

The Inception of the Menree Doctrine

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THE INCEPTION OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE

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Bachelor of Arts

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1928

Submitted to the Department of History
Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
1937

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Preface

In this report, *The Inception Of The Monroe Doctrine*, the writer has attempted to show that the early expressions of American Policy were of isolation, followed by a policy of non-intercourse in European affairs, and a desire that the European nations would leave the United States alone to work out its own destiny in its own way.

But the United States could not be left alone for long. Powerful nations of Europe held contiguous territory to our frontiers. The United States began to look toward these territories and to realize that, if she were to become a great and powerful nation, she would have to expand at the expense of these European dependencies. The United States became very much concerned about the Floridas, Cuba, the Louisiana Territory, and the northwest.

The revolt of the Spanish colonies from the Mother Country during the Napoleonic wars, and the formation of the Quadruple Alliance, with the threat to restore the South American colonies to Spain, seriously worried President Monroe and his cabinet. The United States was not willing to see these colonies fall into the hands of a stronger power than Spain. Monroe's message to Congress was the result.

In the preparation of this report, I wish to acknowledge the timely suggestions and advice of Dr. T. H. Reynolds, Head of the History Department, and the cooperation of the staff of the College library.

Oklahoma Agricultural
and Mechanical College
Stillwater, Oklahoma
July 14, 1937

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The Inception of the Monroe Doctrine

The Monroe Doctrine, as proclaimed in 1823, had three distinct features. The first was that the American continents were not open to further European colonization, the second, that any attempt to extend the European political system to this hemisphere would endanger our peace and safety, and the third, that it was our policy not to interfere in the internal concerns of Europe, but to cultivate friendship with them. The essential features of the doctrine can be stated in six paragraphs.

1. The American continents being free and independent, are no longer open to colonization to European powers.
2. We have not interfered and shall not interfere with existing colonies of European powers.
3. Our policy has been and remains, not to take part in the wars and internal politics of Europe, to recognize the de facto governments as legitimate, and to preserve friendly relations with all, when possible with honor.
4. We shall consider any attempts of the European powers to extend their political system, which is so different from ours, and is not acceptable to the people south of us, to any part of the hemisphere, or any attempt to oppress or control in any other manner the free states of the two Americas, as dangerous to our peace and safety.
5. The true policy of the United States is to leave the new states, which Spain can never subdue, to themselves.
6. We hope¹ the other powers will leave them to themselves.

¹ American State Papers, Foreign Relations, V, 246-250.

The doctrine implied that the two hemispheres were separate and apart and that the part to be played by any European power in its future would have to be limited to the colonies then in its possession. The United States in turn would not play any important part in the other hemisphere. The idea that the United States should keep clear of European politics developed first. The idea of isolation is almost as old as the nation itself. In 1781, Thomas Pownall in a "Memorial to the Soverigns of America", reminded them that nature had given them physical isolation and it was to their interest to have no "connections of politics with Europe other than commercial". The following year John Adams expressed to Oswald, the English peace commissioner, his fear that all the European powers would be maneuvering to work us into their imaginary balance of power. He declared that we should not meddle in European affairs, and that the European powers should not allow it, if we wished to. The idea of isolation cropped out many times during the discussions in the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Soon after the convention Washington wrote to Jefferson, expressing the hope that the new government would be efficient enough to bring the states together so as to keep them from forming "separate, improper, or indeed any connection with European powers, which could involve them in their political disputes". About the same time he wrote to Sir Edward Newenham that he hoped that we could

keep disengaged from the labyrinth of European politics and wars, but at the same time we could gain their respect so as to minister to their wants without engaging in their quarrels.²

The Monroe Doctrine was born at a time when the Americans distrusted Europe and wished to get away from the social and political inequalities of the Old World. This is clearly shown during the French Revolution and the idea of isolation is still more clearly brought out. The treaty of alliance, February 6, 1778, between France and the American Colonies was still in force, and Genet came to demand that we enter the war with France under that treaty. Washington believed that nations as well as individuals should keep their word, but did not believe the treaty covered this case. The question in all its phases was laid before the cabinet. The Neutrality Proclamation, December 22, 1793, followed.³ Words uttered in Washington's Farewell Address are influential to us today.

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interest which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the cause of which is foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artful ties in

2 David Y. Thomas, One Hundred Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1923, 2.

3 American State Papers, Foreign Relations, I, 140.

The ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships and enmities.

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice?

