

THE UNITED STATES RECOGNITION POLICY
RELATIVE
TO THE SOUTH AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT
FROM
1817 to 1823

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PREFACE

The great subject of South American history has been so broad and so little exploited that it must be approached with modesty and care. Its bibliography has by no means reached its confines. Facts of biography are difficult to obtain, and materials relating to it have not to a great extent, been systematically collected or sifted.

This report is a study in a single period and a single phase. It deals with the United States recognition policy of the South American Republics from 1817 to 1823. Few seem to have connected the creation of a policy of recognition with the doctrine of neutrality, or to have dissociated it from the idea of intervention, as has been attempted here. In order to follow the steps of recognition, the writer has attacked the subject from a diplomatic standpoint.

It is an honor to acknowledge my great indebtedness to the History Department and Library of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College for their time and care given me in this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the development of this subject, the United States Recognition Policy Relative to the South American Independence Movement from 1817 to 1823, the writer has attempted to follow the steps of recognition of the South American Republics by the United States by connecting the theory of recognition with the doctrine of neutrality. The absence of any well-developed theory of neutrality until the United States came into existence to create one, prevented the establishment of a theory of recognition, for this latter is dependent upon the former. The neutrality laws of the United States failed to meet the situation created by the revolt of Spain's American colonies. Based upon the proclamation of the first President, and enacted in 1794, the law contemplated wars between independent States, therefore revision

was necessary and this led to the question of recognition.

It will be shown that popular sympathy has always gone out to a people struggling with liberty and independence as their watchwords. Yet it is rarely that the government of the United States has allowed them to blind its eyes to its international duties or interests. The ardent advocacy of recognition of these provinces by such a man as Henry Clay did not move the administration for an instant from its proper course.

The discussion for the specific period 1817 to 1823, was chosen for it covers the period of time that recognition was a question in Congress.

When the 14th Congress met, in the fall of 1816, for its last session, the question of recognition of the South American provinces did not exist. There was widespread sympathy for those provinces in their struggle, and, in general, genuine interest in the events transpiring in their continent. Public opinion in the United States held a hope for ultimate independence and recognition with a feeling that there is a real American community of interest. In spite of this sympathy, the policy of the administration, formulated mostly by Mr. Adams, adhered

to the doctrine of neutrality. But no person of consequence had so much as intimated that the time was ripe for an acknowledgment of the independence of these states. Indeed all the states but Buenos Aires had been extinguished within the past year by the armies of the restored Ferdinand. Before the end of the session the South American question had been reviewed again and the customary expressions of friendship had been evoked once more.

On the 14th of January, 1817, Forsyth, from the House Committee on Foreign Relations, reported a bill¹ which came to be called a bill for making peace between his Catholic Majesty and the town of Baltimore.² It was a revision of the neutrality act, that had been suggested by the President in a special message of 26th of December.³ The dissatisfaction with this neutrality act extended over the rest of the session. Much opposition was shown to strengthening the legislation in the interest of

¹ Annals of Congress, 14 Cong., 2 Sess., p. 477.

² Ibid., p. 732.

³ Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, vol. I, p. 582. (Henceforth cited as Richardson, Messages)

Spain; an act which was felt to be hostile to the rebellious colonies. Some were almost ready for a possible intervention on the side of the latter. Henry Clay thought the existing acts went far enough, agreed that a professed neutrality must be maintained, but admitted a strong hope for the independence of the colonies. When the next Congress met, recognition had been made a question.

CHAPTER II

POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES

During the winter and spring of 1817 the news from South America indicated that affairs had taken a more hopeful appearance for the patriots. A new order seemed to have been born to Buenos Aires, where the Congress of the provinces had come together at Tucuman, and issued, on 9th of July, 1816, a declaration of independence in the name of the United Provinces of Rio de la Plata.¹ Its manifesto reminded the nations of the world that Buenos Aires had maintained an uncontested independence for six years. The patriot armies too, had begun to retrieve their losses. San Martin, in his province of Mendoza, had nearly completed the period of recruiting, and before the spring was over the news reached Washington that he had broken camp, made a march across the Andes and defeated the Spanish army at Chacabuca. With more results to feed upon South American popular and govern-

¹ Annals of Congress, 15 Cong., 1 Sess. p. 1877.

mental interest took a new life, the President of the United States determined to learn the truth about the revolution in order to be ready for any event.

