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JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE

I.

IN one of his essays Hazlitt describes an old English mystery play in which Adam is introduced, crossing the stage, on his way to be created. Was I to undertake the same representation of the earliest form of that political dogma or belief that later became known as the Monroe doctrine, I might easily fall into the same violation of dramatic unities. Scattered phrases in the writings of the political leaders of the early years of the republic might easily lend themselves to an interpretation according to later events. The policy of political isolation so solemnly enjoined in the farewell address of Washington, the uniform practice of a strict neutrality, and the diplomatic wishes and negotiations of Jefferson and Madison were so many distinct threads, which were to be gathered in support of a manly independence and almost indifference to European movements. My task is really a restricted one, and covers the events of less than four months of the year 1823. I intend to show how a question which arose as a distinctly European question was changed to an American matter; how it was altered from one pertaining solely to the relations between the United States and England to one that concerned our relations with all Europe; and, finally, the part borne by John Quincy Adams in reaching a determination.

Something must be said of the conditions existing in 1823 bearing upon the problem which the Monroe doctrine was to solve. Europe was under the control of the Holy Alliance. Originally formed by a combination of Austria, Prussia, Russia and Great Britain to administer upon the wreck of Napoleon's ambitions, the Alliance was continued as a police body, to assure the peace of the civilized world. France had now joined it, and to attain the ends of the union a full and combined support was to be given to legitimate or monarchial governments as against any revolutionary movement originating from the people. Starting from the doctrine of the divine right of kings, it was easy to reach the conclusion that the rule of a legitimate monarch was not to be questioned, and in short, monarchy was the only form of government which could not be reformed or improved. A policy of this nature, supported by force and applied with all the horrors of war, could not well appeal

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to the English government. In the first case to be thus treated, the Neapolitan revolution, England protested against the Alliance making it a common question. Let it be Austrian, because Austrian interests were vitally concerned; but it should not be European. Her protests were unheeded, and an Austrian army acting for the Holy Alliance, ruthlessly crushed the popular movement in Naples and in Piedmont.

When the Spanish affairs called for notice in 1822, the King had been forced to accept the constitution of 1812, and the members of the Alliance believed the peace of Europe was threatened. Great Britain first sought to act as a mediator, but her offered services were not accepted. The Congress of Verona determined to restore Ferdinand to his throne, untrammelled by any constitution, and to France was given the congenial task. Spanish interests, however, were not confined to Europe. Her possessions in South America had for some time been in rebellion against her, and the United States alone had recognized their independence and accorded to them the rights of independent nations. If legitimacy was to be restored and maintained in Spain, no great stretch of the imagination was needed to believe that the Alliance, having accomplished its task in Spain, would extend its principles to Spanish America, and seek to restore the authority of Spain. The same idea might be pushed even further. As the great example of a successful democratic revolution, the United States could hardly have been pleasing to the Holy Alliance, and the more timid were ready to picture an invasion of this country by the combined European powers.

As a fact Great Britain offered a barrier to any such movement against either South or North America. Not only had the difference which showed itself in the Naples incident been greatly widened by the French invasion of Spain, but the price of obtaining the support of England could not be paid by the Allies. Firmly opposed to the attempt of the Alliance to regulate the internal concerns of a neighboring sovereign state, and disapproving the idea of imposing upon Spain the unrestricted rule of a monarch like Ferdinand, her ministers had held aloof from the movement, and adopted an attitude of a strict and undeviating neutrality, a neutrality not liable to alteration towards either party, so long as the honor and just interests of Great Britain were equally respected by both. Beyond a formal protest the British Cabinet would not go. Commercial interests and the wish to stand well with the Holy Alliance dictated its conduct in this affair, and the English people were thus apparently arrayed on the side of despotism.

Yet England did entertain some apprehension of the intentions

of the French government. Cuba was still a colony loyal to Spain, but was a prize worthy attention. There could be no objection to the island's remaining in Spanish possession; it was at the thought that the United States or France might covet it, that the head of the English ministry was alarmed. In November, 1822, Canning laid before the Cabinet a memorandum suggesting that "important as the interests may be which are now in discussion at Verona, yet, in the present state of the world, no questions relating to continental Europe can be more immediately and vitally important to Great Britain than those which relate to America." English commerce was suffering from outrages inflicted by the subjects of Spain, as well as from pirates and marauders "who bear no national character, and for whom no Government is answerable," meaning the Spanish possessions in America. These conditions had obliged the admiralty to afford convoy to merchant vessels trading to the ports of the Colombian republic. "Convoy in time of peace!" exclaimed Canning, "and against the attacks of a nation with which we are professedly in amity!" What a preposterous position for the first maritime power of the world! The attitude of the United States in recognizing the *de facto* independence of the Spanish colonies, in claiming a right to trade with them, and in avenging any interruption of the exercise of that right, implied a more straightforward course, and presented itself before the world a more intelligible position, than did the conduct of Great Britain.

There was a danger that the United States in pursuing this policy would make a military occupation of Cuba a part of the system of security against further depredations on American vessels. Canning claimed to have information giving countenance and probability to a rumored occupation of Cuba by the United States. "It may be questioned," he continued, "whether any blow that could be struck by any foreign Power in any part of the world, would have a more sensible effect on the interests of this country, and on the reputation of its Government." He therefore proposed to send a strong fleet to the Caribbean Sea to put an end to the depredations from pirates, and to check any intentions the United States might have upon Cuba. He also raised the question whether the time had not come for recognizing in some manner the Spanish colonies. "Spain and her colonial empire are altogether separated *de facto*. 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."¹ Had it not been for the internal disturbances of Spain

¹The "Memorandum" is printed in Stapleton, *Some Correspondence of George Canning*, I. 48.

and its invasion from France, there is every reason to believe that Great Britain would have recognized the South American republics at this time.

