

CHAPTER II

THE RECOGNITION OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN REPUBLICS

THE struggle of the South American peoples for independence was viewed from the first with feelings of profound satisfaction and sympathy in the United States. From the commencement of the revolution South American vessels were admitted into the ports of the United States under whatever flag they bore. It does not appear that any formal declaration according belligerent rights to the said provinces was ever made, though a resolution to that effect was introduced into the House by committee as early as December 10, 1811.¹ Such formal action was apparently not deemed necessary and, as there was no Spanish minister resident in the United States at that time to protest, our ports were probably thrown open, as a matter of course.² The fact that they were accorded full belligerent rights from the first was afterwards stated by President Monroe in his annual messages of 1817 and 1818 and in his special message of March 8, 1822.³

At an early date of the revolution commissioners arrived in Washington seeking recognition of independence, and agents were forthwith dispatched to South America to obtain information in regard to

¹ Am. St. Papers, For. Rel., Vol. III, p. 538.

² Wharton's Digest, Sec. 69, and Moore's Digest of Int. Law, Vol. I,

³ ^{177.} "Messages and Papers of the Presidents," Vol. II, pp. 13, 58, and 116.

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the state of the revolutionary governments and to watch the movements of England and other European powers. Joel R. Poinsett was sent to Buenos Aires in 1811, and the following year Alexander Scott was sent to Venezuela.⁴ In 1817 Cæsar A. Rodney, Theodorick Bland, and John Graham were dispatched as special commissioners to South America. They proceeded to Buenos Aires, where they arrived in February, 1818, and remained until the last of April. Rodney and Graham then returned to the United States while Bland proceeded across the continent to Chile. Their reports were transmitted to Congress November 17, 1818.⁵ In 1820 Messrs. J. B. Prevost and John M. Forbes were sent as commercial agents to Chile and Buenos Aires. Reports from them on the state of the revolutions were transmitted to Congress, March 8 and April 26, 1822.⁶

In the meantime a strong sentiment in favor of the recognition of South American independence had arisen in the United States. The struggling colonies found a ready champion in Henry Clay, who, for a period of ten years labored almost incessantly in their behalf, pleading for their recognition first with his own countrymen and then, as secretary of state under the Adams administration, with the governments of Europe. His name became a household word in South America and his speeches were translated and read before the patriot armies.

In spite of the fact that our own political interests were so closely identified with the struggling republics, the President realized the necessity of following a neu-

⁴ Lyman, "Diplomacy of the United States," 2 Vols. Boston, 1828. Vol. II, p. 432. Romero, "Mexico and the United States."

⁵ Given in full in Am. St. Papers, For. Rel., Vol. IV, pp. 217-270.

⁶ Am. St. Papers, For. Rel., Vol. IV, pp. 818-851.

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tral course, and in view of the aid the colonies were receiving from citizens of the United States, called upon Congress for the enactment of a more stringent neutrality law. Clay delivered a vigorous speech in opposition to this measure in January, 1817. His greatest effort in behalf of South America, however, was his speech of March 25, 1818, on the general appropriation bill. He moved an amendment appropriating \$18,000 for the outfit and year's salary of a minister to the United Provinces of the Plate. Without waiting to hear the report of the three commissioners who had been sent to inquire into the state of the revolutionary governments, he urged that a minister be regularly accredited to Buenos Aires at once. In a speech, three hours in length, he concluded the arguments he had begun the day before. Painting with even more than his usual fire and enthusiasm the beauties and resources of the Southern continent, he said:

Within this vast region, we behold the most sublime and interesting objects of creation; the loftiest mountains, the most majestic rivers in the world; the richest mines of the precious metals; and the choicest productions of the earth. We behold there a spectacle still more interesting and sublime—the glorious spectacle of eighteen millions of people struggling to burst their chains and be free.¹

He went on to say that in the establishment of the independence of the South American states the United States had the deepest interest. He had no hesitation in asserting his firm belief that there was no question in the foreign policy of this country, which had ever arisen, or which he could conceive as ever

¹ Benton's "Abridgment," Vol. VI, p. 139.

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occurring, in the decision of which we had so much at stake. This interest concerned our politics, our commerce, our navigation. There could be no doubt that Spanish America, once independent, whatever might be the form of the governments established in its several parts, those governments would be animated by an American feeling and guided by an American policy. They would obey the laws of the system of the new world, of which they would compose a part, in contradistinction to that of Europe.* The House turned a deaf ear to his brilliant rhetoric. The motion was defeated by a vote of 115 to 45, but Clay did not abandon the cause of South America.

Two years later he reopened the question in a direct attack on the policy of the administration, which greatly disturbed President Monroe. On May 20, 1820, he again introduced a resolution declaring it expedient to send ministers to the "governments in South America which have established and are maintaining their independence of Spain." His arraignment of the administration became more violent than ever:

If Lord Castlereagh says we may recognize, we do; if not, we do not. A single expression of the British minister to the present secretary of state, then our minister abroad, I am ashamed to say, has molded the policy of our government toward South America.

A charge of dependence upon Great Britain in affairs of diplomacy was as effective a weapon then as it has been since in matters financial. Clay's resolution passed the House by a vote of 80 to 75, but

* Benton's "Abridgment," Vol. VI, p. 142.