In his efforts to find a suitable agent for this mission, President Monroe turned to Joel R. Poinsett. On April 25, 1817, he wrote him a personal note, asking him to make the trip to Buenos Aires in a public ship, and offering him "liberal compensation."² The interest of the President in the South American movement was further expressed in the letter he wrote to Poinsett. He declared that

The progress of the revolution in the Spanish provinces, which has always been interesting, is made much more so, by many causes, and particularly by a well-founded hope that it will succeed."³

But Poinsett had entered the legislature of South Carolina and declined the appointment.⁴ Forced to give up this plan, the President settled upon a commission, invited Caesar A. Rodney, of Delaware, and John Graham to serve

2 Manning, W. R. Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States Concerning the Independence of the Latin American Nations. vol. I. p.39. (Henceforth cited as Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence.)

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

upon it, and departed from the capitol for a tour through
 New England and the West,⁵ leaving Richard Rush as Secretary
 of State to carry on. Through the months of July and
 August, Rush labored to carry out the plan of his superior,
 but without avail. One commissioner resigned. Rodney
 was detained at home by the illness of a son and the
 secretary did not send a single commissioner. As the
 President was out of communication with Washington for
 several weeks the matter had dropped until his return in
 September. Then the business was resumed with the result
 that on the 4th of December the frigate "Congress"
 sailed from Hampton Road,⁶ carrying Casear A. Rodney,
 John Graham, and Theodorick Bland as commissioners, and
 H. M. Brackenridge as secretary.

In the instructions to the commissioners, Richard
 Rush stated the policy of the United States

The contest between Spain and the Spanish colonies
 in the southern parts of this continent has been,
 from its commencement highly interesting, under
 many views to the United States. As inhabitants

⁵ J. B. McMaster. History of the People of the United States. vol. IV. p.377. (Henceforth cited as McMas ter, Hist. of the Peop. of U. S.)

⁶ Annals of Congress, 15 Cong., 1 Sess. p.2106

of the same hemisphere, it was natural that we should feel a solicitude for the welfare of the colonists. It was nevertheless our duty to maintain the neutral character with impartiality and allow no privileges of any kind to one party, which are not extended to the other. The Government of Spain viewing the colonies as in a state of rebellion, had endeavored to impose upon foreign powers in their intercourse with them, the conditions applicable to such a state. This pretension has not been acceded by this Government, which has considered the contest in the light of a civil war in which the parties were equal. An entire conviction exists that the view taken on this point has been correct, and that the United States have fully satisfied every just claim of Spain.

In other respects we have been made to feel the progress of this contest. Our vessels have been seized and condemned, our citizens made captive and our commerce, even at a distance from the theater of the war, been interrupted. Acting with impartiality towards the parties, we have endeavored to secure from each a just return. In whatever quarter the authority of Spain was abrogated and an independent government erected, it was essential to the security of our rights that we should enjoy its friendship. Spain could not impose conditions on other powers incident to complete sovereignty in places where she did not maintain it. On this principle the United States have sent agents into the Spanish colonies, addressed to the existing authority, whether of Spain or of the colonies, with instructions to cultivate its friendship and secure as far as practicable the faithful observance of our rights.

The contest, by the extension of the revolutionary movement and the greater stability which it appears to have acquired, becomes daily of more importance to the United States. It is by success that the colonists acquire new claims on other powers, which it may comport neither with their interest nor duty to disregard. Several of the colonies having declared their independence and enjoyed it for some years, and the authority of Spain being shaken in others, it seems probable that, if the parties be left to themselves, the most permanent political changes will be effected. It therefore seems incumbent on the United States to watch the movement in its subsequent steps with particular attention,

with a view to pursue such course as a just regard for all those considerations which they are bound to dictate.

Under these impressions, the President deems it a duty to obtain, in a manner more comprehensive than has heretofore been done, correct information of the actual state of affairs in those colonies...."

By the time the commissioners bearing these instructions sailed in December, 1817, the whole question of recognition had assumed a new shape. It had become the subject of a factious opposition waged by Henry Clay. When Monroe became President, the Speaker had set his heart on the position of Secretary of State, which had come to be that of heir-apparent. With his eye fixed upon the Presidency, Clay was thoroughly disgusted and ready to join the opposition when Monroe looked over his head and recalled Adams from the Court of St. James to the position.⁸ He declined the portfolio of war, as he had declined it in the previous year, when Madison had offered it. He returned to Congress eager for a fight and the question of the recognition of the Latin American states that were waging such a stubborn war of liberation was a suitable theme for his oratory. As the friend of

7 Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence. vol. I. p.42.

8 McMasters, Hist. of Peop. of U.S. vol. IV. p. 376.

liberty he might force the hand of the administration, or perhaps influence the succession at the end of Monroe's term. At any rate, he might force his enemies to appear as the friends of Spain and the upholders of a heartless tyranny.⁹ The mutterings of the coming storm were heard during the recess of Congress.