This was not to be, and when the armies of France entered Spain Canning sought to obtain some expression from France as to Spanish territory. A permanent occupation of Spain was out of the question, but the conqueror might demand compensation in the colonies. So Canning laid down the position of Great Britain on another interesting matter:—

“With respect to the Provinces in America, which have thrown off their allegiance to the Crown of Spain, time and the course of events appear to have substantially decided their separation from the Mother Country; although the formal recognition of these Provinces, as Independent States, by His Majesty, may be hastened or retarded by various external circumstances, as well as by the more or less satisfactory progress, in each State, towards a regular and settled form of Government. Disclaiming in the most solemn manner any intention of appropriating to Himself the smallest portion of the late Spanish possessions in America, His Majesty is satisfied that no attempt will be made by France, to bring under her dominion any of those possessions, either by conquest, or by cession, from Spain.”¹

If Canning's purpose was to elicit a similar pledge from France it was not successful, and the possibility remained that Cuba might be offered to France and accepted, as indemnity or as spoils of war. Thus the apprehension of Canning remained unallayed, and the Cuban question persisted to color his relations with France and the United States.

Nor were such apprehensions respecting Cuba confined to Canning. At the very time he was preparing his interrogatory disclaimer for France, Monroe and his cabinet were considering the possibility of Great Britain's taking Cuba. Calhoun was for war with England, if she meant to take Cuba, a proposition so very general that the mere statement of Adams that the United States could not prevent such a seizure or cession was a sufficient answer. Monroe wished to offer to Great Britain a mutual promise not to take Cuba. A course so unnecessary and objectionable met with little favor at the hands of his advisers. Calhoun opposed it because nothing would be gained by it, and Adams thought it would involve a plunge into European politics. Calhoun did not readily change his opinion, and he merely moved his ground so as to be in favor of war with England, if she wanted to take Cuba against the wishes of the islanders. The doctrine of the consent of the governed would have sounded strange at that time in any language but English; it would have sounded strange uttered anywhere on English terri-

¹ George Canning to Sir Charles Stuart, March 31, 1823.

tory. In a despatch to Hugh Nelson, the American minister in Spain, dated April 28, 1823, Adams stated the position of the administration as to Cuba.

“You will not conceal from the Spanish Government the repugnance of the United States to the transfer of the Island of Cuba by Spain, to any other power. The deep interest which would to them be involved in the event gives them the right of objecting against it; and as the People of the Island itself are known to be averse to it, the right of Spain herself to make the cession, at least upon the principles on which the present Spanish constitution is founded, is more than questionable. Informal and verbal communications on this subject with the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs will be most advisable. In casual conversation, and speaking as from your own impressions, you may suggest the hope, that if any question of transferring the Island to any other Power is or shall be in agitation, it will not be withheld from your knowledge or from ours; that the condition of Cuba cannot be changed without affecting in an eminent degree the welfare of this Union, and consequently the good Understanding between us and Spain. That we should consider an attempt to transfer the Island, against the Will of its Inhabitants, as subversive of their rights, no less than of our interests; and that, as it would give them the perfect right of resisting such transfer, by declaring their own Independence, so if they should, under those circumstances, resort to that measure, the United States will be fully justified in supporting them to carry it into effect.”¹

The military progress of France in Spain was approaching an end, and the invaders had met with so little opposition that they could count upon a final success in all their endeavors. Canning's apprehensions as to Cuba returned, and having received no direct assurances from France in answer to his veiled question on her possible ambitions for territory in America, he turned to the United States. Whether this was a studied intention or a sudden impulse is, to me, a matter of doubt. That Cuba, and its possible transfer by Spain to another power, were in Canning's thoughts, is certain; but it is by no means certain that he took the initiative. Rush had been urging him to recognize the South American states, and only an extreme caution prevented him from taking the suggestion. Had he been entirely disinterested he could have entertained no doubt that the simplest and surest means of obtaining the support, even the alliance, of the United States was to announce openly what had been tacitly conceded, that the late Spanish colonies were indeed independent states. Canning's mind was more at ease when it spoke with a reservation, and the indirect course was adopted in this instance.

On August 16th Rush had an interview with Canning on the negotiations pending between the two countries, of which the South American situation formed no part. Near the close of the con-

¹ Adams's Instructions to Hugh Nelson, April 28, 1823. Adams's MSS.

versation Rush "transiently asked," whether there was not room to hope that the Spaniards might get the better of all their troubles, but received only a general reply. Pursuing the subject Rush intimated that should France ultimately effect her purpose of overthrowing the constitutional government in Spain, there was at least the consolation that Great Britain would not allow her to go further and lay her hands upon the Spanish colonies, or stop the progress of their emancipation. What Rush had in mind, and what he wished to recall to Canning's memory, were the sentiments expressed by the British premier in March, when writing to his representative in Paris—that the recognition of the Spanish colonies as independent nations might be hastened or retarded according to circumstances; and that England disclaimed all intention of appropriating the smallest portion of the late Spanish possessions in America. By this was to be understood, in terms sufficiently distinct, that Great Britain would not be passive under such an attempt by France. Canning, in reply, asked Rush what

"I thought my government would say to going hand in hand with this, in the same sentiment; not as he added that any concert in action under it, could become necessary between the two countries, but that the simple fact of our being known to hold the same sentiment would, he had no doubt, by its moral effect, put down the intention on the part of France, admitting that she should ever entertain it. This belief was founded he said upon the large share of the maritime power of the world which Great Britain and the United States shared between them, and the consequent influence which the knowledge that they held a common opinion upon a question on which such large maritime interests, present and future, hung, could not fail to produce upon the rest of the world. . . .