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs that honesty is the best policy. I repeat, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.⁴

The idea of aloofness and of the two spheres of influence was held by John Adams, but he soon recognized that it was not an easy matter. Early in his term our relations with France were such that he felt it necessary to call a special session of Congress and in a special message to that body he said:

⁴ James R. Richardson. Messages and Papers of the President, I, . 222-3.

Although it is very true that we ought not to involve ourselves in the political system of Europe, but to keep ourselves always distinct and separate from it if we can, yet to effect this separation, early, punctual, and continual information of the current chain of events and of the political projects in contemplation is no less necessary than if we were directly concerned in them. However, we may consider ourselves, the maritime and commercial nations of the world will consider the United States of America as forming a weight in that balance of power in Europe which never can be forgotten or neglected. It would not be against our interest, but it would be doing wrong to one-half of Europe, at least, if we should voluntarily throw ourselves into either scale.⁵

In 1792, Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, wrote to William Short, expressing fear and even horror at everything like connecting ourselves to the politics of Europe; in this letter, he said:

We have a perfect horror at everything like connecting ourselves with the Politics of Europe. It would indeed be advantageous to us to have neutral rights established on a broad ground; but no dependence can be placed in a European coalition for that. To be entangled with them would be a much greater evil than a temporary acquiescence in the false principle which have prevailed.⁶

President Jefferson in his First Inaugural Address referred to the fact that we are:

kindly separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc of one quarter of the globe.⁷

5 Ibid., I, 238.

6 Andrew A. Lipscomb, Editor, Jefferson's Writings, Memorial Edition, X, 287.
Richardson,

7 Op. Cit., III, 323.

To his friend Thomas Payne he writes:

Determined as we are to avoid, if possible, wasting the energies of our people in war and destruction, we shall avoid implicating ourselves with the powers of Europe, even in support of principles which we mean to pursue. They have so many interests different from ours, that we must avoid being entangled in them.⁸

The policy of isolation or the determination to "avoid implicating ourselves with the powers of Europe" soon underwent a change. Jefferson had little love for the British, but less for Napoleon who had usurped liberty and democracy. The prospect of having Napoleon for a neighbor on our southwest struck terror to his heart and he declared that the moment that Napoleon took possession of Louisiana we must "marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation". This danger soon passed and Jefferson could again breathe easy in the assurance that we were "separated by a wide ocean from the nations of Europe and from the political interest which entangle them together". However, the doctrine of the two spheres is stated fully as late as 1820. In a letter from Jefferson to William Short, we find Jefferson using these words:

I hope he sees, and will promote in his new situation, the advantages of a cordial fraternization among all the American nations, and the importance of their coalescing in an American system of policy, totally independent of and unconnected with that of Europe. The day is not distant when we may formally require a meridian of partition through the ocean which separates the two hemispheres, on the hither side of which no European gun shall ever be heard, nor an American on

8 Lipscomb,
Op. Cit. X, 225

the other; and when, during the rage of the eternal wars of Europe, the lion and the lamb, within our regions, shall be drawn together in peace.

The principles of society there and here, then are radically different, and I hope no American patriot will ever lose sight of the essential policy of interdicting in the seas and territories of both Americas the ferocious and sanguinary contests of Europe. I wish to see this coalition begin.

The policy of isolation soon gave way to that of non-intervention in American affairs. This was caused chiefly as a result of the contest for territory along our frontiers. Spain became alarmed that England or the United States might take Louisiana from her and decided to give the United States more consideration on the Mississippi. In October 1795, Spain signed the Treaty of San Lorenzo el Real with the United States, by which the navigation of the Mississippi should be free to the citizens of the United States, and by which for the space of three years, they should have the right to deposit their goods at New Orleans, without being obliged to pay tax or duties of any kind. When the three years were up the agreement about the deposit of goods at New Orleans was not renewed with Spain. Fears were expressed that Spain might revoke the privilege at any time. All went well until about two years later when it began to be rumored that France had gained possession of Louisiana.¹⁰

After the news reached America that Louisiana had been transferred to France by the secret treaty of San Ilde-

⁹ Ibid., XV, 262-3.