During the summer of 1817 news from South America occupied a prominent place in the American newspapers. The progress of San Martin, in Chile, and the doings of Bolivar and his Congress of Angostura, were described in detail that grew more elaborate as the weeks advanced. In September the topic of immediate recognition was broached in the Richmond Inquirer and the National Intelligencer.¹⁰

Monroe saw the storm coming and questioned his cabinet on the subject. An immediate recognition would remove this explosive topic as grounds for a dangerous debate. But Mr. Adams, though realizing the essential rivalry between himself and the Speaker, did not hesitate

⁹ C. Schurz. Henry Clay. vol.I. p. 146.

¹⁰ J. Q. Adams. Dairy of J. Q. Adams. p. 201. (Henceforth cited as Adams, Diary.)

to avow "my opinion that it is now not expedient for the President to acknowledge the Government of Buenos Aires."¹¹ He continued the preparations begun by Mr. Rush for sending the commissioners to South America, determined not to act without real knowledge of the subject.

On the 3rd of December, 1817, the day before the frigate "Congress" sailed, Henry Clay rose in the House and offered an amendment instructing the Committee on the Message to inquire into what was necessary to secure to the South Americans their rights as belligerents.¹² The motion was accepted without opposition. The period of factious advocacy had begun.

The Secretary of State was by no means blind to the nature of the opposition. Before the first week of the session ended he wrote that Mr. Clay "had already mounted his South American great horse....to control or

¹¹ J. A. Adams, Memoirs. vol.IV. p.15.

¹² Annals of Congress, 15 Cong. 1 Sess. p.401.

overthrow the executive...."¹³ Clay did not force the fighting at once. One of his allies called for the papers relating to the independence and condition of South America on December 5.¹⁴ A few days later he himself directed a discussion of the hostility of the administration toward the revolting provinces.¹⁵ A little later he opposed in general an amendment to the neutrality act.

At the same time, stirred up by the attitude of the opposition, the South American agents in Washington began their try for immediate recognition. None of them had presented credentials justifying demands of a diplomatic nature, but now one, at least, offered to conclude a treaty without instructions. On March 25, 1818, the President sent to Congress a mass of correspondence on South America, together with a critical report by Adams on the demands of the agents.

The day before, Clay had launched into his great speech. With the general appropriations bill under

¹³ Adams, Diary. p. 189.

¹⁴ Annals of Congress. 15 Cong. 1 Sess. p.406.

¹⁵ Ibid., 409, 1890, 1897.

consideration, he had moved an item of \$18,000 to provide for a ministry to the provinces of Rio de la Plata.¹⁶ Some members of Congress, as their record votes show, realized that there was no pressing need for haste in recognizing countries that had not even sent ministers to demand it.

On March 25, 1818, Clay urged upon the House the claims of South America.¹⁷ He was as consistent as his position at the head of the opposition would permit. He disclaimed a desire for war with Spain, or for a departure from the customary course of neutrality, maintaining that a mere recognition was no cause of hostilities. Yet in the same breath he urged that Spain be pressed vigorously for redress for the wrongs she had done to the United States, and that pressure be brought not by the seizure of the Floridas, but by a recognition of her provinces.

With the manifesto of the Congress of Tucuman in his hand he drew an eloquent picture of an oppressed people, revolting not against a mere theory of tyranny, as the North American colonies had done, but against an

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 1469.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1500.

actual tyranny of centuries, horrible, bloody and destructive. Playing on the sympathies of the House with one hand, on the other he emphasized the economic advantages recognition would afford, as he showed the extent of South American commerce, the value of its exports, and the deep and abiding interest of the United States therein. At the same time he calmed the fears of the timid by showing that Spain was in no condition to enter into a war; that the allies had lost their principle of cohesion since Waterloo; that England, the only dangerous power of Europe had a commercial interest in independence even greater than our own.

As to recognition, he showed that the United States had already established a policy of acknowledging the de facto government without regard to its legitimacy. The recognition of the revolutionary governments of France, one after another, prove this conclusively. The refusal to recognize either government in Spain from 1808 to 1815 confirmed his contention. And so, he maintained, our duty to ourselves bound us to recognize the independence of Rio de la Plata, which possessed an organized

government and an unmolested independence for eight years.

In the conclusion of his speech, Clay urged the coordinate right of Congress in recognition, holding it proper for either Congress or the President to take the initial step.

The debate on Clay's amendment continued for four days, revealing a general sympathy for the patriots that brought members from sick beds to speak in their behalf. The heart of the House was generous, but its head leaned strongly to expediency and propriety in spite of Clay's admonition that expediency was the better guide. Even Forsyth, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, and defender of the administration, expressed a strong, hopeful interest in the colonies, opposing the amendment on the grounds of its impropriety, for he denied the fact of independence, the influence of the amendment on other foreign relations, and the insincerity of its origin.