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still the executive arm of the government did not move. In 1817 and 1818 the question of South American independence was continually before the cabinet for discussion. President Monroe seemed strongly inclined toward recognition, but in this he was opposed by Adams and Calhoun, who were unwilling to act in the matter without some understanding with England, and if possible with France. Our relations with Spain in regard to the Indian troubles in Florida were in a very strained condition and any action taken at that time in recognition of South America would have involved us in war with Spain and almost inevitably with other European powers. The President, therefore, as a matter of expediency postponed the action which his sympathy prompted, and, in his annual message of November 16, 1818, expressed his satisfaction at the course the government had hitherto pursued and his intention of adhering to it for the time being.⁹ Under the President's direction, however, efforts were made to secure the coöperation of Great Britain and France in promoting the independence of South America.¹⁰

In 1819 an amicable adjustment of our differences with Spain seemed to have been reached by the negotiation of a treaty providing for the cession of the Floridas to the United States and the settlement of long-standing claims of American citizens against Spain. An unforeseen difficulty arose, however, which proved embarrassing to the administration. The Spanish monarch very shrewdly delayed ratifying the treaty for two years and thus practically tied the

⁹ "Messages and Papers of the Presidents," Vol. II, p. 44.

¹⁰ "Adams's Diary," September, 1817, to December, 1818; "Letters and Despatches of Castlereagh," Vol. XI, pp. 404 and 458.

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hands of the administration during that time as far as the South American question was concerned.

In spite of the awkward position in which the administration found itself, Clay, who was opposed to the treaty on account of its unwarranted surrender of our claims to Texas, continued to plead the cause of South America. Early in the year, 1821, a declaration of interest in the South American struggle, introduced by him, was carried by an overwhelming majority (134 to 12), but the administration held back another year until the *de facto* independence of the colonies no longer admitted of reasonable doubt. Meanwhile the Florida treaty had been ratified. On March 8, 1822, President Monroe, in a special message to Congress, expressed the opinion that the time had come for recognition and asked for the appropriations necessary for carrying it into effect. The President's recommendation was received with approval, and in due course the sum of \$100,000 was appropriated for "such missions to the independent nations on the American continent as the President of the United States may deem proper." In accordance with this act Mr. R. C. Anderson of Kentucky was appointed minister to Colombia, Mr. C. A. Rodney of New Jersey to the Argentine Republic, and Mr. H. Allen of Vermont to Chile, in 1824, and Mr. Joel R. Poinsett of South Carolina to Mexico in 1826.

While the United States government was concerning itself with the political interests of the Spanish provinces, Great Britain was quietly reaping all the commercial advantages to be derived from the situation and was apparently well satisfied to let things follow the drift they had taken. By the destruction

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of the combined fleets of France and Spain at Trafalgar, in 1805, Nelson had won for Great Britain undisputed control of the Atlantic and laid open the route to South America. Ever since the *assiento* of 1713 had placed the slave trade in her hands, Great Britain had realized the possibilities of South American commerce, and the intercourse, which had been kept up with that country after the termination of the slave monopoly by smugglers, now that the danger was removed, became more regular and profitable. During the changes of ministry that followed the death of Pitt, the policy of England in regard to South America was weak and vacillating. We have already called attention to the political indecision that marked the attack upon the provinces of the Plate. With Napoleon's invasion of Spain and the national uprising it occasioned, British policy became once more intelligible. It was wisely deemed of more importance to spare the colonies and to win Spain over to the European alliance against Napoleon, than to take her colonies at the cost of driving her permanently into the arms of France. Meanwhile British commerce with the South American states was steadily growing and that too with the connivance of Spain.

At the close of the Napoleonic wars, Spain, fearing that England, through her desire to keep this trade, would secretly furnish aid to the colonies in their struggle for independence, proposed to the British government to bind itself to a strict neutrality. This England agreed to, and when the treaty was signed, there was, according to Canning, "a distinct understanding with Spain that our commercial intercourse with the colonies was not to be deemed a breach of

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its stipulations.”¹¹ Notwithstanding this tacit compact, British commerce suffered greatly at the hands of Spanish privateers and even Spanish war vessels. Numbers of British merchantmen were captured by Spanish ships, carried into the few ports left to Spain on the Main, and condemned as prizes for trading with the insurgent colonies. Thus at the time of the acknowledgment of South American independence by the United States, a long list of grievances had accumulated in the hands of the British ambassador at Madrid, and in spite of urgent and repeated remonstrances, remained unredressed.

Canning was deterred from making final demands upon the government of Madrid by the consideration that he did not wish to hamper the constitutional government of Spain, which had come into being by the revolution of March, 1820, and against which the other powers of Europe were preparing to act. The condition of affairs on the Spanish Main was, however, critical and demanded instant redress. He decided, therefore, to take matters into his own hands without harassing the government of Spain, and to dispatch a squadron to the West Indies to make reprisals. In a memorandum to the cabinet on this subject, November 15, 1822, in which he outlines his policy, he commends the course of the United States in recognizing the *de facto* independence of the colonies, claiming a right to trade with them and avenging the attempted interruption of that right by making reprisals, as a more straightforward and intelligible course than that of Great Britain, forbearing for the sake of Spain to recognize the colonies, trading with them in faith of

¹¹ Stapleton, "Political Life of Canning," Vol. II, p. 10.

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the connivance of Spain and suffering depredations without taking redress. It was not necessary, he thought, to declare war against Spain, for "she has perhaps as little direct and available power over the colonies which she nominally retains as she has over those which have thrown off her yoke. Let us apply, therefore, a local remedy to a local grievance, and make the ships and harbors of Cuba, Porto Rico, and Porto Cabello answerable for the injuries which have been inflicted by those ships, and the perpetrators of which have found shelter in those harbors." In conclusion, he says that the tacit compact, which subsisted for years, by which Spain was to forbear from interrupting British trade with the South American colonies having been renounced by Spain, and the old colonial system having been revived in as full vigor as if she had still a practical hold over her colonies and a navy to enforce her pretensions, "no man will say that under such circumstances our recognition of those states can be indefinitely postponed."¹²

While Great Britain was thus considering the expediency of following the example of the United States in the recognition of Spain's revolted colonies, the powers of central Europe had taken upon them the task of solving the difficulties of that unfortunate country both at home and in America. The restored rule of the Bourbons in Spain had been far from satisfactory to the great mass of the people. In March, 1820, the army which Ferdinand had assembled at Cadiz to be sent against the rebellious colonies, suddenly turned against the government, refused to embark, and demanded the restoration of the constitution

¹² Stapleton, "Official Correspondence of Canning," Vol. I, p. 48 ff.

