's primary object was however to foist an insidious treaty upon the Brazilians.

In late September 1905 Miguel Valverde resigned as the Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Relations. He then had himself appointed Ambassador to Brazil, succeeding Carlos Tobar Borgono, who was away working on the Spanish arbitration

problem. Using his post in Rio de Janeiro as an *entrée*, Valverde then pursued the signing of an extremely aggressive treaty with Brazilian Foreign Minister Rio Branco. If that plan failed Valverde planned to negotiate an alternative treaty with Colombia, which would recognize Ecuadorian navigation rights in the disputed Amazon region.³⁹ But Ambassador Valverde's primary aim was to secure with Brazil an alliance whose conditions would be virtually guaranteed to produce an armed conflict between Peru and the allies Ecuador and Brazil. Valverde planned to offer the Brazilians conditions which would make it in their own self interest to sign an agreement pledging Brazil's military support of Ecuador against Peru. On December 12, 1905, Valverde submitted a secret fourteen point memorandum to Baron Rio Branco in Rio de Janeiro.⁴⁰

Here is a summation of Valverde's proposal: Ecuador was to receive the territories she desired which were in dispute with Peru (Points VI, VII), though Valverde disclaimed excessive greed on the part of Ecuador when, in Point VIII, he said "as can be seen, the proposed line is much more restricted from that which it ought to be, in the regions watered by the Guallaga and the Ucayali. . . ." ⁴¹ In Point IX Valverde proposed a reciprocal treaty of free navigation of the Amazon, an Ecuador-Brazil Treaty of Friendship and Peace, a trade pact including most favored nation status, and that Brazil and Ecuador "corroborate the Treaty of Defensive Alliance against Peru signed in that of 1904" ⁴² as part of the new treaty. Further, Valverde proposed to make a wider treaty to facilitate Ecuador-Brazil arrangements on their borders with Peru and Colombia in which Ecuador would cede to Brazil those areas agreed upon in the 1829 Treaty of Guayaquil. In return Brazil was to cede the Yapura Triangle to Ecuador. Also, Ecuador was to receive from Brazil 100 million dollars in payment for territories ceded to Brazil. Ecuador would then repay 50 million of those dollars to Brazil as remuneration for the Yapura Triangle concession (the money payments obviously being intended to lend an air of legality to the "exchange" of these areas also claimed by Peru and Colombia). At this point the provocative parts of the Valverde proposal began: According to Article 10 of Point IX the two signatory nations would agree to support each other in war if necessary in order to fulfill the terms of the proposed treaty; Article 11 of Point IX

proposed that Brazilian arms and naval assistance were to be supplied "in case of war with Peru. . . in order to carry Ecuadorian troops to the points on the coast of Peru where they would disembark."⁴³ (This phraseology leaves little doubt as to the real intentions of Valverde.) The treaty was to last for ten years from the time of its ratification in secret sessions by the respective countries' legislatures (Point IX, Article 14). The succeeding points of the memorandum defined how Valverde intended to force Peru into combat against "the rapid and decisive action of the allied armies"⁴⁴ of Brazil and Ecuador. According to Point X, once the treaty was signed by Brazil and Ecuador, the Ecuadorians would notify the Spanish government that a Brazilian-Ecuadorian limits treaty removed from consideration certain areas which the Spanish might have been considering in the Peru-Ecuador arbitration case. Valverde then admitted in Point XI that he expected: "The immediate consequence of the foregoing notification [to the Spanish] will be the rupture of the arbitration."⁴⁵ Ecuador would then ask (Point XII) for compliance with the Pedemonte-Mosquera Protocol of 1830 (a proposed border treaty, previously deemed unacceptable by Peru, which would have given Ecuador a border with Peru which carried along the Marañon-Amazon River from the Chinchipe to the Brazilian border). Valverde was certain, with regard to this proposal, "that this Peru will certainly refuse to do."⁴⁶ Then, according to Point XIII, Ecuador too would "solemnly" declare its refusal to recognize the Pedemonte-Mosquera Protocol and would instead demand immediate compliance with Articles V, VI, VII of the 1829 Treaty of Guayaquil, which conveniently happened to be the basis of the territorial concessions in the new Brazil-Ecuador Treaty and which both nations were legally bound to defend by force if necessary. Point XIV then stated Valverde's ultimate aim:⁴⁷

Brazil will manifest that she supports the just claim of Ecuador, by virtue of the celebrated treaties, and will demand also the fulfillment of the Treaty of 1829. In case of resistance, the allies will send their ultimatum to Peru, and the war will break out.