"Reverting to his first idea he again said, that he hoped that France would not, should even events in the Peninsula be favorable to her, extend her views to South America for the purpose of reducing the colonies, nominally perhaps for Spain, but in effect to subserve ends of her own; but that in case she should meditate such a policy, he was satisfied that the knowledge of the United States being opposed to it as well as Great Britain, could not fail to have its influence in checking her steps. In this way he thought good might be done by prevention, and peaceful prospects all round increased. As to the form in which such knowledge might be made to reach France, and even the other powers of Europe, he said in conclusion that that might probably be arranged in a manner that would be free from objection."¹

This talk was not only interesting in itself, but it was the first advance of that character that had ever been made by the British to the American government, in relation to the foreign affairs between the two nations. Rush was guarded in his answer, expressing no opinion in favor of the suggestions, yet abstaining as carefully from saying anything against them. He could merely promise

¹ Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, August 19, 1823.

to lay them before his government. To Adams he expressed the inference that Canning's proposition was "a fortuitous one; yet he entered into it I thought with some interest."¹

Four days later, on August 20th, Canning embodied these points in a private and confidential note.

"Is not the moment come when our Governments might understand each other as to the Spanish American Colonies? And if we can arrive at such an understanding, would it not be expedient for ourselves, and beneficial for all the world, that the principles of it should be clearly settled and plainly avowed?"

"For ourselves we have no disguise.

1. We conceive the recovery of the Colonies by Spain to be hopeless.
2. We conceive the question of the recognition of them, as Independent States, to be one of time and circumstances.
3. We are, however, by no means disposed to throw any impediment in the way of an arrangement between them and the mother country by amicable negotiations.
4. We aim not at the possession of any portion of them ourselves.
5. We could not see any portion of them transferred to any other Power with indifference.

"If these opinions and feelings are as I firmly believe them to be, common to your Government with ours, why should we hesitate mutually to confide them to each other; and to declare them in the face of the world?"

"If there be any European Power which cherishes other projects, which looks to a forcible enterprize for reducing the colonies to subjugation, on the behalf or in the name of Spain; or which meditates the acquisition of any part of them to itself, by cession or by conquest; such a declaration on the part of your government and ours would be at once the most effectual and the least offensive mode of intimating our joint disapprobation of such projects.

"It would at the same time put an end to all the jealousies of Spain with respect to her remaining Colonies, and to agitation which prevails in those Colonies, an agitation which it would be but humane to allay; being determined (as we are) not to profit by encouraging it.

"Do you conceive that under the power which you have recently received, you are authorized to enter into negotiation and to sign any Convention upon this subject? Do you conceive, if that be not within your competence, you could exchange with me ministerial notes upon it?"

"Nothing could be more gratifying to me than to join with you in such a work, and, I am persuaded, there has seldom, in the history of the world, occurred an opportunity when so small an effort of two friendly Governments might produce so unequivocal a good and prevent such extensive calamities."

Rush sent to Washington a copy of this note in his despatch No. 325, dated August 23d.² Believing that Canning's note showed earnestness and cordiality towards the government of the United States, he wished to meet its suggestion in such a manner as not to compromise his government with either France or Spain, or to im-

¹ Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, August 19, 1823. The despatch is summarized in Rush's *Memoranda*, 399-404.

² Printed in Rush's *Memoranda*, 415.

plicate it in any degree in the federative system of Europe. The only point that could not be accepted by the United States was Canning's second, merely because the United States had already recognized the full independence of the South American states.

Rush had barely sent off his despatch when he received another "private and confidential" note from Canning, dated at Liverpool, mentioning an additional motive for coming to a speedy determination.

GEORGE CANNING TO RICHARD RUSH.

Private and confidential.

LIVERPOOL, August 23, 1823.

MY DEAR SIR,—Since I wrote to you on the 20th, an additional motive has occurred for wishing that we might be able to come to some understanding on the part of our respective Governments on the subject of my letter; to come to it soon, and to be at liberty to announce it to the world.

It is this. I have received notice, but not such a notice as imposes upon me the necessity of any immediate answer or proceeding—that so soon as the military objects in Spain are achieved (of which the French expect, how justly I know not, a very speedy achievement) a proposal will be made for a Congress, or some less formal concert and consultation, specially upon the affairs of Spanish America.

I need not point out to you all the complications to which this proposal, however dealt with by us, may lead.

Pray receive this communication in the same confidence with the former; and believe me with great truth

My Dear Sir, and esteem,

Your obedient and faithful servant,

(Signed) GEO. CANNING.