On March 28 the motion was lost by the decisive vote of

115 to 45.¹⁸ The first session of the 15th Congress

¹⁸ Annals of Congress. 15 Cong. 1 Sess. p.1500-1522, 1646.

closed with the issue of South American recognition well before the public, and with Henry Clay pledged as its advocate.

When the Congress met for its second session, the commissioners, sent in December, 1817, had returned, and their reports were transmitted by the President. No two commissioners could agree in interpreting what they saw. Bland soon had lost confidence in the patriots; then Rodney, under the influence of the secretary, Brackenridge, wrote an enthusiastic report, which Graham was unwilling to sign. Accordingly three reports by the commissioners were sent to Congress by the President in November and December, 1818, together with a fourth by Joel R. Poinsett.¹⁹

No new facts of importance were given out in the reports of the commissioners. But the very character of their mission made it difficult to go below the surface in the politics of South America. They were forced to accept such facts as were brought officially

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American State Papers and Foreign Relations, vol. IV, p. 217-248. (Henceforth cited as Amer. St. Papers and For. Rel.)

to their notice. Their generalizations varied with their prejudices. The reports told the same story that had run in the press for eight years. It was the story of political instability. Buenos Aires, since the erection of her Junta, in 1809, had enjoyed independence of Spain, but nothing more. At no time had she possessed a central government whose authority was recognized throughout all the provinces of the old vice-royalty.

With this condition before him, Monroe was non-committal in his message.²⁰ He could see no prospect of a speedy end of the war. He described briefly the conditions of the rebellious governments. The message declared to Congress and the world the determination of the United States to stand neutral in the great contest between Spain and her colonies.

Henry Clay had failed to return to the attack in the second session. Yet recognition and liberation were popular topics. In a way they were a manifestation of the feeling toward Spain that showed itself in popular approval of General Jackson's career in Florida.

²⁰ Richardson, Messages. vol.II. p.43-44.

However, instead of choosing a subject for opposition in which the people could be with him, Clay felt bound to attack the conduct of Jackson. For several weeks of the session, he kept up the fight, to the exclusion of the safer question of recognition. Towards the end of the session Monroe sent to Congress another collection of documents, bearing, this time, on his refusal to grant exequaturs to consuls from South America.²¹ Thereupon Clay rose and apologized for not speaking at length in favor of a recognition, pleaded illness and pressure of business as an excuse, declared that his conviction as to its propriety was unshaken and promised to return to the subject when Congress should meet again.²²

The administration was more than content not to have recognition pressed at this time. Relations with Spain were delicate; in process of negotiation was a treaty. Determined to support the acts of Jackson and to acquire Florida, it was well not to aggravate Spain on the score of her colonies. The treaty was signed

²¹ Amer. St. Papers and For. Rel. vol IV, p. 412.

²² Annals of Congress, 15 Cong., 1 Sess. p.1148.

February 22, 1819. A review of the recognition question in the fall session almost prevented its ratification by the King of Spain, and certainly postponed it.

The 16th Congress met to receive a message that marked an advance toward recognition. Monroe was moving as rapidly as events would allow and Adams would countenance. Adams had little confidence in the South Americans, was unwilling to allow a sentimental sympathy to compromise the government, and argued that the message was an invitation to France and Great Britain to act with the United States in a joint recognition.²³ France

and Russia for their part were both exerting pressure to prevent the act. Clay then remembered his promise of the last winter and renewed his attempt to hasten the steps of the administration.

During the winter of 1819-1820 the relations with Spain, already confused, became more complicated by the revolution in the Spanish peninsula and the acceptance of a new constitution by Ferdinand. The treaty over

²³ Richardson, Messages. vol.II. p.58.

Florida had not yet been ratified. The Spanish minister had been instructed to get a pledge from Monroe that he would not recognize the colonies as a preliminary action to the ratification. On May 9, 1820, the President presented the situation to Congress in a temperate message. He transmitted at this time correspondence with the envoy of his Catholic Majesty over the treaty of February 22, 1819. He commented upon the complaints of Spain regarding the hostility of the citizens and the unfriendly policy of the Government of the United States toward the subjects and dominions of Spain, maintaining that both were "utterly destitute of foundation...."²⁴ He further stated

...in regard to the stipulation proposed as the condition of the ratification of the treaty, that the United States shall abandon the right to recognize the revolutionary colonies in South America, or to form other relations with them when in their judgment it may be just and expedient so to do, it is manifestly so repugnant to the honor and even to the independence of the United States, that it has been impossible to discuss it.²⁵

But, concerning the domestic troubles of Spain he asked Congress

Is this the time to make the pressure? If the United States were governed by views of ambition and aggrandizement many strong reasons might be given in its

²⁴ Ibid., vol II. p.70.