When presented with this proposal, Foreign Minister Rio Branco rejected it, later describing it as "scandalous."⁴⁸ As

reported by the semi-official voice of the Brazilian government, *Jornal do Comercio*, the ensuing disagreement over the proposal caused a breaking up of amicable relations between Valverde and Rio Branco.⁴⁹ The Ecuadorians' worst fear, of course, would have to have been the leaking of details of this bellicose proposal. Such was the dilemma facing First Secretary Emilio Arévalo, who replaced Valverde following the latter's rupture of communications with Rio Branco. Arévalo feared that Peru would use the memorandum as a *cassus belli* if she ever gained knowledge of its details.⁵⁰

The Ecuadorian Foreign Ministry's worst fears were realized in July of 1906 when newspapers in Lima and Guayaquil published details of the Memorandum as well as information on the secret 1904 Brazil-Ecuador Treaties of Limits and Defense.⁵¹ Though unaware of specific details, the Brazilian newspapers had begun to write harshly of Valverde's aggressive proposition as early as May 1905.⁵²

In the meantime, the newly arrived Ecuadorian diplomatic representative Emilio Arévalo was left to pick up the diplomatic pieces of the shambles made of the Ecuadorian relationship with Brazil. Arévalo set out to protect Ecuador's position by trying to inhibit the Brazilians from arriving at treaty agreements with Ecuador's Amazon rivals Colombia and Peru. Arévalo was certain that "not only Peru wants to attack us in the South, also Colombia wants our territories in the North, in particular those of the Oriente."⁵³ In the meantime, Ecuador once again renewed her efforts to reach bilateral understandings with the Colombians. Eloy Alfaro had taken power in Ecuador in January 1906, and his predilection had always been for a Gran Colombian federation and front against the Peruvians. Thus, when in July 1906 the Colombians and Peruvians signed a *modus vivendi*, the Ecuadorians simply sought and received assurances from the Colombians that the Colombia-Peru accord did not prejudice Ecuador's claims in the Amazon area.⁵⁴

Any lingering hopes the Ecuadorians had for a military alliance against Peru were further dashed in June 1906, when Chile's Ambassador to Brazil Hevia Riquelme informed Ambassador Arévalo that Chile was not disposed at that time to sign a treaty of alliance which Ecuador desired. Though Brazil's backing away

from a military alliance with Ecuador was not mentioned, it probably was a factor. The Chilean Ambassador pointed out that Chilean intervention against Peru would probably result in Argentina (which had an outstanding border dispute with Chile) intervening on the side of Peru.⁵⁵ Had Brazil been an Ecuadorian ally the Chileans might have hoped for Brazilian help against any possible Argentine intervention. Arévalo reported that the Chileans had offered to give Ecuador secret aid in any conflict which might arise with Peru, and in return Ecuador should support Chilean positions at the upcoming Pan American Conference.⁵⁶

Despite Brazilian denials throughout 1906, Ambassador Arévalo harbored a continual fear and suspicion that the Brazilians and Colombians had signed a secret limits treaty.⁵⁷ Arévalo served as one of Ecuador's delegates to the 1906 Pan American Conference in Rio de Janeiro and his report on occurrences there reiterated his belief that Colombia must be classified in the same adversary group as Peru.⁵⁸

The Ecuadorians did not officially withdraw Valverde's controversial December 5, 1905, Memorandum proposal until October 1, 1906, possibly because they still nursed hopes that Rio Branco would reconsider his initial rejection.⁵⁹ (An Alfaro Foreign Minister, José Peralta, claimed later in his memoir *Para la Historia* that the Alfaro administration never did make any attempt to implement the Valverde Memorandum.⁶⁰)

On October 3, 1906, Brazilian Foreign Minister Rio Branco complained that the July publication of the 1904 Brazil-Ecuador Secret Defense Treaty had ruined negotiations with Peru on a Treaty of Friendship. Of course, the Ecuadorians had little reason to regret this Brazilian problem. Arévalo simply replied to Rio Branco that the Ecuadorian Congress had ratified the treaty (which the Brazilians had never done) in secrecy and good faith and that the Ecuadorian Foreign Ministry had guarded the secret. Such a complaint was groundless and indicative of the cooling of the Brazil-Ecuador relationship. Rio Branco admitted to Arévalo that the secret had been leaked not because of the Lima and Guayaquil newspaper stories but because Argentina had somehow gotten hold of a copy of the 1904 treaty and given it to the Peruvians.⁶¹