The proposition to convene a congress of European powers to consider American affairs, with or without the presence and participation of the United States, was one that could not be acceptable to the American minister, much less so to the government he represented. It did not require any instructions from Washington to characterize the proposed congress as an uncalled for measure, one indicative of a policy highly unfriendly to the tranquillity of the world. The United States could not look "with insensibility upon such an exercise of European jurisdiction over communities now of right exempt from it, and entitled to regulate their own concerns unmolested from abroad." If Great Britain would recognize this independence, Rush would make a declaration, "in the name of my Government, that it will not remain inactive under an attack upon the independence of those States by the Holy Alliance," making it explicitly, and avowing it before the world.¹

It will now be necessary to pass to the United States, where Rush's three despatches and their enclosures arrived at the Depart-

¹ Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, August 28, 1823. The despatch (No. 326) is printed in Rush's *Memoranda*, 420.

ment of State, October 9th. Unfortunately the *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* are silent from September 11th, when the writer was at Quincy, to November 7th, nearly a month after Canning's advances had become known to the President. We have, therefore, no record of the first impressions they made upon Monroe and his Cabinet. Two days after their receipt Monroe asked for copies of them, and these he took with him into Virginia, when he went to his country-seat for a rest. His object was to ask advice from Jefferson and Madison, to whom he sent the copies without informing Adams that he had taken this somewhat unusual and indiscreet step. For a disclosure of the papers would have greatly embarrassed the Secretary of State, and destroyed the usefulness of Rush in London, not to speak of the unfortunate position Monroe himself would have occupied. His letter to Jefferson expressed his doubts and suggested a possible policy to be pursued; but a careful reading fails to develop a decided opinion on his part. He would meet the proposal of the British government, and hints in no doubtful manner that the occasion may be a fair one for departing from the "sound maxim" of political isolation.

MONROE TO JEFFERSON.

OAKHILL October 17th 1823

DEAR SIR,—I transmit to you two despatches. which were receiv'd from Mr. Rush, while I was lately in Washington, which 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, and proposing a cooperation, between G. Britain and the U States, in support of i, 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 defeating the combination. By Mr. Rush's answers, which are also inclosed, you will see the light in which he views the subject, and 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, and 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, and 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, and in consequence, either in favor of Despotism or of liberty and 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 and mark the commencement of that career.

My own impression is that we ought to meet the proposal of the British gov^t, and 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, and difficulty of the question, and shall be happy to have yours, and Mr. Madison's opinions on it. I do not wish to trouble either of you with small objects, but the present one is vital, involving the high interests, for which we have so long and so faithfully, and harmoniously, contended together. Be so kind as to enclose to him the despatches, with an intimation of the motive. With great respect etc

JAMES MONROE

Recd Oct 23¹

Both Jefferson and Madison were in favor of accepting Canning's advances, as by that means Great Britain would be separated from the Holy Alliance. Madison was the more radical in favoring some material aid to Spain and Greece in their contests against combined Europe. This sentimental idea is not sufficient to convict Madison of "playing politics," for he had run his public career, and had nothing in the future. There can be no doubt, however, that others were urging such a policy because they knew it would be popular with the United States. The picture of a people struggling for liberty appealed strongly to leading members of both political parties; and the "witchery" of the South American question was nearly repeated in the Greek problem.

While Monroe was in Virginia an incident happened which led to the injection into this question of the South American states of a new factor—Russia. Baron de Tuvill, the Russian minister at Washington, called upon the Secretary of State on October 16th, and informed him that his master, the Emperor, would not receive any minister or agent from any of the governments recently formed in the new world. While he had not been instructed to make an official communication of this fact to the American government, he was instructed to make this determination of the Emperor known, so that there might no doubt be entertained with regard to his intentions. He also made a verbal expression of the satisfaction with which the Emperor had observed that the government of the United States, in recognizing the independence of the South American states, had declared its intention to persevere in that neutrality it had hitherto observed. The minister said he would address a note to Mr. Adams, officially informing him of the Emperor's position as to diplomatic or consular agents from South America. The Secretary of State observed in reply, that upon the President's return from Virginia he "would lay before him, as well the Note, which I should in the meantime receive from the Baron, as the purport of the oral communication which he then made to me. That I should probably be instructed

¹ From the Jefferson MSS.

to return a written answer to his Note, and that I should also be directed what to say in answer to his verbal remarks. That the Declaration of the American Government when they recognized the Southern American Nations, that they would persevere in the neutrality till then observed between Spain and her emancipated Colonies, had been made under the observance of a like neutrality by all the European Powers to the same contest. That so long as that state of things should continue, I could take upon me to assure the Baron, that the United States would not depart from the neutrality so declared by them. But that if one or more of the European powers should depart from their neutrality, that change of circumstances would necessarily become a subject of further deliberation in this Government, the result of which it was not in my power to foretell."

On the same day the promised official note was received from the minister :

" Sa Majesté Impériale a enjoint à son Ministre de me prévenir, que, fidèle aux principes politiques, qu'Elle suit de concert avec ses alliés, Elle ne pourra dans aucun cas recevoir auprès d'Elle aucun agent quelconque, soit de la Régence de Colombia, soit d'aucun des autres Gouvernemens de fait, qui doivent leur existence aux événemens, dont le nouveau monde a été depuis quelques années le théâtre."

Monroe returned from Virginia November 5th. Two days earlier despatches had been received from Rush showing an extraordinary change in Canning's tone. He was no longer pressing for a reply to his advances ; he was decidedly cool, and showed plainly that he was not prepared to give the pledge of an immediate recognition of the independence of the South American states, the pledge which alone would enable Rush to enter into his proposed joint announcement of policy. His note was couched in diplomatic language, but left little doubt of his altered disposition.

(*Enclosure with Mr. Rush's No. 330, September 8, 1823.*)

GEORGE CANNING TO RICHARD RUSH.

Private and Confidential.

STORRS, WESTMORLAND, Aug. 31, 1823.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have now to acknowledge the receipt of your answer to both my letters ; and whatever may be the practical result of our confidential communication, it is an unmixed satisfaction to me that the spirit in which it began on my part, has been met so cordially on yours.

To a practical result eminently beneficial I see no obstacle ; except in your want of specific powers, and in the delay which may intervene before you can procure them ; and during which events may get before us.