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of 1812. The action of the army was everywhere approved and sustained by the mass of the people, and the king was forced to proclaim the constitution and to swear to uphold it. The March revolution in Spain was followed in July by a constitutional movement in Naples, and in August of the same year by a similar movement in Portugal; while the next year saw the outbreak of the Greek struggle for independence. Thus in all three of the peninsulas of Southern Europe the people were struggling for the right of self-government. The movement in Greece was, it is true, of an altogether different character from the others, but it was a revolt against constituted authority and therefore incurred the ill-will of the so-called legitimists. The powers of Europe at once took alarm at the rapid spread of revolutionary ideas and proceeded to adopt measures for the suppression of the movements to which these ideas gave rise. The principle of joint intervention on the part of allied governments in the internal affairs of European states had been developed in the years immediately following the overthrow of Napoleon and was the outcome of the wholly anomalous condition in which he had left the politics of Europe. In the hands of Prince Metternich, the genius of reaction against French revolutionary ideas, this principle had become the most powerful weapon of absolutism and now threatened the subversion of popular institutions throughout Europe.

The rapid development of this doctrine of intervention in the seven years immediately following the second fall of Napoleon not only seriously menaced the liberties of Europe, but also threatened to control the

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destiny of the new world. At the Congress of Vienna Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, and Russia had formed a close union and had signed the treaty upon which the peace of Europe rested for the next half century. The agreement made at Vienna was reaffirmed with some minor changes, after the second overthrow of Napoleon, at Paris, November 20, 1815. France was now practically excluded from the alliance. This treaty undertook especially to guard against any further disturbance of the peace of Europe by Napoleon or France. One of the most significant features of the treaty, or what was to prove so, was the agreement definitely laid down in the sixth article, providing for meetings of the powers at fixed periods.

The first conference held in accordance with this understanding was that at Aix-la-Chapelle in October, 1818. France was readmitted as a member of the alliance and her territory evacuated by the allied armies. The quintuple alliance thus formed declared that it had no other object than the maintenance of peace; that the repose of the world was its motive and its end. The language of the declaration had been in a large measure neutralized to suit the views of the British government. Lord Liverpool had said to Castlereagh before the meeting of the conference: "The Russian must be made to feel that we have a parliament and a public, to which we are responsible, and that we cannot permit ourselves to be drawn into views of policy which are wholly incompatible with the spirit of our government." The members of the British cabinet, except Canning, did not object seriously to the system of congresses at fixed intervals, but to the declarations publicly set forth by them.

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Canning, on the other hand, objected to the declarations and to the conferences themselves, "meetings for the government of the world," as he somewhat contemptuously termed them.

It had been generally supposed that the question of the Spanish colonies would come up for discussion at Aix-la-Chapelle. Castlereagh assured the United States, through Bagot, the British minister at Washington, that while England would act with the allied powers at Aix-la-Chapelle in mediation between Spain and her colonies, her mediation would be limited entirely to the employment of her influence and good offices and that she would not take any measures that might assume a character of force.¹³

The revolutions that took place in Spain, Naples, and Portugal in 1820 presented an occasion for another meeting of the allies. In November the representatives of Austria, Russia, and Prussia met in conference at Troppau, and issued a circular setting forth what they had already done for Europe in overthrowing the military tyranny of Napoleon and expressing the determination "to put a curb on a force no less tyrannical and no less detestable, that of revolt and crime." The conference then adjourned to Laybach, where they could, with greater dispatch, order the movements they had decided to take against the revolutionists of Naples. Austria, being more intimately concerned with the political condition of the Italian peninsula than either of the other two powers, was entrusted with the task of suppressing the Neapolitan revolution. The Austrian army entered Naples

¹³ Bagot to Castlereagh, October 31, 1818. Mem. of a Conversation with Adams. "Letters and Despatches of Castlereagh," Vol. XII, p. 66.

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March 23, 1821, overthrew the constitutional government that had been inaugurated, and restored Ferdinand II to absolute power. The revolution which had broken out in Piedmont was also suppressed by a detachment of the Austrian army.

England held aloof from all participation in the proceedings at Troppau and Laybach—though Sir Charles Stuart was present to watch the proceedings. In a circular dispatch of January 21, 1821, the British government expressed its dissent from the principles set forth in the Troppau circular.

The next meeting of the allied powers was arranged for October, 1822, at Verona. Here the affairs of Greece, Italy, and, in particular, Spain came up for consideration. At this Congress all five powers of the alliance were represented. France was uneasy about the condition of Spain, and England had to send a delegate out of self-defense, as her interests were largely involved. Castlereagh was preparing to depart for the congress, when his mind gave way under the stress of work and more remotely of dissipation, and he committed suicide. Canning then became secretary for foreign affairs, and Wellington was sent to Verona.