Later in October 1906 Rio Branco admitted to Arevalo that Brazil was negotiating a limits agreement with Peru. It was rapidly becoming apparent that any lingering Ecuadorian hope for an anti-Peruvian alliance with Brazil was fruitless. In view of Colombia's continuing aggressive pursuit of a limits agreement with Brazil (which might soon become an antagonist of Ecuador if the Peruvians were able to entice the Brazilians into an agreement in the talks which Rio Branco had admitted were taking place), Arévalo suggested Ecuador actively pursue the normalization of relations with Colombia and a subsequent alliance, even if that meant sacrificing to Colombia some of Ecuador's claims in the Amazon region. Such an alliance would be especially helpful if the subsequent Spanish arbitration awarded Peru some of the areas Ecuador was willing to concede to the Colombians.⁶²

A full year after its initiation the Valverde Memorandum continued to affect Ecuadorian relations with Brazil. Baron Rio Branco became irate with Ambassador Arevalo when the Baron learned that Points V and VII of the Memorandum had first been made public in the Quito newspaper *El Tiempo*, on July 21, 1906. Rio Branco had to be assured that *El Tiempo* was in no way a spokesman for the Ecuadorian government. Rio Branco had originally tried to keep the whole Memorandum affair secret, even though he rejected its proposals, for fear of adverse reaction in Peru and Brazil.⁶³ On December 14, 1906, Ambassador Arevalo sought to placate Rio Branco by writing a formal Ecuadorian government apology for "the negotiation proposed by Señor Valverde" which was "incompatible with the politics of Brazil, that do not think nor ever have thought of conquests."⁶⁴

Rio Branco dealt the final blow to any Ecuadorian hopes of cooperation with Brazil on the Amazon problem in March 1907. The Brazilian Foreign Minister told Arévalo that, as alluded to in a Rio Branco letter of October 20, 1906, the Brazilian government did not have, nor had it ever had, any intention of ratifying even the Tobar-Rio Branco Treaty of 1904.⁶⁵ The sagacious Brazilian diplomat had realized that Ecuador could offer Brazil no more legally, and even less militarily, than Peru as an ally in pursuit of Brazil's pretensions in the Amazon region. Rio Branco's intentions were clarified when Brazil signed an agreement for an Amazon

area *modus vivendi* and a Treaty of Limits with the Colombian government in April 1907.⁶⁶ An accord was signed with the Peruvians on April 15, 1908, which established freedom of navigation for ships of both countries on the Yapura (Caqueta) River (thus at least tacitly recognizing the sovereignty of one country or the other over the region).⁶⁷ The Ecuadorians were unable to assert sufficient justification for the Brazilians to sign any further accords with them regarding the Amazon region's ownership.⁶⁸ Thus died Miguel Valverde's grandiose plan for a Brazil-Ecuador alliance for a war of acquisition in the Amazon interior.

Some subsequent discussion has arisen as to the legitimacy of the Valverde Memorandum's origins. In defense of Valverde, the Ecuadorian diplomatic historian Jorge Villacres Moscoso has made a claim which seems unsupported by evidence that Baron Rio Branco actually verbally initiated the precepts contained in the December 5, 1905, Memorandum. Villacres Moscoso contends that Rio Branco told Valverde to draw up a plan acceptable to Ecuador and submit it to the Brazilian Foreign Minister. Then, Rio Branco had supposedly intended to present the proposal triumphantly to the Brazilian legislature, but he realized just before doing so that the time was not propitious, as Brazil had just enriched herself with 150,000 square kilometers of the Acre region formerly claimed by Bolivia.⁶⁹

Available evidence does not support the Villacres Moscoso theory. In his correspondence Emilio Arévalo refers to the Memorandum as having been the idea of Miguel Valverde.⁷⁰ Further, it seems quite within the character of Valverde to have pursued the treaty sought in the Memorandum without the knowledge of the Ecuadorian Foreign Ministry. In 1903, as Foreign Minister, Valverde conducted negotiations with France pursuant to the renting of the Galápagos Islands to that country. Valverde failed to inform the Ecuadorian President of those negotiations on a subject which had long been a volatile domestic issue.⁷¹ In the same year Foreign Minister Valverde suggested a secret deal with the United States for possession of the Galápagos Islands which was to be kept secret from the Ecuadorian congress, which had legal authority in the matter.⁷² A subsequent Foreign Minister who had access to all of the records, José