Had you felt yourself authorized to entertain any formal proposition, and to decide upon it, without reference home, I would immediately have taken measures for assembling my Colleagues in London, upon my return, in order to be enabled to submit to you as the *act* of my government, all that I have stated to you as my own *sentiments* and theirs. But with such a delay in prospect, I think I should hardly be justified in proposing to bind ourselves to any thing positively and unconditionally ; and think on the other hand that a proposition qualified either in respect to the con-

tingency of your concurrence in it, or with reference to possible change of circumstances, would want the decision and frankness which I should wish to mark our proceeding.

Not that I anticipate any change of circumstances, which could vary the views opened to you in my first letter :—nor that, after what you have written to me in return, I apprehend any essential dissimilarity of views on the part of your Government.

But *we* must not place ourselves in a position in which, if called upon from other quarters for an opinion, we cannot give a clear and definite account not only of what we think and feel, but of what we have done or are doing, upon the matter in question. To be able to say, in answer to such an appeal, that the United States and Great Britain concur in thinking so and so—would be well. To anticipate any such appeal by a voluntary declaration to the same effect would be still better. But to have to say that we are in communication with the United States but have no conclusive understanding with them, would be inconvenient—our free agency would thus be fettered with respect to other Powers ; while our agreement with you would be yet unascertained.

What appears to me, therefore, the most advisable is that you should see in my unofficial communication enough hope of good to warrant you in requiring Powers and Instructions from your Government on this point, in addition to the others upon which you have recently been instructed and empowered ; treating that communication *not* as a proposition made to you, but as the evidence of the nature of a proposition which it would have been my desire to make to you, if I had found you provided with authority to entertain it.

I have the honor to be, with the greatest esteem and respect,

My Dear Sir,

Your obedient and faithful servant,

(Signed) GEO. CANNING.

Not only did Rush on receiving this note regard the incident as closed, but his suspicions of Canning's motives were seriously aroused. "I am bound to own," he wrote in a private letter to Monroe, "that I shall not be able to avoid, at bottom, some distrust of the motives of all such advances to me, whether directly or indirectly, by this government, at this particular juncture of the world." Whatever evidences Great Britain had given of a tendency to liberalize her commercial policy, there was no recognizable prospect of the adoption of greater political freedom, whether in relation to herself or other states.

"We have seen her wage a war of 20 years at a cost of treasure and blood incalculable, in support of the independence of other states (as she said) when that independence was threatened by a movement proceeding from the *people* of France. We have seen her at the close of that contest abandoning the great interests of the people of other states, anxious apparently only about monarchs and thrones. We have seen her at the same epoch become in effect a member of the Holy Alliance ; though she could not in form, and continue to abet its principles up to the attack on Naples. Even then the separation was but partial, and, true to her sympathy with the monarchical principle, we find her faith pledged and her

fleets ready to interpose not on any new extremity of wrong or oppression to the *people* of Naples, but on any molestation to the royal family. Since the present year set in, she has proclaimed and until now cautiously maintained her neutrality under an attack by France upon the independence of Spain, as unjust, as nefarious, and as cruel, as the annals of mankind can recount, this attack having been made upon the people of a country, by a legitimate king, urged on by legitimate nobles. It is thus that Britain has been from the very beginning, positively or negatively, auxiliary to the evils with which this Alliance under the mark of Christianity has already affected the old, and is now menacing the new world. It is under this last stretch of ambition that she seems about to be aroused, not, as we seem forced to infer after all we have seen, from any objections to the arbitrary principles of the Combination, for the same men are still substantially at the head of her affairs; but rather from the apprehensions which are now probably coming upon her, touching her own influence and standing through the formidable and encroaching career of these continental potentates. She at last perceives a crisis likely to come on, bringing with it peril to her own commercial prospects on the other side of the Atlantic, and to her political sway in both hemispheres. Hence probably some of her recent and remarkable solitudes. The former war of 20 years more than once shook her prosperity and brought hazards to her existence, though for the most part she was surrounded by allies. A second war of like duration with no ally for her in Europe might not have a second field of Waterloo for its termination. Such are the prospective dangers that possibly do not escape her.

“The estimate which I have formed of the genius of this government, as well as of the characters of the men who direct, or who influence, all its operations, would lead me to fear that we are not as yet likely to witness any very material changes in the part which Britain has acted in the world for the past fifty years, when the cause of freedom has been at stake; the part which she acted in 1774 in America, which she has since acted in Europe, and is now acting in Ireland. I shall therefore find it hard to keep from my mind the suspicion that the approaches of her ministers to me at this portentous juncture for a concert of policy which they have not heretofore courted with the United States, are bottomed on their own calculations. I wish that I could sincerely see in them a true concern for the rights and liberties of mankind. Nevertheless, whatever may be the *motive* of these approaches, if they give promise of leading to good *effects* , effects which the United States from principle and from policy would delight to hail, I grant that a dispassionate and friendly ear should be turned to them, and such shall be my aim in the duties before me.”¹

The one or two subsequent incidental references to the matter made by Canning confirmed Rush in his views. On September 26th, Canning told him that Daniel Sheldon, American *chargé d'affaires* at Paris had assured the British ambassador that the United States was aware of all the projects of France and the Holy Alliance upon Spanish America, and disapproved of them. If Sheldon had been instructed to say that, surely Rush must be in the possession of sufficient authority of a like nature to accept Canning's propositions.

¹ Rush to Monroe, September 15, 1823. From the Monroe MSS.

Rush, however, was too cautious to be drawn even into an expression of opinion, and again insisted "that certainly I had none, other than those general instructions which I had already mentioned to him, evidently never framed to meet the precise crisis which he supposed to be at hand respecting Spanish America, but under the comprehensive spirit of which I was nevertheless willing to go forward with him in his proposals upon the terms I had stated, in the hope of meeting this crisis."