¹⁰ William H. Malley, Treaties and Conventions, 260-2.

fonso of October 1, 1800, and that the Americans would probably be denied the free navigation of the Mississippi, or deposit goods at New Orleans, President Jefferson instructed Livingstone, our minister to France, to ascertain the truth of the above reports. France at first hedged and denied that allegation, but later admitted that such a treaty was in existence.¹¹

After the confirmation of these reports, a loud cry went up against France. Jefferson said that the United States would never give up the navigation of the Mississippi and that if they should at least be obliged to draw the sword, "they should throw away the scabbard". In a letter written to Robert E. Livingston, United States Minister to France, April 18, 1802, Jefferson stated the American doctrine of non-intervention admirably:

The day that France takes possession of New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her forever within her low water mark. It seals the union of two nations, who, in conjunction, can maintain exclusive possession of the ocean. From that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation. We must turn all our attention to a maritime force, for which our resources place us on very high grounds; and having formed and cemented together a power which may render reinforcement of her settlements here impossible to France, make the first cannon, which shall be fired in Europe the signal for tearing up any settlement that she may have made, and for holding the two continents of America in sequestration for the common purposes of the United

¹¹ Ibid., 1640

States and American nations. This is not a state of things we seek or desire. It is one which this measure, if adopted by France forces us as necessarily as any other cause, by the laws of nature, brings on its necessary effect.¹²

Jefferson suggested to Monroe six months before the doctrine was proclaimed that we depart from our policy of isolation. He suggested that Great Britian be asked to join us in guaranteeing the independence of Cuba against all nations except Spain. This was no doubt an attempt to forestall Great Britian from gaining possession of Cuba. In 1818, Monroe asked John Quincy Adams, his Secretary of State, to sound the British Minister on recognition of the Spanish colonies. England would not consider recognizing the new states at this time for two reasons. She needed the friendship of Spain against France and she was also watching the southward expansion of the United States.¹³

By 1823, the situation had changed. The Congress of Verona had decided that France should restore the Spanish King, Ferdinand VII, to his despotic powers. This might mean that France would intervene in America to restore the colonies to Spain, or France might take some of the Spanish colonies as pay for her trouble. In either case the trade of England would be injured and England's old rival, France, would again become a factor in American affairs. Canning,

¹² Lipscomb, Jefferson's Writings, X, 313.

¹³ John Bassett Moore; Digest of International Law, VI, 371.

the English foreign secretary, now talked of recognition and assured France that England had no designs on any of the Spanish colonies and tried to get a like expression from France, but without success. He now learned that a circular letter had been sent to the European powers inviting them to a conference at Paris to decide what to do with the Spanish colonies. Canning now became alarmed and turned to Richard Rush, our minister to England, and sounded him out on the possibility of concerted or joint action against any attempt of the Holy Alliance to subjugate the Spanish colonies. Rush declined to commit himself, chiefly, he says, because of the "danger of placing my government to any measure or cause of policy which might in any degree, now or hereafter, implicate it in the federation system of Europe". Canning renewed the proposition several times and Rush transmitted the notes to Washington. Rush was soon satisfied that England had nothing in view but "ends of her own". Also, he felt that the independence of the new states, "for their own benefit", was "quite another question in her diplomacy".¹⁴

Mr. Canning writing to Mr. Rush, the United States Minister to England, wanting a declaration from the United States, said:

¹⁴ Ibid, VI, 391.

If there be any European power which cherishes any other projects, which looks to a forcible enterprise 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 efficient mode of intimating our joint disapprobation of such projects.¹⁵

While the Canning-Rush negotiations were in progress and under consideration by the cabinet, an attempt was made, probably with the approval of Secretary of State Adams, to secure joint action between the United States and Great Britian on the dispute with Russia over the ukase of 1821, claiming the 51 parallel as the southern boundary of Alaska.¹⁶ The reason for doing so was probably to keep Great Britian from siding with Russia in objection to the proposition that the Americas were no longer open to new European colonization. Sir Charles Bagot, the English minister in Russia, believed that joint action was contemplated and he so informed Rush, but on reading his full powers he found that they related only to Russia's claim to exclusive right of navigation in the Northern Pacific Ocean one hundred miles out from Alaska and even on this he had no authority for a joint agreement. He wrote

15 Moore,
Op. Cit., VI, 389.

16 American State Papers. Foreign Relations, IV, 857.

back for further instructions but before Canning could reply Monroe's Message was received in London and Canning now refused all joint action because he did not believe in the principles that the Americas were no longer open to European colonization.¹⁷

From the foregoing it seems that the doctrine of no entangling European alliances was formulated not as a permanent policy from which there should be no deviation, but as one from which, though good in principle, a departure would be amply justified when the occasion should demand it.