Peralta, has called the Memorandum Valverde's proposal, while denying the 1906-1911 Alfaro administration attempted to effectuate the plan.⁷³ Valverde engaged in some acrid correspondence with Honorato Vázquez regarding the Memorandum, because Valverde's attempts to sabotage the Spanish arbitration were resented by Ecuadorian arbitration delegation leader Vázquez.⁷⁴ When in Santiago, Chile, while on his way home from Rio de Janeiro Valverde engaged in discussions with Ecuadorian diplomatic authorities and he made no denial of the Memorandum which by then was a subject of controversy.⁷⁵ Indeed, Valverde's negotiation of the aggressive Secret Defense Treaty of 1904 with Brazil makes the December 5, 1905, Memorandum seem but a logical extension of his earlier design to use Brazil for the acquisition of Ecuador's unsure territorial claims.

Miguel Valverde had sought to weave a tangled web of South American relations around a solid core of Brazilian support of Ecuador's pretensions, but Brazilian Foreign Minister Rio Branco proved too wise to be manipulated by the ambitious Ecuadorian.

NOTES

1 David H. Zook, Jr., *Zarumilla-Marañon: The Ecuador-Peru Dispute* (New York, 1964) is an excellent English language study of the history of the Ecuador-Peru territorial dispute.

2 Extensive Ecuadorian studies of the problem include: Julio Tobar Donoso and Alfredo Luna Tobar, *Derecho Territorial Ecuatoriano* (Quito, 1961); Rafael Euclides Silva O., *Derecho Territorial Ecuatoriano* (Guayaquil, 1962); Jorge Perez Concha, *Ensayo Histórico-Critico de las Relaciones Diplomáticas del Ecuador con los Estados Limitrofes*, 2nd ed., (Quito, 1961). The Ecuadorian arguments for their claims can be found in the Secret Archives of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Quito, in the four volumes entitled: *Misión del Dr. Honorato Vázquez en España 1905-1909*.

3 *Convención de Arbitraje (Convención Espinosa-Bonifaz)* (Archivo del ministerio de relaciones exteriores del Ecuador contains the original), signed August 1, 1887.

4 Jorge Villacres Moscoso, *Geopolítica del Mundo Tropical; La Región Amazónica* (Guayaquil, 1963), pp. 188-230.

5 Zook, *Zarumilla-Marañon*, pp. 66-76; Alvaro Lins, *Rio Branco (O Barao do Rio Branco); Biografia pessoal e História politica* (São Paulo, 1965), pp. 302-11.

6 Brazilian Foreign Minister Rio Branco to Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Miguel Valverde, Rio de Janeiro, April 27, 1904, *Comunicaciones Recibidas de la Legación del Brasil en el Ecuador 1846-1913* (Archivo del ministerio de relaciones exteriores del Ecuador) [hereafter cited as *Comunicaciones de la Legación del Brasil*].

7 Ecuadorian Minister to Colombia Alfredo Baquerizo Moreno to Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Relations [Miguel Valverde] and President Leonidas Plaza Gutiérrez, Bogotá, June 13, 1903, "Cablegramas Recibidas en el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y que han sido dirigidos por la Legación del Ecuador en Colombia," *Cablegramas Recibidos y Expedidos Legaciones en Alemania, Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil y Colombia 1903-1927*.

8 Foreign Minister Miguel Valverde to Carlos Tobar Borgono, Quito, March 8, 1904, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores a la Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil [1904]," *Cablegramas Dirigidos y Expedidos Legaciones en Alemania, Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil y Colombia 1903-1927*; also, Valverde to Tobar, Quito, March 28, 1904, *ibid.*

9 Valverde to Tobar, Quito, March 28, 1904, *ibid.*

10 A factor negating the Brazil-Peru alliance possibility was that Peru had been a traditional ally of Argentina, which was Brazil's chief rival for South American leadership and an opponent in past border disputes.