This rebuff threw Canning into a new offer of compromise. Great Britain, he declared, felt great embarrassments as regarded the immediate recognition of these new states, embarrassments which had not been common to the United States, and he asked whether Rush would not give his assent to the proposals on a promise by Great Britain of *future* acknowledgment. The American minister again avoided any commitment by giving an immediate and unequivocal refusal. "I cannot be unaware," he wrote to Adams, "that in this whole transaction the British cabinet are striving for their own ends; yet if these ends promise in this instance to be also auspicious to the safety and independence of all Spanish America, I persuade myself that we cannot look upon them but with approbation. England it is true has given her countenance, and still does, to all the evils with which the holy Alliance have afflicted Europe; but if she at length has determined to stay the career of their formidable and despotick ambition in the other hemisphere, the United States seem to owe it to all the policy and to all the principles of their system, to hail the effects whatever may be the motives of her conduct."

In a despatch dated October 10th, Rush reviewed the incident, and once more declared that the last word had in all probability been spoken.

"I saw him [Canning] again at the foreign office yesterday and he said not one single word relative to South America, although the occasion was altogether favorable for resuming the topick, had he been disposed to resume it. I therefore consider that all further discussion between us in relation to it is now at an end. I had myself regarded the questions involved in the discussion as essentially changed by the arrival of the news of the convention of the 4th of July between Buenos Ayres and the commissioners from Spain; and of the complete annihilation of the remnant of the royal forces in Colombia under Morales, on the third of August, both which pieces of intelligence have reached England since the twenty sixth of September, the date of my last conference with Mr. Canning on the South American subject.

"The termination of the discussion between us may be thought somewhat sudden, not to say abrupt, considering how zealously as well as spontaneously it was started on his side. As I did not commence it, it is not my intention to revive it. If I had actually acceded to his proposals,

I should have endeavored to have placed my conduct in a satisfactory light before the President. The motives of it would not, I flatter myself, have been disapproved. But as the whole subject is now before my government, and as I shall do nothing further in it without instructions, I should deem it out of place to travel into any new reasons in support of a step not in fact taken.

“Mr. Canning not having acceded to my proposal, nor I to his, we stand as we were before his first advance to me, with the exception only of the light which the intervening discussion may be supposed to have shed upon the dispositions and policy of England in this important matter. It appears that having ends of her own in view, she has been anxious to facilitate their accomplishment by invoking my auxiliary offices as the minister of the United States at this court; but as to the independence of the new states of America, for their own benefit, that this seems quite another question in her diplomacy. It is France that must not be aggrandized, not South America that must be made free. The former doctrine may fitly enough return upon Britain as part of her permanent political creed; but not having been taught to regard it as also incorporated with the foreign policy of the United States, I have forborne to give it gratuitous succour. I would have brought myself to minister to it incidentally on this occasion, only in return for a boon which it was in the power of Britain herself to have offered; a boon that might have closed the sufferings and brightened the prospects of those infant Republics emerging from the new world, and seeming to be connected as by a great moral chain with our own destinies.

“Whether any fresh explanations with France since the fall of Cadiz may have brought Mr. Canning to so full and sudden a pause with me, I do not know, and most likely never shall know if events so fall out that Great Britain no longer finds it necessary to seek the aid of the United States in furtherance of her schemes of counteraction as against France or Russia. That the British cabinet, and the governing portion of the British nation, will rejoice at heart in the downfall of the constitutional system in Spain, I have never had a doubt and have not now, so long as this catastrophe can be kept from crossing the path of British interests and British ambition. This nation in its collective, corporate, capacity has no more sympathy with popular rights and freedom now, than it had on the plains of Lexington in America; than it showed during the whole progress of the French revolution in Europe, or at the close of its first great act, at Vienna, in 1815; than it exhibited lately at Naples in proclaiming a neutrality in all other events, save that of the safety of the royal family there; or, still more recently, when it stood aloof whilst France and the Holy Alliance avowed their intention of crushing the liberties of unoffending Spain, of crushing them too upon prettexts so wholly unjustifiable and enormous that English ministers, for very shame, were reduced to the dilemma of speculatively protesting against them, whilst they allowed them to go into full action. With a king in the hands of his ministers, with an aristocracy of unbounded opulence and pride, with what is called a house of commons constituted essentially by this aristocracy and always moved by its influence, England can, in reality, never look with complacency upon popular and equal rights, whether abroad or at home. She therefore moves in her natural orbit when she wars, positively or negatively, against them. For their own sakes alone, she will never war in their favor.”

The real cause of Canning's sudden indifference was not made

known until some weeks later. Unable to draw Rush into even a partial alliance, and as unable to meet Rush's primary condition of an immediate recognition of the South American states, Canning sought to obtain some distinct pledge from France of disinterestedness so far as the late Spanish possessions in America were concerned. Approaching the Prince de Polignac, then representing France at the English court, he obtained positive assurance on the lines of his own ideas. A joint memorandum was prepared October 9th, and in it the Prince de Polignac declared

"That his Government believed it to be utterly hopeless to reduce Spanish America to the state of its former relations to Spain ;

"That France disclaimed, on Her part, any intention or desire to avail Herself of the present State of the colonies, or of the present situation of France towards Spain, to appropriate to Herself any part of the Spanish Possessions in America, or to obtain for Herself any exclusive advantages ;

"And that, like England, She would willingly see the Mother Country in possession of superior commercial advantages, by amicable arrangements ; and would be contented, like Her, to rank, after the Mother Country, among the most favoured nations ;

"Lastly, that She abjured, in any case, any design of acting against the Colonies by force of arms."¹

Canning read this paper to Rush, November 24th, but did not give him a copy of it until December 13th—or too late to have any influence upon the councils at Washington.