The congress which now assembled at Verona was devoted largely to a discussion of Spanish affairs. Wellington had been instructed to use all his influence against the adoption of measures of intervention in Spain. When he found that the other powers were bent upon this step and that his protest would be unheeded, he withdrew from the congress. The four remaining powers signed the secret treaty of Verona, November 22, 1822, as a revision, so they declared in

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the preamble, of the "Treaty of the Holy Alliance." This treaty of the Holy Alliance, signed at Paris, September 26, 1815, by Austria, Russia, and Prussia, is one of the most remarkable political documents extant. It sprang from the erratic brain of the Czar Alexander under the influence of Madame Crudner, who was both an adventuress and a religious enthusiast. Its object was to uphold the divine right of kings and to counteract the spirit of French revolutionary ideas by introducing "the precepts of justice, of charity, and of peace" into the internal affairs of states and into their relations with one another. No one had taken it seriously except the Czar himself and it had been without influence upon the politics of Europe. The agreement reached at Verona gave retrospective importance to the Holy Alliance, and revived the name, so that it became the usual designation of the combined powers. The following alleged text of the secret treaty of Verona soon became current in the press of Europe and America. Although it has never been officially acknowledged and its authenticity has been called in question, it states pretty accurately the motives and aims of the powers. The first four articles are as follows:

The undersigned, specially authorized to make some additions to the Treaty of the Holy Alliance, after having exchanged their respective credentials, have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE I. The high contracting parties being convinced that the system of representative government is equally incompatible with the monarchical principles as the maxim of the sovereignty of the people with the divine right, engage mutually, and in the most solemn manner, to use all their efforts to *put an end* to the system of *representative*

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governments, in whatever country it may exist in Europe, and to prevent its being introduced in those countries where it is not yet known.

ART. II. As it cannot be doubted that the *liberty of the press* is the most powerful means used by the pretended supporters of the rights of nations, to the detriment of those of Princes, the high contracting parties promise reciprocally to adopt all proper measures to suppress it not only in their own states, but also, in the rest of Europe.

ART. III. Convinced that the principles of religion contribute most powerfully to keep nations in the state of passive obedience which they owe to their Princes, the high contracting parties declare it to be their intention to sustain, in their respective states, those measures which the clergy may adopt, with the aim of ameliorating their own interests, so intimately connected with the preservation of the authority of Princes; and the contracting powers join in offering their thanks to the Pope, for what he has already done for them, and solicit his constant coöperation in their views of submitting the nations.

ART. IV. The situation of Spain and Portugal unites unhappily all the circumstances to which this treaty has particular reference. The high contracting parties, in confiding to France the care of putting an end to them, engage to assist her in the manner which may the least compromise them with their own people and the people of France, by means of a subsidy on the part of the two empires, of twenty millions of francs every year, from the date of the signature of this treaty to the end of the war.

Signed by Metternich for Austria, Chateaubriand for France, Bernstet for Prussia, and Nesselrode for Russia.¹⁴

Such was the code of absolutism against which England protested and against which President Monroe delivered his declaration.

¹⁴ For the Congresses of Aix-la-Chapelle, Troppau, Laybach, and Verona, see "Letters and Despatches of Castlereagh," Vol. XI; "Life of Lord Liverpool," Vol. III; "Political Life and Official Correspondence of Canning"; Chateaubriand's "Congrès de Verone," and W. A. Phillips, "The Confederation of Europe, 1813-1823." The text of the treaty of Verona is published in Niles' Register, August 2, 1823, Vol. 24, p. 347, and in Elliot's "American Diplomatic Code," Vol. II, p. 179.

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The Congress broke up about the middle of December, and the following April, the Duc d'Angoulême led a French army across the Pyrenees. By October the constitutional party had been overthrown and absolutism reigned supreme once more in western Europe. In England alone was there still any semblance of constitutional government.

The Congress of Verona was the last of the joint-meetings of the powers for the discussion of the internal affairs of states. It marked the final withdrawal of England from the European alliance. Henceforth she took up a position distinctly hostile to the principles advocated by her former allies and her policy in relation to Spanish America practically coincided with that of the United States.

The great majority of the English people sympathized deeply with the constitutional movement in Spain and were ready to take up arms in support of the Spanish people. The protest of England having been disregarded by the powers at Verona, it became necessary for the cabinet, in view of the preparations going on in France for the invasion of the Peninsula, to say what they contemplated doing. In February, 1823, Lord Liverpool circulated among his colleagues a minute prepared by Canning, which gave at length the reasons, military and other, why it would be unwise for England to undertake the defense of Spain. In the first place, the war against Spain was unpopular in France, and if Great Britain should take part in the war, the French government would avail itself of the fact to convert it into an English war and thus render it popular. Second, England would have to undertake the defense of Spain against

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invasion by land, and her naval superiority would not materially aid the Spaniards or baffle the French. Third, the continental powers were committed to the support of France. Fourth, there was a possibility that the invasion of Spain would be unsuccessful. Fifth, on the other hand, it might meet with success, in which event France might assist Spain to recover her American colonies. Here, he says, England's naval superiority would tell, "and I should have no difficulty in deciding that we ought to prevent, by every means in our power, perhaps Spain from sending a single Spanish regiment to South America, after the supposed termination of the war in Spain, but certainly France from affording to Spain any aid or assistance for that purpose." Sixth, in case of the invasion of Portugal by France and Spain, he thought England would be in honor bound to defend her, in case she asked for aid. The military defense of Portugal would not be so difficult as a land war in Spain.¹⁵

In accordance with this determination Canning dispatched a letter to Sir Charles Stuart, British ambassador at Paris, March 31, 1823, in which he spoke of recognition of the colonies as a matter to be determined by time and circumstances, and, disclaiming all designs on the part of the British government on the late Spanish provinces, intimated that England, although abstaining from interference in Spain, would not allow France to acquire any of the colonies by conquest or cession. To this note the French government made no reply and England took this silence as a tacit agreement not to interfere with the colonies.

¹⁵ "Life of Lord Liverpool," Vol. III, p. 231. "Official Correspondence of Canning," Vol. I, p. 85.