The corollary to the policy of American isolation was, no European intervention in American affairs. This developed slowly but surely. At about the same time that Washington was hoping that the new government would be strong enough to keep the states from forming "separate, improper, connections with European powers, Hamilton was bold enough to declare that:

by a steady adherence to the Union, we may hope ere long, to become the arbiter of Europe in America, and to be able to incline the balance of European competitions in this part of the world as our interest may dictate.¹⁸

Our first concern about colonies related chiefly to their transfer, especially from a weaker to a stronger power. Spain and England were the only powers which held territory contiguous to ours. We paid very little

17 Moore,
Op Cit. V, 457, 462-3.

18 Thomas . One Hundred Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 10.

attention to the cession of Haiti by Spain to France in 1895. For more than a decade we had been trying to induce Spain to recognize the thirty-first parallel as our southern boundary, and to allow us to navigate the Mississippi. In 1795, she signed a treaty granting these concessions and by 1798, she had evacuated our territory. But when we heard that Spain had transferred Louisiana and the Floridas to France, Rufus King, our minister to Great Britian, expressed to Lord Hawkesbury an opinion pretty well fixed in America.

The purport of what I said was that we are content that the Floridas remain in the hands of Spain, but should not be willing to see them transferred except to ourselves.¹⁹

Just before England and France took up arms in 1803, Mr. Addington said to Mr. King that, in event of war England would probably occupy New Orleans. Mr. King reporting the conversation to Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, wrote:

I interrupted him by saying, that I hoped the measure would be well weighed before it should be attempted; that, true it was, we could not see with indifference that country in the hands of France, but it was equally true, that it would be contrary to our views, and with much concern, that we should see it in the hands of England; we had no objection to Spain continuing to possess it, they were quiet neighbors, and we looked forward without impatience to events which, in the ordinary course of things must at no distant day annex this country to the United States. Mr. Addington desired me to be assured that England would not accept the country, were all agreed to give

19 Thomas,
Op. Cit., II, 509-10

it to her; that, were she to occupy it, it would not be to keep it, but to prevent another power from obtaining it; and, in his opinion, this end would be best effected by its belonging to the United States. I expressed my acquiescence in the last part of his remarks, but observed, that, if the country should be occupied by England it would be suspected to be in concert with the United States, and might involve us in misunderstandings with another power, with which we desired to live in peace. He said, if you obtain it, well, but if not, we ought to prevent its going into the hands of France; though, you may be assured, continued Mr. Addington, that nothing shall be done injurious to the interest of the United States.²⁰

Later President Jefferson in a letter to Governor Claiborne, October 29, 1808, of the Louisiana Territory, expressed the same idea about Cuba and Mexico remaining dependencies of Spain and an unwillingness to see them fall into the hands of either France or England:

We shall be well satisfied to see Cuba and Mexico remain in their present state of dependence; but very unwilling to see them in that of either France or England politically or commercially. We consider their interest and ours as the same, and that the object of both must be to exclude all European influence from this hemisphere.²¹

As the contest between England and Napoleon waxed hotter the Americans became more and more concerned. They made no protest when England took over the French West Indies, but as Napoleon tightened his grasp upon Spain they kept

²⁰ Moore, VI, 321

²¹ Lipscomb, Jefferson's Writings, XII, 186-7

closer watch upon contiguous Spanish territory to keep it from falling into the hands of England. In 1810, a part of West Florida declared its independence and was promptly annexed by the United States, in spite of the protests of Great Britian. In January, President Madison communicated certain documents to Congress and said:

Taking into view the tenor of these several communications, the posture of things with which they are connected, the intimate relation of the country adjoining the United States eastward of the river Perdido to their security and tranquillity, and the peculiar interest they otherwise have in its destiny, I recommend to the consideration of Congress the seasonableness of a declaration that the United States could not see without serious inquietude any part of a neighboring territory in which they have in different respects so deep and so just a concern pass from the hands of Spain into those of any other foreign power.²²

In 1812, the United States seized Amelia Island and the country between the Pearl and Perdido was annexed to Mississippi Territory, Mobile being made a port of entry. The next year we returned Amelia Island, but the other territory that had been seized was not returned. The President was authorized by Congress to occupy and hold the rest of it. Mobile was now occupied. The United States wanted the territory. Spain was throttled by Napoleon and Great Britian, with whom we were now at war, was seeking to get hold of the territory as she claimed to hold it for Spain. In 1817 Amelia Island

²² Richardson, Messages and Papers of the President, I, 488.

