

Letter from Micaela Bastidas to Tupac Amaru II

Micaela Bastidas, the wife of Jose Gabriel Condorcanqui, or Tupac Amaru II, was of equal social status to her husband in the Andean Highlands; she was also descended from Spanish conquistadores and Inka nobility. She, too, had grown up used to high social position. Therefore, she quite naturally became one of the important advisers to her husband as he led the greatest rebellion challenging Spanish authority in Peru since the sixteenth century. As the following letter attests, she did not desist from giving full and frank advice to Tupac Amaru or from leading troops herself. Here Micaela Bastidas chides the rebel leader for failing to seize Cuzco.

I have warned you again and again not to dally in those villages, where there is nothing to do—but you continue to saunter, ignoring the fact that soldiers are running short of food. They are receiving their pay, but the money will not last forever. Then they will all depart, leaving us to pay with our lives, because you must have learned by this time that they came only for reasons of self-interest, and to get all they can out of us. They are already beginning to desert...

Thus we will lose all the people that I have gotten together for the descent on Cuzco, and the forces at Cusco will unite with the soldiers from Lima, who have been on the march for many days.

I must tell you this, though it pains me. If you want to ruin us, continue to sleep and commit such follies as that of passing alone through the streets of Yauri, and even climbing to the church tower—actions certainly out of place at this times, and that only dishonor you and gain you disrespect.

I believed that you were occupied day and night with arranging this affair, instead of showing an unconcern that robs me of my life. I am already a shadow, and of myself and beside myself with anxiety, and so I beg you to get on with this business

You made me a promise, but henceforth I shall not heed your promises, for you did not keep your word...

I gave you plenty of warnings to march immediately on Cuzco, but you took them all lightly, giving the Spaniards time to prepare as they have done, placing cannon on Picchu Mountain, and devising other measures so dangerous that you are no longer in a position to attack them...

In fine, God must want me to suffer my sins.

Your wife.

[P.S.] After I had finished this letter, a messenger arrived with the definite news that the enemy from Paruro is in Acos; I am going forward to attack them, even if it costs me my life.