11 Tobar to Ecuador Mexterior [the Ecuadorian designation for Minister of Foreign Relations] Miguel Valverde, Petrópolis, Brazil, March 26, 1904, "Cablegramas Recibidos en el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y que han sido dirigidos por la Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil," *Cablegramas Recibidos y Expedidos Legaciones del Ecuador en . . . Brasil y Colombia 1903-1927*.

12 Tobar to Mexterior [Miguel Valverde], Petrópolis, May 6, 1904, *ibid.*: "Hoy firmamos alianza y tratados limites, primera defensiva mutua resguardo territorio poseido 1810. . . someteráse aprobación congreso simultáneamente acuerdo dos naciones: segundo reconoce limites Ecuador Brasil cuyas fronteras despues entendemos dire Aama [sic] o guerra Perú serán las convenidas Tratado Perubrasileño 1851."

13 Valverde to Tobar, Quito, May 10, 1904, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores a la Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil," *ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 Carlos R. Tobar, *La Palabra de un ex-Ministro en el Brasil* (Quito, 1910), as cited in Jorge Pérez Concha, *Ensayo Histórico-Crítico*, I, 285-86: ". . . excedia con mucho lo que el gobierno del Ecuador esperaba. . . Merced a aquel acuerdo, la diplomacia ecuatoriana podia ejercer acción conjunta aon la habilísima del Brasil, en lo relativo a las comunes cuestiones de limites con el Perú."

16 *Ibid.*

17 Tobar to Valverde, Petrópolis, May 12, 1904, "Cablegramas Recibidos en el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y que han sido Dirigidos por la Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil," *Cablegramas Recibidos y Expedidos Legaciones del Ecuador en . . . Brasil y Colombia 1903-1927*.

18 Valverde to Tobar, Quito, May 14, 1904, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministerio. . . a la Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil," *ibid.*

19 Valverde to Ecuadorian Minister in Bogotá, Quito, May 25, 1903 [sic — 1904: The Ecuadorian "Reservado" (top secret) records are lists of typed copies of the original messages and this entire section, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores a la Legación del Ecuador en Colombia, Año de 1903," is clearly misdated, as July 1903 references to the Peru-Colombia Tanco-Pardo Treaty (signed May 1904) indicate], *Cablegramas Recibidos y Expedidos Legaciones del Ecuador en . . . Brasil y Colombia 1903-1927*; the Ecuadorian Foreign Minister voiced the defensive attitude of the Ecuadorians in this cable: "Colombia prefers to

share possession [of the] Putumayo [with] our traditional enemy [Peru] . . . it threatens us [that] she allies herself [with] Peru in order to consummate usurpation [of] all of our Oriente. . . Tell them. . . Ecuador prefers to die like Poland [rather than] prostitute herself like Panama." ("Colombia prefiere compartir posesión Putumayo nuestro enemigo tradicional; . . . nos amenaza aliarse Perú para consumir usurpación todo nuestro Oriente. . . Dígales usted . . . Ecuador prefiere morir como Polonia a prostituirse como Panama.")

20 Valverde to Ecuador Minister in Colombia, Quito, May 11, 1904, *ibid.*

21 Francisco Guarderas, *El Viejo de Montecristi: Biografía de Alfaro* (Puebla, Mexico, 1965), p. 369.

22 Julio Andrade to Ecuador Mexterior [Valverde], Bogotá, May 17, 1904, "Cablegramas Recibidos en el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y que han sido remitidos por la Legación del Ecuador en Colombia," *Cablegramas Recibidos y Expedidos Legaciones en. . . Brasil y Colombia 1903-1927*: "Acción conjunta ofensiva y defensiva contra Peru sobre base Tratado 29."

23 Valverde to Tobar, Quito, May 21, 1904, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministerio. . . a la Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil," *ibid.*

24 Andrade to Ecuador Mexterior [Valverde], Bogotá, May 23, 1904, "Cablegramas Recibidos en el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y que han sido remitidos por la Legación del Ecuador en Colombia," *ibid.*

25 Andrade to Valverde, Bogotá, June 1, 1904, *ibid.*

26 Andrade to Valverde, Bogotá, July 12, 1904, *ibid.*

27 Miguel Valverde to Honorato Vázquez, Quito, June 21, 1905, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores a la Legación del Ecuador en España, Año 1904," *Cablegramas entre Legaciones en España, Francia, Italia, Gran Bretaña, Panamá, Suiza, Venezuela 1901-1927* (Archivo del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Ecuador); Valverde to Ecuador Minister in Spain, Quito, August 10, 1905, *ibid.*

28 Andrade to Valverde, Bogotá, November 7, 1904, "Cablegramas Recibidos en el Ministerio. . . remitidos por la Legación del Ecuador en Colombia," *Cablegramas Recibidos y Expedidos Legaciones en. . . Brasil y Colombia 1903-1927*.

