

45

*Prelude to the war with Great Britain. Preparation of Public Opinion*

1761

'... Lord Bristol, Ambassador of His Britannic Majesty in Madrid, put in a formal request in the name of his Sovereign, demanding to be informed whether the King intended to join forces with France against England, and insisted upon an unequivocal answer to his question, stating that, should this be refused him, he would interpret it as a formal breaking off of diplomatic relations and a declaration of war, and should straightway depart these shores. His Majesty the King, our Lord, instructed he be given his answer to the effect that he was at liberty to quit our country whenever and howsoever he chose, for it was the person who posed such a question who was making the first break in diplomatic relations and heralding the outbreak of war. And so it is that diplomatic relations between our court and the English have been broken off, and His Majesty's Ambassador in London, His Excellency the Count of Fuentes, has been instructed to return to Spain forthwith. The King's resolve has been greatly facilitated by the haphazard conduct towards us of the British Ambassador over many years. His Majesty was also not unheedful of the danger which His American colonies have run ever since the English, disgruntled by their most advantageous terms offered by the French during the treaties for peace, were seen to covet so unashamedly the few possessions which still remain of His Most Christian Majesty's empire in the Indies. And who can doubt that they would not be long in turning their attention against Our own colonies and attempting to annex that New World with its shipping and its trade for themselves?'

(Mercurio, *Histórico y Político*, Madrid, vol. CLXVII, pp. 448-9.)