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The British government continued, however, to watch closely the movements of France.¹⁶

As the invasion of Spain drew near to a successful termination, the British government had reason to suspect that the allied powers would next direct their attention to the Spanish colonies with a view to forcing them back to their allegiance or of otherwise disposing of them, that is, by cession to some other European power. It was already in contemplation to call another European congress for the discussion and settlement of this question. As this was a subject of vital interest to the United States, Canning invited the American minister, Mr. Rush, to a conference, August 16, 1823, in which he suggested the expediency of an understanding on this question between England and the United States. He communicated to Mr. Rush the substance of his dispatch of March 31 to Sir Charles Stuart. Mr. Rush said he understood the import of this note to be that England would not remain passive to any attempt on the part of France to acquire territory in Spanish America. Mr. Canning then asked what the United States would say to going hand in hand with England in such a policy. Mr. Rush replied that his instructions did not authorize him to give an answer, but that he would communicate the suggestion informally to his government. At the same time he requested to be enlightened as to England's policy in the matter of recognizing the independence of the colonies. Mr. Canning replied that England had taken no steps in the matter of recognition whatever, but was considering the question of sending commissioners to the colonies to inquire into

¹⁶ Stapleton, "Political Life of Canning," Vol. 11, p. 118.

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the condition of affairs. For the present these commissioners would be sent to Mexico alone.¹⁷

Mr. Stapleton in his "Life of Canning" simply says that as Mr. Rush was not authorized to enter into any formal agreement, Canning thought the delay of communicating with Washington would render such proceeding of no effect, and so the matter was dropped.¹⁸ This, however, we learn from Mr. Rush's dispatches, is not the whole truth. Several communications passed between them after the conversation above given, which throw a totally different light upon the affair.

In an unofficial and confidential letter to Mr. Rush, dated August 20, 1823, Canning asked again if the moment had not arrived when the two governments might come to an understanding in regard to the Spanish-American colonies. He stated the views of England as follows: (1) That the recovery of the colonies by Spain was hopeless; (2) That the question of their recognition as independent states was one of time and circumstances; (3) That England was not disposed, however, to throw any obstacle in the way of an arrangement between the colonies and the mother-country by amicable negotiation; (4) That she aimed at the possession of no portion of the colonies for herself; and (5) That she could not see the transfer of any portion of them to any other power with indifference. He added "that if the United States acceded to such views, a declaration to that effect on their part, concurrently with England, would be the most effectual and least offensive mode of

¹⁷ Rush's "Residence at the Court of London," p. 406.

¹⁸ "Political Life of Canning," Vol. II, p. 24.

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making known their joint disapprobation of contrary projects; that it would at the same time put an end to all jealousies of Spain as to her remaining colonies, and to the agitation prevailing in the colonies themselves by showing that England and the United States were determined not to profit by encouraging it."¹⁹

Prior to the formal recognition of South America, the United States had repeatedly expressed the wish to proceed in the matter hand in hand with Great Britain,²⁰ but that act placed the United States on an altogether different footing from England. Canning seemed to forget in the wording of his proposal that the United States had already, in the most formal manner, acknowledged the independence of the Spanish colonies. In reply Mr. Rush reminded him of this fact and of the desire of the United States to see the colonies recognized by England. In other respects, he believed that the views unfolded by Mr. Canning in his note were shared by the United States, but he added that he had no authority to avow these principles publicly in the manner suggested.

As soon as Rush's first dispatch was received President Monroe realized fully the magnitude of the issue presented by the proposal of an Anglo-American alliance. Before submitting the matter to his cabinet he transmitted copies of the dispatch to ex-Presidents Jefferson and Madison and the following interesting correspondence took place. In his letter to Jefferson of October 17th, the President said:

I transmit to you two despatches which were receiv'd from Mr. Rush, while I was lately in Washington, which

¹⁹ Rush's "Residence at the Court of London," p. 412.

²⁰ "Letters and Despatches of Castlereagh," Vol. XI, p. 458. Bagot's reports of interviews with Adams.

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involve interests of the highest importance. They contain two letters from Mr. Canning, suggesting designs of the holy alliance, against the Independence of S^o. America, & proposing a co-operation, between G. Britain & the U States, in support of it, against the members of that alliance. The project aims, in the first instance, at a mere expression of opinion, somewhat in the abstract, but which, it is expected by Mr. Canning, will have a great political effect, by defcating the combination. By Mr. Rush's answers, which are also enclosed, you will see the light in which he views the subject, & the extent to which he may have gone. Many important considerations are involved in this proposition. 1st Shall we entangle ourselves, at all, in European politicks, & wars, on the side of any power, against others, presuming that a concert, by agreement, of the kind proposed, may lead to that result? 2^d If a case can exist in which a sound maxim may, & ought to be departed from, is not the present instance, precisely that case? 3^d Has not the epoch arriv'd when G. Britain must take her stand, either on the side of the monarchs of Europe, or of the U States, & in consequence, either in favor of Despotism or of liberty & may it not be presum'd that, aware of that necessity, her government has seiz'd on the present occurrence, as that, which it deems, the most suitable, to announce & mark the commenc'ment of that career.

My own impression is that we ought to meet the proposal of the British govt. & to make it known, that we would view an interference on the part of the European powers, and especially an attack on the Colonies, by them, as an attack on ourselves, presuming that, if they succeeded with them, they would extend it to us. I am sensible however of the extent & difficulty of the question, & shall be happy to have yours, & Mr. Madison's opinions on it.²¹

Jefferson's reply dated Monticello, October 24th, displays not only a profound insight into the international situation, but a wide vision of the possibilities involved. He said:

²¹ Hamilton, "Writings of James Monroe," Vol. VI, pp. 323-325.