29 Valverde to Tobar, Quito, May 26, 1904, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores a la Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil," *ibid.*

30 Valverde to Tobar, Quito, June 9, 1904, *ibid.*: "Sin declaratoria guerra Ecuador Brasil pueden iniciar campaña defensiva fronteras ocupando Iquitos y recuperando nuestros territorios hasta Ucayali. Ecuador listos mil hombres embarcarse boca Curaray buques brasileños."

31 A mere two decades earlier Chile had defeated Peru in the War of the Pacific and the two remained in heated controversy over Chilean retention of areas formerly considered to be southern Peru. See: Mario Barros, *História Diplomática de Chile 1541-1938* (Barcelona, Spain, 1970), pp. 326-440; Jorge Basadre, *História de la República del Perú* (5th edition; 10 vol.; Lima, 1961-1964), V-VI, pp. 2317-2659.

32 Valverde to Tobar, Quito, August 25, 1904, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores a la Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil," *Cablegramas Recibidos y Expedidos Legaciones en. . . Brasil y Colombia 1903-1927*: ". . . reforzar nuestra acción en ejecución pacto secreto Brasil."

33 In his previously cited June 21, 1905, cable to Minister Vazquez in Spain, Valverde stated the Ecuadorians were soliciting not only Colombian cooperation against Peru but also the aid of Venezuela, Chile and Brazil.

34 *Tratado de Arbitraje Sobre Limites Ante el Emperador de Alemania* (Archivo del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Ecuador), signed in Bogotá, November 5, 1904.

35 Protecting the interests of Brazil, Foreign Minister Rio Branco signed a protocol on July 12, 1904; by the agreement Peru and Brazil were to begin bilateral negotiations on their border disputes, which at least temporarily took away the Brazilian need for settlement by force of her border conflicts with Peru. For details of the Peru-Brazil Protocol see: Jorge Basadre, *Historia de la República del Perú* (Lima, 1961-64), VII, 3522-23; Lins, *Rio Branco*, pp. 304-10.

36 Zook, *Zarumilla-Marañon*, p. 75.

37 Vázquez's opinion was expressed to Carlos Tobar Borgono in an interview in Lisbon, Portugal (Vázquez also disapproved of the Tobar-Rio Branco Treaty of 1904): Guarderas, *El Viejo de Montecristi*, p. 370.

38 Jorge Villacres Moscoso, *Historia Diplomática de la República del Ecuador* (Guayaquil, 1969-1972), III, 314-15.

39 Ecuadorian First Secretary in Brazil Emilio Arévalo to Ecuador Mexterior Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, May 22, 1906, *Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil 1904-1922*.

40 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petropolis, *ibid.*, contains the text of Valverde's Memorandum; the official title of the Memorandum was: "Memorandum reservado para el Exco Sr. Baron de Rio Branco, Ministro de Relaciones exteriores de los Estados Unidos de Brasil" and was signed by Miguel Valverde. See: *Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil 1904-1922*.

41 "Como se ve, la linea propuesta es mucho más restringida de lo que deberia ser, en las regiones bañadas por los Guallaga y Ucayali. . ."

42 ". . . corroboran el Tratado de Alianza Defensiva contra el Perú, firmado el de de [sic] 1904,"

43 "En caso de guerra con el Perú. . . para llevar las tropas ecuatorianas a puntos de la costa peruana en que se resuelva efectuar desembarques."

44 "En caso de guerra con el Perú, la escuadra brasileña se dirigirá al Pacifico, a fin de cooperar a una acción rápida y decisiva de los ejércitos aliados." (Point IX, Article 14).

45 "La consecuencia inmediata de la notificación anterior será la ruptura del arbitraje."

46 ". . . lo que seguramente negará el Perú."

47 "El Brasil manifestará que apoya la justa reclamación del Ecuador, en virtud de los tratados celebrados, y exigirá también el cumplimiento del Tratado de 1829. En caso de resistencia, los aliados enviarán su ultimatum al Perú, y estallará la guerra."