²⁵ Ibid.

favor; but they have no objects of this kind to accept, none which are not founded in justice and which can be injured by forbearance.²⁶

In conclusion, he urged Congress not to decide the question until the next session.

On April 4, Clay had moved that it was expedient to provide outfit and salary for such ministers to South America as the President might deem it expedient to send.²⁷

On May 10, the day after the reception of the message, he brought up his motion in the House. Clay ignored the Spanish treaty. He was unwilling to compensate Spain for the Floridas which we must at any rate ultimately obtain. He was strongly opposed to a southwestern boundary that left Texas outside the United States. Now he seized the opportunity both to frighten Spain into a definite refusal to ratify the treaty, and to attack the policy of the administration. The speech contained little that was new. It was a defiance of Spain. Forgetting his maxim that recognition was no violation of neutrality, Clay regretted that the United States had not recognized the provinces two years before, when they really needed assistance. He

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Annals of Congress, 16 Cong., 1 Sess. p. 178.

urged the creation of an "American System", with the United States as its center, in defiance of the despotisms of the old world. To his surprise, and certainly to the surprise of the President, his motion passed the House. The next day Mr. Adams had the satisfaction of telling the French minister, de Neuville, that if Spain was vexed she had only herself to blame; that the administration contemplated no change of policy.²⁸

At the next session, second and last of the 16th Congress, Clay once more brought this motion up to provide salaries for ministers. For the message of Monroe, as it referred to South America, had been friendly and non-committal,²⁹ and this was Clay's last opportunity for he had declined a reelection that he might resume the practice of law and restore his private affairs. Therefore, on February 3, 1821, he moved, once more, the resolution that had passed in the preceding May, and asked that it be referred to the Committee of the Whole.³⁰ Here three days later he called it up to speak in its defense, a speech that has not been preserved.

28 Ibid., p. 2223-2229.

29 Richardson, Messages. vol.II. p.77

30 Annals of Congress, 16 Cong., 2 Sess., p. 1029.

This motion failed in the Committee of the Whole; it was lost again when brought up in the House on February 9. Clay saw that its rejection was due to form rather than substance, and on the 10th he offered a new resolution to the effect that the House join with the people of the United States in their sympathy with the South Americans; that it was ready to support the President whenever he should think it expedient to recognize their governments. The question was divided on the insistence of one of the members, and the first part was carried by the overwhelming majority of 134 to 12. The second followed with 86 to 68.³¹

With this session Clay retired to private life. His triumph stood for nothing save for emphasizing his position in opposing the administration policy. The President, unmoved by the resolution, continued calmly on the course the administration had marked out for itself. Recognition did not come a day earlier because of the advocacy of Henry Clay.

The final departure of the South American commissioners in December, 1817, marked the commencement at once of

³¹ Ibid. p.1055, 1071, 1081.

Clay's opposition and of a more active policy on the part of the administration. The inclination of Monroe to yield before the threats of the opposition was checked by John Q. Adams. It was changed into a determination to learn the actual conditions of the Republics and to ascertain the attitude which the European powers would take toward recognition when it should come. For the administration, no less than Clay, sympathized with the struggle and contemplated recognition in the near future.

The policy of the administration is further expressed in one of Mr. Adam's political letters in which he wrote

The mention of Buenos Aires brings to my mind an article that I have lately seen in the Boston Patriot...Its tendency was to show the inexpediency and injustice there would be in our taking side with the South Americans in their present struggle against Spain. It was an excellent article, and I should be glad to see the same train of thought further pursued. As for example by a discussion...by what right should we take sides? and who in this state of civil war has constituted us the judge, which of the parties has the righteous cause? then by an inquiry of the cause of the South Americans, and whether it really be as the partisans here allege the same as our own cause in the war of our revolution? whether for instance, if Buenos Aires has formally offered to accept the Infant Don Carlos as the absolute Monarch upon condition of being politically independent of Spain, their cause is the same as our own? whether if Bolivar,

being at the head of the Republic of Venezuela, has solemnly proclaimed the absolute and total emancipation of the Slaves, the cause of Venezuela is precisely the same as ours was? whether, in short, there is any other feature of identity between their cause and ours, than that they are as we were colonies fighting for independence. In our Revolution there were two distinct stages. In the first of which we contended for our civil rights and in the second for our political independence.

In South America, Civil Rights, if not entirely out of the question appear to have been disregarded and trampled upon by all parties. Buenos Aires has no constitution; and its present ruling powers are establishing only by the entire banishment of their predecessors. Venezuela though it has emancipated all those slaves has been constantly alternating between an absolute military government, a Capitulation to Spanish authority, and Guerillas, Black and White, of which every petty chief has acted for purposes of war and Rapine as an independent sovereign. There is finally in South America neither unity of cause nor unity of effort as it was in our revolution....