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The question presented by the letters you have sent me, is the most momentous which has ever been offered to my contemplation since that of Independence. That made us a nation, this sets our compass and points the course which we are to steer through the ocean of time opening on us. And never could we embark on it under circumstances more auspicious. Our first and fundamental maxim should be, never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe. Our second, never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cis-Atlantic affairs. America, North and South, has a set of interests distinct from those of Europe, and peculiarly her own. She should therefore have a system of her own, separate and apart from that of Europe. While the last is laboring to become the domicil of despotism, our endeavor should surely be, to make our hemisphere that of freedom. One nation, most of all, could disturb us in this pursuit; she now offers to lead, aid, and accompany us in it. By acceding to her proposition, we detach her from the bands, bring her mighty weight into the scale of free government, and emancipate a continent at one stroke, which might otherwise linger long in doubt and difficulty. Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of any one, or all on earth; and with her on our side we need not fear the whole world. With her then, we should most sedulously cherish a cordial friendship; and nothing would tend more to knit our affections than to be fighting once more, side by side, in the same cause. Not that I would purchase even her amity at the price of taking part in her wars. But the war in which the present proposition might engage us, should that be its consequence, is not her war, but ours. Its object is to introduce and establish the American system, of keeping out of our land all foreign powers, of never permitting those of Europe to intermeddle with the affairs of our nations. It is to maintain our own principle, not to depart from it. And if, to facilitate this, we can effect a division in the body of the European powers, and draw over to our side its most powerful member, surely we should do it. But I am clearly of Mr. Canning's opinion, that it will prevent instead of provoking war. With Great Britain withdrawn from their scale and shifted into that of

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our two continents, all Europe combined would not undertake such a war. For how would they propose to get at either enemy without superior fleets? Nor is the occasion to be slighted which this proposition offers, of declaring our protest against the atrocious violations of the rights of nations, by the interference of any one in the internal affairs of another, so flagitiously begun by Bonaparte, and now continued by the equally lawless Alliance, calling itself Holy.²²

Madison not only agreed with Jefferson as to the wisdom of accepting the British proposal of some form of joint action, but he went even further and suggested that the declaration should not be limited to the American republics, but that it should express disapproval of the late invasion of Spain and of any interference with the Greeks, who were then struggling for independence from Turkey.²³ Monroe, it appears, was strongly inclined to act on Madison's suggestion, but his cabinet took a different view of the situation. From the diary of John Quincy Adams, Monroe's secretary of state, it appears that almost the whole of November was taken up by cabinet discussions on Canning's proposals and on Russia's aggressions in the northwest. Adams stoutly opposed any alliance or joint declaration with Great Britain. The composition of the President's message remained in doubt until the 21st, when the more conservative views of Adams were, according to his own statement of the case, adopted. He advocated an independent course of action on the part of the United States, without direct reference to Canning's proposals, though substantially in accord with them. Adams defined his

²² Ford, "Writings of Thomas Jefferson," Vol. X, pp 277-278.

²³ Hamilton, "Writings of James Madison," Vol. IX, pp. 161-162.

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position as follows: "The ground that I wish to take is that of earnest remonstrance against the interference of the European powers by force with South America, but to disclaim all interference on our part with Europe; to make an American cause and adhere inflexibly to that."²⁴ Adams's dissent from Monroe's position was, it is claimed, due partly to the influence of Clay, who advocated a Pan American system, partly to the fact that the proposed coöperation with Great Britain would bind the United States not to acquire some of the coveted parts of the Spanish possessions, and partly to the fear that the United States as the ally of Great Britain would be compelled to play a secondary part. He probably carried his point by showing that the same ends could be accomplished by an independent declaration, since it was evident that the sea power of Great Britain would be used to prevent the reconquest of South America by the European powers. Monroe, as we have seen, thought that the exigencies of the situation justified a departure from the sound maxim of political isolation, and in this opinion he was supported by his two predecessors in the presidency.

The opinions of Monroe, Jefferson, and Madison in favor of an alliance with Great Britain and a broad declaration against the intervention of the great powers in the affairs of weaker states in any part of the world, have been severely criticised by some historians and ridiculed by others, but time and circumstances often bring about a complete change in our point of view. Since our entrance into the great world conflict several writers have raised the question

²⁴ W. C. Ford, "Genesis of the Monroe Doctrine," in *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proceedings*, second series, Vol. XV, p. 392.

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as to whether the three elder statesmen were not right and Adams and Clay wrong.²⁵ If the United States and England had come out in favor of a general declaration against intervention in the concerns of small states and established it as a world-wide principle, the course of human history during the next century might have been very different, but Adams's diary does not tell the whole story. On his own statement of the case he might be justly censured by posterity for persuading the President to take a narrow American view of a question which was world-wide in its bearing. An important element in the situation, however, was Canning's change of attitude between the time of his conference with Rush in August and the formulation of the President's message. Two days after the delivery of his now famous message Monroe wrote to Jefferson in explanation of the form the declaration had taken: "Mr. Canning's zeal has much abated of late." It appears from Rush's correspondence that the only thing which stood in the way of joint action by the two powers was Canning's unwillingness to extend immediate recognition to the South American republics. On August 27th, Rush stated to Canning that it would greatly facilitate joint action if England would acknowledge at once the full independence of the South American colonies. In communicating the account of this interview to his government Mr. Rush concluded:

Should I be asked by Mr. Canning, whether, in case the recognition be made by Great Britain without more delay, I am on my part prepared to make a declaration, in the name of my government, that it will not remain inactive under

²⁵ See especially G. L. Beer, "The English-Speaking Peoples," p. 79.