was reoccupied and Pensacola was siezed in 1818. This was not done through fear of it being transferred to some other power, but through Spain's inability to keep order. Pensacola was evacuated in 1819, but Spain was now convinced that she could not hold the territory and signed a treaty delivering it to the United States.²³

During this period much anxiety was manifested about Cuba. The United States was not adverse to seeing it remain in the hands of Spain, but was much concerned about the possibility of its passing to either France or England. Mr. Adams, Secretary of State, in his instructions to Mr. Randall, Special Agent to Cuba, advised him to observe and gain all information possible as to the political situation and attitude of the Cubans and to watch closely the agents and activities of the French and British. Mr. Randall was also instructed to reply to all inquiries about the attitude of the United States toward Cuba; that we were satisfied to see Cuba remain in the hands of Spain, but not to see it transferred to any other power. To Mr. Randall, he said:

If, in your intercourse with society, inquiries should be made of you with regard to the views of the government of the United States concerning the political state of Cuba, you will say that, so far as they were known to you from having resided at the seat of government, was for the continuance of

²³ Malloy, Treaties and Conventions, II, 1651-58.

Cuba in its political connection with Spain, and that it would be altogether averse to the transfer of the island to any other power.²⁴

The United States considered England our most dangerous rival in Cuba. Jefferson was afraid that it might fall into British hands and suggested a joint alliance with England to guarantee its independence against any other power except Spain.

Mr. Jefferson, in a letter to President Monroe, June 11, 1823, suggested that as Cuba seemed to "hold up a speck of war to us" and as the possession of the island by Great Britain would "indeed be a great calamity to us", it might be advisable to induce Great Britain to join the United States "in guaranteeing its independence against all the world, except Spain". Writing again to President Monroe, June 23, 1823, he said that his suggestion was based on the supposition that there was an English interest in Cuba as strong as that of the United States but that, if there was no danger of the islands "falling into the possession of England", he must retract an opinion founded upon an error of fact". It would be better to lie still in readiness to receive that interesting incorporation when solicited by herself. For, certainly, her addition to our confederacy is exactly what is wanting to round out our power as a nation to the point of the utmost interest.²⁵

Mr. Gallatin, Minister to France, writing to John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State, June 24, 1823, used these words:

I did not leave Mr. de Chateaubriand, French Minister for Foreign Affairs, without adverting to the affairs of Spain. That our sympathies were entirely on her side, and that we considered the war made upon her by

²⁴ Moore, Digest of International Law, VI, 385.

²⁵ Lipsecomb, Jefferson's Writings, XV, 435.

France unjust. I did not pretend to conceal, but I added that the United States would undoubtedly preserve their neutrality, provided it was respected, and avoid every interference with the politics of Europe. But I had every reason to believe that, on the other hand, they would not suffer others to interfere with emancipation of America.²⁶

During and immediately following the Napoleonic wars one after another of the South American countries broke away from Spain and set up independent governments. These countries appealed to the United States for recognition of their independence. The sympathies of the United States were of course with the South American countries, but she could not afford to give recognition to their independence, until she sounded out some of the European powers especially England.

On September 26, 1815, the Emperors of Austria and Russia and the King of Prussia concluded at Paris a treaty which is known as the Holy Alliance. The object of this league was declared to be the administration of government, in matters both internal and external, according to the precepts of justice, charity, and peace; and to this end the allied Monarchs looking upon themselves as "delegated by Providence" to rule over their respective countries, engaged to "lend one another, on every occasion and in every case, assistance, aid, and support."²⁷

26 Moore,
Op. Cit., VI, 485-6

27 Moore, Digest of International Law, VI, 374.

This league was eventually joined by all the sovereigns of Europe, except the King of England who could not sign a document binding his country without the signature of a minister, but who in a letter gave his approval of the pact. The league expressly declared for the divine right of kings as against the rights of the people and against the encroachment of liberal ideas. As the English King's own government, with its free and parliamentary institutions, was founded upon revolution, he could not easily sanction a policy that called for suppression of governments founded upon "revolt and crime", and had declared that all European powers "had an undoubted right to take a hostile attitude to those states in which the overthrow of government might operate as an example and denounced "as equally null, and disallowed by the public law of Europe any pretended reform effected by revolt and open force". They announced their determination, "to repel the maxim of rebellion, in whatever place, and under whatever form it might show itself. Their ultimate object was more explicitly expressed in a secret treaty in which they engaged mutually "to put an end to representative governments in Europe and to adopt measures to destroy "the liberty of the press".²⁸