The attitude of the Powers toward South America seemed likely to undergo a change during 1818. Mr. Adams watched it with a jealous interest. The earliest dispatches of the commissioners told how at Rio de Janeiro the Spanish minister, Count Casa Flores, appears to have been so much alarmed by the suspicion that the object of the commission was the formal acknowledgment of the government of Rio de la Plata that he thought it his duty

³² Worthington, F. C. The Writings of John C. Adams.
vol. VI. p. 282.

to make communication officially to Mr. Sumter that he had received official dispatch from the Duke of San Carlos, the Spanish Ambassador at London, dated November 7, informing him

...that the British government had acceded to the proposition made by the Spanish government of a general mediation of the powers to obtain the pacification of South America, the negotiation of which it was on the point of being decided, whether it should be at London or Madrid.³³

On the receipt of this news, the Secretary of State wrote to the American minister in Paris, Albert Gallatin, complaining of the reserve with which the European powers treated the United States. He regretted at length that they had seen fit to cancel this proposed mediation. If its object

....be any other than to promote total independence political and commercial of South America, we are neither desirous of being invited to take a part in it, nor disposed to accept the invitation if given. Our policy in the contest between Spain and her colonies has been impartial neutrality. Is the proposed general mediation to be a departure from that line of neutrality? If it is, which side of the contest are the allies to take? the side of Spain? on what principle and by what right? As contesting parties in a civil war, the South Americans have rights, which the other powers are bound to respect as much as the rights of Spain; and after having by an avowed neutrality, admitted the existence of those rights, upon what principle of

³³ Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence. vol. I. p.63.

justice can the allies consider them as forfeited or themselves as justifiable in taking sides with Spain against them?

There is no discernable motive of justice or of interest which can induce the allied sovereigns to interpose for the restoration of the Spanish Colonial Dominion in South America. There is none even of policy; for if all the organized power of Europe is combined to maintain the authority of each sovereign over his own people, it is hardly supposed that the sober senses of the allied cabinets will permit them to extend the application of this principle of union to the maintenance of colonial dominion beyond the Atlantic and the Equator.

By the usual principles of international law, the state of neutrality, recognizing the cause of both parties to the contest as just--that is, it avoids all considerations of the merits of the contest. But when abandoning that neutrality, a nation takes one side, in a war of other parties, the first question to be settled is the justice of the cause to be assumed. If the European allies are to take side with Spain, to reduce the South American colonies to submission, we trust they will make some previous inquiry into the justice of the cause they are to undertake. As neutrals we are not required to decide the question of justice. We³⁴ are sure we should not find it on the side of Spain.

These general principles Mr. Gallatin was instructed to communicate informally to the French minister. He was to assure him that it is our earnest desire to pursue a line of policy, at once just to both parties in the contest and harmonious with that of the European allies. That we must know their system, in order to shape our own measures accordingly; but that we do not want to join them in any

³⁴ Ibid., p.66

plan of interference to restore any part of the Spanish
supremacy, in any of the South American provinces. ³⁵

In the same frame of mind, and in some of the same paragraphs, Adams wrote to Richard Rush the following day.

He conjectured wisely, in conclusion, that the British cabinet

....will soon discover the great interest of Great Britain in the total independence of South America, and will promote that event just as far as their obligations towards Spain will permit. The time is probably not far remote, when the acknowledgment of the South American Independence will be an act of friendship toward Spain herself-- when it will be kindness to her to put an end to the self-delusion under which she is wasting all the remnant of her resources, in a war, infamous by the atrocities with which it is carried on, and utterly hopeless of success. It may be an interesting object of your attention to watch the moment when this idea will become prevalent in the British Councils, and to encourage any disposition which may consequently be manifested to a more perfect concert of measures between the United States and Great Britain towards that end; the total independence of the Spanish South American Provinces... ³⁶

In the spring of 1818 the policy of the United States was outlined in the instructions to Rush and Gallatin, and later to George W. Campbell at St. Petersburg. ³⁷ It was unmistakably the policy of John Q. Adams. Regardless of

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 71.

Mr. Clay's position it was a policy distinctly friendly to South America. It watched with considerable apprehension the gathering of the sovereigns at Aix-la-Chapelle; but had a well-founded suspicion that the interest of these same sovereigns would confine their actions to their own side of the Atlantic.