The interview between Adams and Baron Tnyll, already mentioned, occurred on October 16th, and the official note bore the same date. On October 18th Adams drafted a reply, and, of course, without any consultation with the absent President. This draft was not submitted to Monroe and his Cabinet until November 7th. In its first form, therefore, the thoughts and expressions were entirely those of Adams. In the cabinet meeting the Secretary explained that the Russian communications afforded a "very suitable and convenient opportunity for us to take our stand against the Holy Alliance, and at the same time to decline the overture of Great Britain. It would be more candid, as well as more dignified, to avow our principles explicitly to Russia and France, than to come in as a cock-boat in the wake of the British man-of-war."² The draft of the letter to Baron Tnyll was then read. The following parallel shows the first draft, Monroe's alterations as completed on the 10th, and Adams's substitute paragraph added on the 11th. The date of

¹ The full text of the paper, except the paragraphs on the congress, will be found in *British and Foreign State Papers, 1823-1824*, p. 49. It is an interesting conjecture whether Canning did not use the half promise of Rush to co-operate when conversing with the representative of France. A hint that the United States would occupy the same position as England would carry great moral weight.

² *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, VI. 178.

the draft was originally October 18th, but November 15th was the day on which it was sent to the Russian minister.

ADAMS'S DRAFT.¹

THE BARON DE TUYLL,

Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from Russia.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE. WASHINGTON, 15th Nov^r 1823.

SIR,—I have had the honour of receiving your Note of the $\frac{4}{16}$ inst^t communicating the information that His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias has determined in no case *whatsoever* to receive any agent whatsoever either from the Government of the Republic of Columbia, or from any other of the Governments de facto, which owe their existence to the Events of which the new World has for some years past been the theatre.

Influenced by the considerations which prescribe it as a duty to independent *Christian Nations of Christians* to entertain with each other, the friendly relations which sentiments of humanity and their mutual interests require, and satisfied that those of South America had become irrevocably Independent of Spain the Government of the United States **B** [have interchanged Ministers Plenipotentiary with the Republic of Colombia, have appointed Ministers of the same Rank to the Governments of Mexico, Buenos Ayres and Chili, have received a Minister and other Diplomatic Agents from Mexico, and will continue to receive and send Agents Diplomatic and Commercial, in their intercourse with the other American Independent Nations, as in the performance of their social duties, and in the pursuit of their lawful Interests they shall find *expedient* proper. While regretting that the political principles maintained by His Imperial Majesty and his allies, have not yet led the Imperial Government to the same result, and that they have not seen fit to receive the *diplomatic agent* Minister of *Peace* said to have been commissioned by the Republican Government of Colombia, to reside near his Imperial Majesty, the Government of the United States respecting in others that self-dependent Sovereignty which they exercise themselves, receive from you the information of his Majesty's determination on this subject in the Spirit of Candour, frankness, and of amicable disposition with which it is given.]

D. I avail myself of the occasion to reiterate to you, Sir, the assurance of my distinguished Consideration.

MONROE'S SUGGESTED CHANGES.²

B. The government of the U States thought it proper to acknowledge their independance, in March, 1822., by an act which was then published to the world. This government has since interchanged ministers with the republic of Columbia, has appointed ministers of the same rank to the governments of Mexico, Buenos Ayres, and Chili, has received a minister and other diplomatic agents from Mexico, and preservd, in other respects the same intercourse, with those new States, that they have with other powers.

By a recurrence to the message of the President, a copy of which is enclosed, you will find, that this measure was adopted on great consideration; that the attention of this gov^t had been called, to the contest, be-

¹What is enclosed in brackets was struck out by the President. Words in italics were also omitted from the final form of this letter.

²See Monroe's letter printed on p. 695.

tween the parent country and the Colonies, from an early period that it had marked the course of events with impartiality, and had become perfectly satisfied, that Spain could not reestablish her authority over them: that in fact the new States were completely independent. C.

[Under those circumstances my gov^t has heard with great regret, the information containd in your note that the political principles maintained by his Imperial Majesty and his allies, have not yet led the Imperial gov^t, to the same result. I am instructed however by the President to assure you, that this communication of H. I. M.'s determination, on this subject has been receivd in the spirit of candour, frankness, and of amicable disposition with which it is given.]

ADAMS'S SUBSTITUTE.

C. From the information contained in your Note, it appears that the political Principles maintained by His Imperial Majesty and his allies, have not led the Imperial Government to the same result. I am instructed by the President to assure you, that the Government of the United States respecting in others the Independence of the Sovereign authority, which they exercise themselves, receive the communication of H. I. M's determination on that subject in the Spirit of Candour, frankness and of amicable disposition which it is made. D.

It was Calhoun who objected to the words *Christian*, annexed to independent nations, and *of peace*, added to the word *minister* as sarcastic. In spite of Adams explaining that "all the point of my note was in these two words, as my object was to put the Emperor in the wrong in the face of the world as much as possible," they were struck from the draft. The cabinet meeting came to an end before the form of the note had been determined, but developed some difference of opinion upon the manner of replying to the Russian communications. As the communications with the Russian minister had been part verbal and part in writing, the Secretary thought it would be only proper to reply in the same manner. To answer the whole in one written note might place the Baron in an awkward predicament. But he warned the President that "the answer to be given to Baron Tuyll, the instructions to Mr. Rush relative to the proposals of Mr. Canning, those to Mr. Middleton at St. Petersburg, and those to the minister who must be sent to France, must all be part of a combined system of policy and adapted to each other." With the President Adams agreed to confine his written reply to the purport of the Baron's written note, and to see the Baron again upon the verbal part of his communication. This would be limited to an expression of the intention on the part of the United States to continue to remain neutral.