Before the close of the summer of 1823, they had practically stamped out the revolutions in Europe and had

²⁸ Moore,
Op. Cit., VI, 344-5

given notice to England that the powers were soon to call a congress for the purpose of formulating plans for the purpose of putting down the revolutionary governments in the South American countries. At this time Lord Castlereagh, who had been favorably disposed toward the Holy Alliance, had been succeeded in the conduct of the foreign affairs of England by George Canning, who reflected the popular sentiment as to the policy of the allied powers. The United States had recognized the independence of the South American countries, which had not been done by England, although England as well as the United States had built up a favorable trade with those countries that they did not want to see cut off or destroyed.²⁹

Before the meeting of the great European powers at Aix-la-Chapelle in October, 1818, their mediation had been solicited by Spain and agreed to the restoring of the Spanish colonies to Spain, provided certain commercial privileges should be granted to the Allies. The United States had been advised of the proposition and also that some of the powers wanted the mediation of the United States. The United States immediately made it known to the members of the league that the government of the United States would take no part in any plan of mediation or interference between Spain and South America, which

²⁹ Ibid. VI, 375.

should be founded on any other basis than that of total independence of the colonies. After the declaration of the United States. England, who was sympathetic to the restoration of the Spanish colonies, saw that the plan could not be carried into effect without the concurrence of the United States. England now insisted that no force be used to return the South American colonies to Spain. After much discussion and proposals the Congress broke up without accomplishing their purpose, the return of the Spanish colonies to Spain. The attitude of the United States may be summed up in the words of a letter written to Mr. Thompson by Mr. Adams, Secretary of State, May 20, 1819:

But while the government of the United States have thus taken every occasion offered them in the course of events to manifest their good wishes in favor of the South Americans, they have never lost sight of the obligations incumbent on them, as avowedly neutral to the contest between them and Spain.³⁰

We see this policy stated further in a conversation between Baron Tuvill, Russian minister and Mr. Adams, American Secretary of State:

So long as that state of things should continue, he could take upon himself to assure the baron that the United States would not depart from the neutrality so declared by them, but 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 on the part

30 Ibid. . VI, p. 398.

of the United States, the result of which it was not in my power to foretell.³¹

Had it not been for the internal disturbance of Spain and its intervention 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 in another interesting matter:

With respect to the provinces in America, which have thrown off their alliance 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, toward 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, either by conquest or by cession, from Spain.³²

Failing to obtain assurance from France that she had no designs upon the Spanish American colonies, Canning

Moore,
31 Op. Cit., VI, 398

32 W. C. Ford, "John Quincy Adams and the Monroe Doctrine," American Historical Review, VII, 679.

became very anxious that England and the United States should come to an understanding and issue a joint declaration concerning the South American provinces. To Mr. Rush, he wrote, August 20, 1823:

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 designs.

1. We conceive the recovery of the colonies by Spain to be hopeless.

2. We conceive the question of recognition of them, as independent states, to be one of time and circumstance.

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 of them ourselves.

5. We could not see any portion of them transferred to any other power with indifference.

Nothing could be more gratifying to me than to join 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.³³

On August 23, 1823, Canning again writes to Rush concerning the South American colonies and England's attitudes:

My government would . . . regard as like objectionable, any interference whatever in the affairs of Spanish America, unsolicited by the late Provinces

³³ Moore, Op. Cit., VII, 682.

themselves, and against their will . . . it would regard the convening of a congress to deliberate upon their affairs as a measure uncalled for, and indicative of a policy highly unfriendly to the tranquillity of the world; . . . it would never 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.

This sounded like good doctrine to the Americans but Canning soon dropped the matter of joint action because he had received assurance from Polignac, the French minister, that his government thought the reduction of the French colonies a hopeless task and that France had no intention of trying to appropriate any part of them.³⁴

The question of the Spanish colonies and joint action with Great Britain to prevent the Holy Alliance from intervening and restoring to Spain, or of appropriating them to themselves, was not the only problem that the United States had to deal with. The Russian ukase of 1821, has already been referred to. The question of Russia's encroachment on the northwest now caused considerable negotiations and quite a little uneasiness on the part of the United States. Mr. Adams, Secretary of State, writes in his diary, alluding to an interview of July 27, 1823, with Baron Tuvill, Russian minister:

I told him specially that we should contest the right of Russia to any territorial establishment on this continent, and that we should assume