The embarrassments caused to the administration by Henry Clay hardly exceeded those for which the agents of the patriots in the United States, or of the United States in the Southern Republic, were responsible. The activities of the agents were not confined to sessions of Congress, like the former, but were perennial. Don Manuel Hermenegildo de Aguirre had arrived from Buenos Aires in 1817, bearing a commission from the Supreme Director, Pueyrredon, accrediting him as "agent of this Government near that of the United States of America", and asking for him "all the protection and consideration required by his diplomatic rank and the actual state of our relations." ³⁸ Once in the United States, he engaged in the patriotic work of equipping privateers. In odd moments he addressed the Secretary of State to demand

³⁸ Annals of Congress, 15 Cong., 1 Sess. p. 1879, 1880.

recognition and countenance, to complain of the injustice done his country by the neutrality acts, to describe the situation of his government, to emphasize the moderation of his demands and to threaten the United States with severance of commercial relations.

39

Mr. Adams was not a timid man to be frightened into recognition nor was he a weak man to be driven into hostility to the patriots by his lack of consideration. He continued unmoved, though with some irritation, his friendly conservative course. In the summer of 1818 he was forced to refuse compliance with the demands of one de Forrest to be granted an exequatur as Councul General for Buenos Aires in the United States. Here he laid down the doctrine that the granting of an exequatur is a recognition. His own agents caused him the greatest trouble. In one of the revolts in Buenos Aires, Devereux guaranteed a loan that saved the life of the existing government. For this he was dismissed in 1817, by the predecessor of Mr. Adams. His successors, Worthington and Halsey, did little better. Worthington took upon

39 Ibid., p. 1877-1897.

himself the authority of a plenipotentiary, negotiated a commercial treaty on his own responsibility. Halsey entered into privateering schemes and sent blank commissions to the United States. He, too, was removed. On the whole, the position of the Secretary of State was not a happy one. He was the great restraining influence; politicians were shouting for recognition; agents of all sorts were embarrassing the Government, and his own colleagues in the cabinet were discussing the expediency of sending a naval force into southern waters to encourage the insurgent states.⁴⁰

President Monroe was ready at length to move more rapidly in the direction of recognition than was Mr. Adams. A circular was directed to the American ministries at London, Paris and St. Petersburg in August, asking what part these governments "will take in the dispute between Spain and her colonies, and in what light they will view an acknowledgment of the Independence of the Colonies by the United States? Whether Spain will declare war against us?"⁴¹

⁴⁰ J. Q. Adams, Memoirs. vol. IV. p. 70, 88, 91, 158.

⁴¹ Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence. vol. I. p.74,75.

When the responses to this circular began to come in, it was clear that Mr. Adams had not misjudged the attitude of the Powers. In London recognition would meet with popular approval, France would view a recognition with disfavor, and Russia would not fight alone. The Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle adjourned without taking action acceptable to Spain. It recommended a mediation which England accepted on the condition that in event of failure in reconciliation of the combatants there should be no resort to coercion.

Before these responses reached Washington Congress had convened and the President had been forced once more to decide upon a policy. But this time the discordant reports of the three South American Commissioners were at hand. With the picture of political disorder revealed by these reports and being uncertain as to the policies of the allies, Adams did not hesitate to delay. A year before Monroe had thought seriously of an immediate recognition; now he seems to have agreed with Adams for he said

....From the view taken of this subject found on all the information that we have been able to obtain, there is good cause to be satisfied with the course heretofore pursued by the United States in regard to this contest, and to conclude that it is proper to

shere to it especially in the present state of affairs." ⁴²

The second session of the 15th Congress began in November, 1818. In this session Clay built up his opposition on the basis of the administration's policies in Florida rather than in South America. By attacking the conduct of Jackson, he allowed the administration to pursue its policy unhampered. Mr. Adams developed his policy in dealing with Congress in connection with the demands of the South American agents. David C. deForest from Buenos Aires, and Don Lino deClemente from Venezuela, were at this time demanding recognition as consuls. Clemente was not given a hearing on his application due to his connection with privateering. DeForest was heard but refused on the ground that granting an exequatur was tantamount to a recognition. The House called for the papers upon the applications, and received a full report from the Secretary of State. ⁴³

At the end of 1818, Monroe felt the time for recognition was rapidly approaching. European intervention on the behalf of Spain grew less likely. In January

42 Richardson., Messages. vol. II. p. 44.

43 Manning, W. R. Diplomatic Correspondence. vol I. p.80.

1819, the Secretary of State sent new instructions to the minister in London to this effect.

In these instructions Mr. Adams wrote Richard Rush that the policy of the United States had been that of rigid neutrality. We had not recognized them as independent, nor received their consuls. That we gave the parties as equal rights as possible, but admitted our neutrality operated against Spain. He wrote that Spain solicited the aid of the Allies to mediate to prevent separation of the Colonies from Spain, but Great Britain had regarded that action as a departure from neutrality. The United States was opposed to any third party intervention. Mr. Adams, reflecting the changing attitude of the administration wrote that the success of the contest ought to end with the "total Independency of South America," but we desire to do our duty to Spain and keep the good-will of the Powers. Since Spain could not restore her power these new States should be recognized as independent. England was to be invited to act in concert with the United States in recognition. When Independence was recognized, it was to be without deciding upon the extent of territory of any province.