Before the note in its altered form could be prepared Adams was to see the Russian minister, and the 8th was the day appointed. Even in the interval of less than twenty-four hours, between the Cabinet meeting of the 7th and this conference, Monroe had doubts, wavered, and wrote to Adams as follows :

JAMES MONROE TO JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

Nov 8, 1823.

DEAR SIR,—I called to confer a moment with you respecting the concerns depending with the minister of Russia, but not meeting with you, and hearing that you are expected to have an interview with the minister of Russia, to day, I drop you a few lines on that subject.

In the interview, I think that it will be proper, to extend your conversation and enquiries to every point, which seems to be embraced, by his note, and informal communication, with a view to make it the basis of all subsequent measures, either with Congress, or through Mr. Rush with the British gov^t. If you see no impropriety, in it, I think that I would ask him, whether he intended, by the terms "political principles" to refer to the governments established, in the new states, as distinguishing them from those of Europe. the strict import justifies the conclusion that he does, and that is supported by all the recent movements of the allied powers, in Europe. Still to give it that construction, without his sanction, in this form, might be objected to hereafter. I merely suggest this for your consideration, to which I add, that if there be cause to doubt the propriety of the step, you had better decline it, for further reflection, especially as other opportunities will present themselves, in future conferences with him, on the same subject.

On the other point I need add nothing at this time. Indeed I do not know that I can say anything, in addition to what was suggested on it yesterday. It is probable that something may occur in your conference, which may make it proper, to enlarge the sphere of the communication.

J. M.¹

The Baron came to the Department according to appointment on the same day. The Secretary told him that he "had submitted to the President the Note from him declaring the Emperor's determination not to receive any Minister or Agent from any of the South American States, to which I should shortly send him an answer: that I had also reported to the President the substance of our verbal conferences: of what had been said by him, and of my answers. That the President had directed me to say that he approved of my answers as far as they had gone, and to add that he received the observations of the Russian Government relating to the neutrality of the United States in the contest between Spain, and the Independent States of South America, amicably; and in return for them wished him to express to the Court *the hope of the Government of the United States that Russia would on her part also continue to observe the same neutrality.* After some conversation the Baron desired me to repeat what I had said, that he might be sure of perfectly understanding me: which I did. He then observed that he should immediately prepare a dispatch to his Government, relating to the purport of this conversation, and (it being Saturday) that to be sure of its accuracy he would send it to my house the next day, requesting me to make any observations upon it that I should think advisable.

"At this conference, upon a suggestion from the President, I enquired of the Baron, what was the import of the words "political principles," in his note of $\frac{4}{18}$ October. He said they were used in the Instructions

¹ From the Adams MSS.

of his Government to him, and he understood them as having reference to the right of Supremacy of Spain over her Colonies ; and that this appeared to him to be so clearly their meaning that he did not think it would be necessary for him to ask of his Government an explanation of them." ¹

Two days later Monroe returned to Adams the draft of the letter to Tuyll with the changes he wished to have incorporated. His note was thoroughly characteristic, again showing the indecision of the writer.

JAMES MONROE TO JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

DEAR SIR,—I enclose you a modification, of your note in reply to that of the Russian minister for your consideration. The part for which it is proposed to be a substitute is marked with a pencil—tho' much of that thus marked is retained. You will be able to decide how far such a modification, will be proper from what may have taken place in your conference with the minister. The object is, to soften the communication, in some degree, without losing any portion of the decision called for by the occasion.

J. M.

Nov^r 10, 1823.²

Having replied to the communication from the Russian minister, it became necessary to make some reply to Canning's proposals. Apart from the suggestion that recognition was a matter of time and circumstance, there was nothing in the five heads that the United States had not already accepted as its policy. The guarded utterances of Rush in his exchange of notes with Canning had gone as far as it was possible to go without positive instructions from home, and those instructions could not have been issued without unduly binding our government to follow Great Britain in every contingency. The President, by the very form of his questions to Jefferson, implied that he would even favor a departure in this instance from the traditional policy of isolation. But Canning blundered. He intimated to Rush that the Alliance had intentions against the late Spanish colonies of South America, and urged the American minister to enter into a definite and binding compact. Yet he did not tell Rush from what source he had obtained this information, and thus gave rise to a suspicion that his solicitude was not entirely disinterested, or his urgency was not calculated to com-

¹ The Baron said the words were used "in the instructions of the Government to him, and he understood them to have reference to the right of supremacy of Spain over her colonies. I had so understood them myself, and had not entertained a moment's doubt as to their meaning." *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, VI, 182.

² From the Adams MSS. In noting the receipt of this letter from the President, Adams says, "I think also of proposing another modification." *The Memoirs* (VI, 184) tell us what this modification was—"leaving out entirely the expression of regret—which he approved."

promit Rush for the benefit of the British government. Upon the despatches from Rush, Adams commented: "The object of Canning appears to have been to obtain some public pledge from the government of the United States, ostensibly against the forcible interference of the Holy Alliance between Spain and South America; but really or especially against the acquisition to the United States themselves of any part of the Spanish-American possessions. . . By joining with her, therefore, in her proposed declaration, we give her a substantial and perhaps inconvenient pledge against ourselves, and really obtain nothing in return."¹

WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD.

¹ *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, VI. 177.