³⁴ Thomas, One Hundred Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1923, 28.

distinctly the principle that the American continents are no longer subject for any new European colonial establishment.³⁵

The attitude of the United States government on the non colonization principle was clearly stated by Mr. Adams in a conversation with Mr. Canning:

"And how far would you consider", said he, "this exclusion to extend?" "To all the shores of the South Sea", said I, "We know of no right that you have there". "And in this", said he, "you include our northern province on this continent?" "No", said I, "there the boundary is marked and we have no disposition to encroach upon it. Keep what is yours but leave the rest of the continent to us".³⁶

We find the Alaskan Boundary Tribunal using this language:

It is not imaginable that, in the present condition of the world, any European nation should entertain the project of settling a colony on the northwest coast of America. That the United States should form establishments there, with views of absolute territorial right and inland communication, is not only to be expected, but is pointed out by the finger of nature.³⁷

Soon after the negotiations and correspondence with Mr. Canning, concerning the South American colonies and the possibilities of a joint declaration with England against the Holy Alliance or any power, restoring these colonies to Spain, or of appropriating them to themselves; and with Baron Tnyll, concerning Russian encroachment on the northwest, President Monroe sought to get the advice of Jeffer-

35 Dexter Perkins, The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826. 11

36 Ibid., 10

37 Ibid., 18

son, Madison, and his Cabinet. In his letter to Jefferson of October 17, 1823, the President said:

I transmit to you two dispatches which were received 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 South America, and proposing a cooperation between Great Britain and the United States, in support of it, against the members of that alliance. The project aims in the first instance, at the 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. First, shall we entangle ourselves at all in European politics, 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? Second, if a case can exist in which a sound maxim may, and ought to be departed from, is not the present instance, precisely that cause? Third, has not the epoch arrived when Great Britain must take her stand, either on the side of the monarchs of Europe, or of the United States, and in consequence, either in favor of Despotism or of liberty and may it not be presumed that, aware of that necessity, her government has seized on the present occurrence, as that, which it deems the most suitable to announce and mark the commencement of that career.

My own impressions are that we ought to meet the proposal of the British government 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 to us. I am sensible however, of the extent and difficulty of the question, and shall be happy to have your and Mr. Madison's opinions on it.³⁸

Mr. Jefferson's reply of October 24, 1823, displays not only a profound insight into the international situation but a wide vision of the possibilities involved. He said:

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 allow 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 domicile 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 a 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 desuouly 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 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 provoke war. With Great Britain withdrawn from their scale and shifted into that of 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 violation 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.³⁹

That the essential features of the Monroe Doctrine were expressed in the above letter is not surprising, when we remember Jefferson's long and varied experience in dealing with the problems and conditions that caused Monroe to send his famous message to Congress. Jefferson is again stating the principles that he had long cherished and wished to see incorporated into an American policy or rule of action.

Mr. Madison not only agreed with Jefferson as to the wisdom of accepting the British proposal of some form of joint action, but suggested that the United States should go further and express disapproval of the late invasion of Spain and of the interference with the Greeks, who were then struggling for independence from Turkey. Monroe, it appears, was strongly inclined to act on Madison's suggestion, but his cabinet took a different view of the situation, and we held to the principle of non intervention in European affairs.⁴⁰

During November 1823, the question of Canning's proposals, and the correspondence and conferences between Mr. Adams and Baron Ruyll frequently occupied the attention of Mr. Monroe and his cabinet. Mr. Adams was of the opinion that Great Britain wanted some public pledge from the United States not only against the forcible intervention of the Holy Alliance in Spanish America but also especially against the acquisition by the United States of any part of these countries.

⁴⁰ Latane, American Foreign Policy, 186-7.

Mr. Calhoun wanted to give Mr. Rush discretionary powers to join in a declaration against the interference of the Holy Alliance, if necessary, even if we had to give a pledge not to take Cuba or Mexico. This Mr. Adams opposed. Later Monroe showed Adams the letters from Jefferson and Madison.