48 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, May 22, 1906, *Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil 1904-1922*.

49 *Ibid.* Issues were cited by Arévalo.

50 *Ibid.*

51 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, September 25, 1906, *ibid.*

52 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, May 22, 1906, *ibid.*

53 Arévalo to Ecuadorian Minister in Spain Honorato Vázquez, Petrópolis, June 4, 1906, *Ibid.*: ". . . no solo el Perú nos ataca por el Sur; también Colombia quiere cercenar nuestros territorios por el Norte, en particular los del Oriente. . . ."

54 Ecuador Mexterior to Ecuadorian Minister in Spain, Quito, April 10, 1906, "Cablegramas Dirigidos por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores a la Legación del Ecuador en España, Año 1906," *Cablegramas entre Legaciones en España, Francia, Italia, Gran Bretaña, Panamá, Suiza, Venezuela 1901-1927*; Julio Andrade to Manuel Montalvo, Bogotá, July 18, 1906, *Comunicaciones Recibidas de la Legación del Ecuador en Colombia 1906-1909*.

55 Arevalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, June 29, 1906, *Comunicaciones Recibidas de las Legaciones del Ecuador en Argentina y Brasil 1903-1913*.

56 *Ibid.*

57 Brazilian Chargé d'Affaires in Ecuador Graccho Sa Valle to Brazilian Foreign Minister Rio Branco (copy), Quito, October 24, 1906, *Comunicaciones Recibidas de la Legación de Brasil, 1846 a 1913*; Rio Branco to Sa Valle, Rio de Janeiro, October 28, 1906, *ibid.*, denies existence of a secret Brazil-Colombia limits treaty; also, Sa Valle to Ecuador Mexterior Manuel Montalvo, Quito, December 6, 1906, *ibid.*

58 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, August 14, 1906, *Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil 1904-1922*; Arévalo had expressed the same feeling in his message: Arévalo to Honorato Vázquez, Petrópolis, June 4, 1906, *ibid.*

59 Arévalo to Excmo. José María da Silva Paranhos [Foreign Minister Rio Branco], Petrópolis, October 1, 1906, *ibid.*

60 José Peralta, *Para la Historia* (Cuenca, Ecuador, 1920), p. 71.

61 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, October 20, 1906, *Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil 1904-1922*.

62 *Ibid.*

63 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, December 28, 1906, *ibid.*

64 Arévalo to Rio Branco, Petrópolis, December 14, 1906, *Ibid.*: ". . . la negociación propuesta por el Sr. Valverde. . . ella es incompatible con la política de Brasil, que no piensa ni ha pensado nunca en conquistas."

65 Arévalo to Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Pacífico Villagómez, Petrópolis, March 8, 1907, *ibid.*

66 Raimundo Rivas, *Historia Diplomática de Colombia (1810-1934)* (Bogotá, 1961), pp. 637-38.

67 Basadre, *Historia de la República del Perú*, VII, 3523.

68 The Ecuadorians did manage a navigation and commerce treaty with Brazil on May 19, 1907. See: Brazilian Chargé d'Affaires A. de Alencar to Acting Ecuadorian Foreign Minister F.J. Martinez Aguirre, Quito, November 17, 1908, *Comunicaciones Recibidas de la Legación del Brasil 1846-1913*.

69 Villacres Moscoso, *Historia Diplomática del Ecuador*, III, 319-20.

70 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, May 22, 1906, *Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil 1904-1922*.

71 Roberto Andrade, *Vida y Muerte de Eloy Alfaro* (New York, 1916), p. 381.

72 United States Ambassador Archibald Sampson to Secretary of State John Hay, Quito, October 31, 1903, *Despatches from United States Ministers to Ecuador 1848-1906, Volume 18, November 12, 1901-December 31, 1903*.

73 José Peralta, *Para la Historia*, pp. 70-71.

74 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, December 28, 1906, *Legación del Ecuador en el Brasil 1904-1922*.

75 Arévalo to Manuel Montalvo, Petrópolis, May 22, 1906, *ibid.*: Arévalo talked with Ecuadorian diplomatic officials in Santiago, Chile, who had met with Valverde on his way home from Brazil and no mention was made of any Valverde denial of authorship of the Memorandum which was then being criticized in Brazilian newspapers.