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an attack upon the independence of those states by the Holy Alliance, the present determination of my judgment is that I will make such a declaration explicitly, and avow it before the world.²⁶

About three weeks later Canning, who was growing restless at the delay in hearing from Washington, again urged Rush to act without waiting for specific instructions from his government. He tried to show that the proposed joint declaration would not conflict with the American policy of avoiding entangling alliances, for the question at issue was American as much as European, if not more. Rush then indicated his willingness to act provided England would "immediately and unequivocally acknowledge the independence of the new states." Canning did not care to extend full recognition to the South American states until he could do so without giving unnecessary offense to Spain and the allies, and he asked if Mr. Rush could not give his assent to the proposal on a promise of future recognition. Mr. Rush refused to accede to anything but immediate acknowledgment of independence and so the matter ended.²⁷ As Canning could not come to a formal understanding with the United States, he determined to make a frank avowal of the views of the British cabinet to France and to this end he had an interview with Prince Polignac, the French ambassador at London, October 9, 1823, in which he declared that Great Britain had no desire to hasten recognition, but that any foreign interference, by force, or by menace, would be a motive for immediate recognition; that England "could not go

²⁶ Rush's "Residence at the Court of London," p. 419.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 429, 443.

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into a joint deliberation upon the subject of Spanish America upon an equal footing with other powers, whose opinions were less formed upon that question." This declaration drew from Polignac the admission that he considered the reduction of the colonies by Spain as hopeless and that France "abjured in any case, any design of acting against the colonies by force of arms."²⁸ This admission was a distinct victory for Canning, in that it prepared the way for ultimate recognition by England, and an account of the interview was communicated without delay to the allied courts. The interview was not communicated to Rush until the latter part of November, and therefore had no influence upon the formation of Monroe's message of December 2.²⁹

Before the close of the year the British government appointed consuls to the South American states, and about the time of their departure, an invitation was sent to the courts of St. Petersburg, Paris, and Vienna to a conference to be held at Paris to "aid Spain in adjusting the affairs of the revolted colonies." A copy of this invitation was also handed to the British ambassador at Madrid, but in such a form as to leave him in doubt as to whether his government was invited to the conference or not.³⁰ While the discussion as to the proposed conference was going on and before Canning had announced what action his government would take in the matter, President Monroe's message arrived in Europe.

Spanish America was not the only part of the western continent threatened at this time by European

²⁸ "Political Life of Canning," Vol. II, p. 26.

²⁹ Rush's "Residence at the Court of London," p. 448.

³⁰ "Political Life of Canning," Vol. II, p. 33.

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aggression. On the 4th of September, 1821, the emperor of Russia had issued an ukase, in which he claimed the northwestern coast of North America down to the 51st degree. This claim was incompatible with the pretensions of both England and the United States, and was stoutly opposed by them. This was a part of the territory known as the Oregon country, which continued in dispute between England and the United States until 1846. In July, 1823, Adams declared to Baron Tuvill, the Russian minister to the United States, "that we should contest the right of Russia to any territorial establishment on this continent, and that we should assume distinctly the principle that the American continents are no longer subjects for any new European colonial establishments." This language was incorporated substantially in the President's message.

The Monroe Doctrine is comprised in two widely separated paragraphs that occur in the message of December 2, 1823. The first, relating to Russia's encroachments on the northwest coast, and occurring near the beginning of the message, was an assertion to the effect that the American continents had assumed an independent condition and were no longer open to European colonization. This may be regarded as a statement of fact. No part of the continent at that time remained unclaimed. The second paragraph relating to Spanish America and occurring near the close of the message, was a declaration against the extension to the American continents of the system of intervention adopted by the Holy Alliance for the suppression of popular government in Europe.

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The language used by President Monroe is as follows :

1. At the proposal of the Russian Imperial Government, made through the minister of the emperor residing here, a full power and instructions have been transmitted to the minister of the United States at St. Petersburg to arrange by amicable negotiation the respective rights and interests of the two nations on the northwest coast of this continent. A similar proposal had been made by His Imperial Majesty to the government of Great Britain, which has likewise been acceded to. The government of the United States has been desirous by this friendly proceeding of manifesting the great value which they have invariably attached to the friendship of the emperor and their solicitude to cultivate the best understanding with his government. In the discussions to which this interest has given rise and in the arrangements by which they may terminate, the occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.³¹

2. In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy so to do. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense. With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers. The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America. This difference proceeds from that which exists in their respective governments; and to the defense of our own, which has been achieved by the loss of so much blood and treasure, and matured by the wisdom of their most enlightened citizens, and under which

³¹ "Messages and Papers of the Presidents," Vol. II, p. 209.

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we have enjoyed unexampled felicity, this whole nation is devoted. We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. In the war between those new governments and Spain we declared our neutrality at the time of their recognition, and to this we have adhered, and shall continue to adhere, provided no change shall occur which, in the judgment of the competent authorities of this government, shall make a corresponding change on the part of the United States indispensable to their security.²²

The President's message reached England while the discussion in regard to the proposed congress at Paris was still going on. It was received with enthusiasm by the liberal members of Parliament. Lord Brougham said:

The question with regard to South America is now, I believe, disposed of, or nearly so; for an event has recently happened than which none has ever dispersed greater joy, exultation, and gratitude over all the free men of Europe: that event, which is decisive on the subject, is the language held with respect to Spanish America in the message of the President of the United States.

²² "Messages and Papers of the Presidents," Vol. II, p. 218.

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Sir James Mackintosh said :

This coincidence of the two great English commonwealths (for so I delight to call them; and I heartily pray that they may be forever united in the cause of justice and liberty) cannot be contemplated without the utmost pleasure by every enlightened citizen of the earth."¹¹

They evidently had reference to the second clause alone, the one relating to Spanish America. The other clause, the one against European colonization in America, seems not to have attracted much attention. Canning, however, saw the bearing of it and objected to the principle it set forth, which was directed against England as much as against the allies. He was evidently a little taken aback at the turn his proposal had taken. The President's message really settled the question before Canning had announced what action his government would take. Some little chagrin is apparent in the tone of his letter to Sir William à Court, British minister at Madrid, December 21, 1823.