"Calhoun" says Adams, "is perfectly moonstruck by the surrender of Cadiz, and says that the Holy Alliance with 10,000 men will restore all Mexico and South America to Spanish Dominion."⁴¹

On November 14, 1823, Mr. Adams expressed the opinion that we had no right to dispose of the South American countries either by ourselves or in conjunction with any other nation, and no other nation has a right to dispose of them without our consent. This he believed would give us a clue to answer all Mr. Canning's questions with candor and confidence.⁴²

From time to time Mr. Monroe seemed to favor Mr. Calhoun's ideas, but Mr. Adams was opposed and insisted that a stand should be taken against the interference of the Holy Alliance in American affairs. Wirt intimated that the people of the United States would not support a war for the independence of South America. Calhoun thought otherwise; he believed that the Holy Alliance had designs against us and if not resisted would subdue South America. That violent parties would

⁴¹ Moore, Digest of International Law. VI, 399-400

⁴² Ibid. . 400.

arise in this country for and against the Holy Alliance and that we would have to fight for our own institutions. Adams believed that the Holy Alliance had no designs against us, but if left alone they would subdue the South American colonies and partition them among themselves. Russia might take California, Peru, and Chile; France Mexico and England Cuba. Then what would be the situation of the United States? On the other hand, should the Allies interpose and Great Britain successfully oppose them alone, it would throw the colonies completely in her arms and make them her colonies rather than those of Spain. The United States must, therefore, declared Adams, act promptly and decisively.⁴³

On November 25, 1823, Mr. Adams prepared and presented to the cabinet a draft of observations upon the communications lately made by Baron Tnyll. It contained a full declaration of the policy of the United States and concluded with this declaration:

That the United States of America, and their government, could not see with indifference, the forcible interposition of any European power, either to restore the Dominion of Spain over her emancipated colonies, or to transfer any of the possessions heretofore or yet subject to Spain to any other European power.⁴⁴

On December 2, 1823, President Monroe sent a message to Congress, which laid down certain principles concerning the relationship of the European nations and the Americas, which

⁴³ Moore,
Op. Cit., VI, 400 . . .

⁴⁴ W. D. Ford, "John Quincy Adams and the Monroe Doctrine," American Historical Review, VIII, 434.

have since been known as the Monroe Doctrine. The principles enunciated in this message have done more to link his name with the history of his country than all other acts of his life. The parts of the message known as the Monroe Doctrine are quoted in full:

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 negotiations the respective rights and interests of the two nations on the northwest coast of this continent. A similar proposal has 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 maintained, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power.

It was stated at the commencement of the last session that a great effort was then making in Spain and Portugal to improve the condition of the people of those countries, and that it appeared to be conducted with extraordinary moderation. It needs scarcely to be remarked that the result has been, so far, very different from what was then anticipated. Of events in that quarter of the globe with which we have so much intercourse, and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested spectators. The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of the European powers in matters relating to themselves, we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. 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 much blood and treasure, and matured by the wisdom of their most enlightened citizens, and under which 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 to be dangerous to our peace and safety. With 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 them 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 these 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.

The late events in Spain and Portugal show that Europe is still unsettled. Of this important fact as proof none stronger could be adduced than that the allied powers should have thought it proper, on any principle satisfactory to themselves, to have interposed, by force in the internal concerns of Spain. To what extent such interposition may be carried on the same principle is a question in which all independent powers whose governments differ from theirs are interested, even those most remote and surely none more so than the United States. Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, never the less remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government de facto as the legitimate government for us; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy, meeting in all instances, the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none. But in regard to these continents, circumstances are so very eminently and conspicuously different. It is practically impossible that the allied

powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can any one believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition, in any form with indifference. If we look to the comparative strength and resources of Spain and those new governments, and their distance from each other, it must be obvious that she can never subdue them. It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in the hope that other powers will pursue the same course.⁴⁵

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 Broughman 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.

Sir James Mackintosh said:

This coincidence of the two great English commonwealths (for as 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.⁴⁶

The Monroe Doctrine was issued at a time when the President and his supporters were trying to meet a concrete situation. Neither Monroe, nor his contemporaries, thought they were creating and fixing for all time a policy of our

45 Richardson, Messages and Papers of the President, II, 209-217-219.

46 Francis Whorton, Digest of International Law, I, 276.

country. Certainly they did not attach to it the importance that it has assumed in the latter generations of American History.

At first hatred and prejudice of all things of Europe caused us to wish isolation but this soon gave way to the theory of the two spheres of influence, in turn we were forced to look to our frontiers and the problem of expansion, which concerned us with the contiguous territory held by European nations and Russian's threat on the northwest. In turn the Holy Alliance and the revolt of the Spanish colonies held our attention. The message sent to Congress was the culmination of all these problems, and was simply an expression of an American policy developed by Americans in trying to find and work out America's place among nations.

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Typist: Thelma Myers