While I was yet hesitating [he says], what shape to give to the declaration and protest which ultimately was conveyed in my conference with P. de Polignac, and while I was more doubtful as to the effect of that protest and declaration, I sounded Mr. Rush (the American minister here) as to his powers and disposition to join in any step which we might take to prevent a hostile enterprise on the part of the European powers against Spanish America. He had no powers; but he would have taken upon himself to join with us if we would have begun by recognizing the Spanish-American states. This we could not do, and so we went on without. But I have no doubt that his report to his government of this *sounding*, which he probably represented as an over-

¹¹ "Wharton's Digest," Sec. 57, Vol. I, p. 276.

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ture, had a great share in producing the explicit declaration of the President."

The conference with Prince Polignac here referred to was that of October 9th quoted above. It was not until after the receipt of President Monroe's message in Europe that Canning framed his answer to the Spanish communication informing him of the proposed meeting in Paris for the discussion of the South American question. In that reply he stated to the Spanish government very fully his views upon the question at issue. He said that while England did not wish to precede Spain in the matter of recognition, yet she reserved to herself the privilege of recognizing the colonies when she deemed it best for her interests and right to them. He said that these views had been communicated fully from time to time to the powers invited to the congress and he concluded with the statement: "It does not appear to the British cabinet at all necessary to declare that opinion anew, even if it were perfectly clear (from the tenor of M. Ofalia's instruction) that Great Britain was in fact included in the invitation to the conference at Paris."⁸⁵

While Canning and Monroe acted independently of each other, the expression that each gave to the views of his government was rendered more emphatic and of more effect by the knowledge of the other's attitude in the matter. Another point to be noted is that Monroe's message was made public, while Canning's answer was for some time known only to the diplomatic corps.

The determination of both England and the United

⁸⁵ "Wharton's Digest," Sec. 57, Vol. I, p. 272.

⁸⁶ "Political Life of Canning," Vol. II, p. 42.

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States to oppose the intervention of the allies in South America had the desired effect. Conferences in answer to the invitation of Spain were held in Paris, but they were participated in only by the ordinary representatives of the powers invited, resident in that capital, and their only result was to advise Spain not to listen to the counsels of England.

All further discussion that took place between England and Spain in reference to recognition of the colonies by Great Britain was confined to the status of the revolutionary governments, and upon this point their views were so divergent that Canning finally announced to the Spanish government that, "His Majesty would, at his own time, take such steps as he might think proper in respect to the several states of Spanish America without further reference to the court of Madrid; but at the same time without any feeling of alienation towards that court, or of hostility towards the real interests of Spain."⁸⁰

The French troops continuing to occupy Spain after the time stipulated by treaty, Canning sought an explanation from France, but without satisfactory results. He therefore determined at a cabinet meeting held December 14, 1824, to recognize Mexico and Colombia forthwith. On January 1, 1825, after the ministers had left England with instructions and full powers, the fact of recognition was communicated officially to the diplomatic corps and two days later it was made public. That this recognition was a retaliatory measure to compensate England for the French occupation of Spain was understood at the time and was distinctly avowed by Canning two years

⁸⁰ "Political Life of Canning," Vol. II, p. 54.

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later.⁸⁷ In a speech delivered December 12, 1826, in defense of his position in not having arrested the French invasion of Spain, he said:

I looked another way—I sought for compensation in another hemisphere. Contemplating Spain, such as our ancestors had known her, I resolved that, if France had Spain, it should not be Spain *with the Indies*. I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old.

In spite of the great indebtedness of South America to Canning, this boast falls somewhat flat when we remember that the Spanish colonies had won their independence by their own valor and had been recognized as independent governments by the United States two years before Great Britain acted in the matter.

Mr. Stapleton, Canning's private secretary and biographer, says that the recognition of Spanish-American independence was, perhaps, the most important measure adopted by the British cabinet while Canning was at the head of the foreign office. He sums up the reasons and results of the act as follows:

First, it was a measure essentially advantageous to British interests; being especially calculated to benefit our commerce. Next, it enabled this country to remain at peace, since it compensated us for the continued occupation of Spain by a French force, a disparagement to which, otherwise, it would not have become us to submit. Lastly, it maintained the balance between conflicting principles; since it gave just so much of a triumph to popular rights and privileges, as was sufficient to soothe the irritation felt by their advocates at the victory, which absolute principles had obtained by the over-

⁸⁷ "Official Corresp. of Canning," Vol. II, p. 242. Letter to Granville. On the general question of recognition, see "Life of Lord Liverpool," Vol. III, pp. 297-304.

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throw of the constitutions of Spain, Portugal, and Naples; and it dealt a death-blow to the Holy Alliance, by disabusing its members of the strange fancy, with which they were prepossessed, that the differences between them and the British ministers (where they did differ) were merely feints on the part of the latter to avoid a conflict with public opinion.³⁸

The United States government did not relax its efforts in behalf of the South American states with the recognition of England, but continued to exert itself in order to secure the acknowledgment of their independence by the other powers of Europe, particularly Spain.³⁹ Mr. Clay tried to get the other members of the alliance, especially the emperor of Russia, to use their good offices with Spain for the purpose of inducing her to recognize her late colonies, but the emperor of Russia, the head of the alliance, continued to preach to Spain "not only no recognition of their independence, but active war for their subjugation." To the request of the United States he replied that, out of respect for "the indisputable titles of sovereignty," he could not prejudice or anticipate the determination of the king of Spain.⁴⁰ It was some ten years before Spain could be persuaded to renounce her ancient claims.

³⁸ "Political Life of Canning," Vol. II, p. 1.

³⁹ Am. St. Papers, For. Rel., Vol. V, pp. 794-796, and Vol. VI, pp. 1006-1014.

⁴⁰ Am. St. Papers, For. Rel., Vol. V, p. 850 ff.