44

44 Ibid., vol. I. p.85.

There was evidence that recognition would have come at this time, but that the Florida negotiations postponed it. For two years the signing and ratification of the Florida treaty was endangered by a recognition. For further proof that the recognition was the cause of delay in Spain's ratification of the treaty was that recognition did not come until the winter of 1822.

The whole burden of foreign policy seems to have been placed on Mr. Adam's shoulders. To conciliate Spain and induce her to ratify the Florida treaty, he also had to fight the opposition in the House, the pretensions of the South Americans and the unneutral disposition of his own cabinet. When President Monroe sent his message to Congress, May 9, 1820, with its hard words on the demands of Spain, the first storm broke, and Clay gained his first triumph.

More agents were sent to South America in 1820, instructed to protest against the acts of insurgent privateers and to acquire information. Charles S. Todd went as agent to Colombia. He was instructed by Adams as

45. Ibid., vol. I, p. 124.

follows on the recognition question

With regard to the formal recognition by the Government of the United States of the Republic of Colombia, should anything be said to you, the obvious reply will be that you have not been authorized to discuss the subject. As a reason for this reserve it may be alleged that besides the actual War still waged by Spain, during which the Independence of the other party could not be acknowledged without a departure from our avowed and long-established system of neutrality, the changes still occurring will require some lapse of time to give to the Republic that character of permanency which would justify the formal acknowledgment of it by foreign powers.⁴⁶

J. B. Prevost, agent at Lima, had been transferred to Buenos Aires in 1819 on the dismissal of Worthington and Halsey. With a vacancy in this post, Adams commissioned John M. Forbes as agent to Chile or Buenos Aires. In the instructions to Forbes, the Secretary reviewed recent upheavels in Buenos Aires, warning him as Todd had been warned, not to discuss a recognition, and "You will remark... that the Government of the United States have never intended to secure to themselves any advantage, commercial or otherwise, as an equivalent for acknowledging the Independence of any part of South America...."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 126.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 140.

When Forbes landed in Buenos Aires in 1821, he found a most distracted condition prevailing. A successful revolt in 1820, had just ended against the Congress and the Supreme Director, Pueyrrodon, who had been engaged in secret negotiations with France and Spain. The purpose of these negotiations was to establish a Bourbon dynasty in South America. But a revolt having overthrown Pueyrrodon, the opposition started trials of high treason causing a decade of turmoil.

Forbes, for his part, was received with distinguished honors. But this was due largely to the rumors that he bore a formal recognition of the government of Buenos Aires. It was soon found out, however, that Forbes adhered to his instructions and could not be lured into partisan politics.

In May, 1821, there appeared in Buenos Aires two influential journalist-patriots, Bernardo Rivadavia and Manuel Jose Garcia. These two had just returned from a diplomatic mission in Europe. Rivadavia had once been the head of the government and when Pueyrrodon's administration fell, Rivadavia became Minister of State, while Garcia took the Treasury. This was the beginning of an orderly government in Buenos Aires. Garcia inaugurated a sound policy by paying the debts of the

government, and paid them in gold. Rivadavia recalled all privateers sailing under the flag of Buenos Aires and revoked their commissions.⁴⁸ At the same time other Provinces had driven the Spanish from its last hope in keeping them, for Mr. Forbes writes September 2, 1821

At the moment I am writing, a salvo of artillery and the most extravagant demonstrations of joy through streets, announce the capture of Lima by San Martin. If this news be true, it puts the Seal of Independence on South America. The Spanish Royalty, driven from its last hope in these Provinces, and enlightened by a Representative Government, will, I think, within six months, acknowledge their Independence.⁴⁹

This analysis of events proved to be correct. Progress had not been confined to Buenos Aires, or to the leadership of Rivadavia and Garcia. San Martin, in July, 1821, marched into the city of Lima. Bolivar defeated the Spanish General Morillo, June 24. On July 13, the Congress at Cucuta proclaimed the permanent union of Venezuela and New Granada. In August, a federative constitution for the new republic was set up. The year 1821 was marked by successes of the republican armies and by the establishing of orderly governments in the most important of

⁴⁸ Amer. St. Papers and For. Rel. vol. IV. pp. 822-23.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 820.

the South American States. Meanwhile across the Atlantic, Spain had come to her senses. The successful revolution of 1820, making Ferdinand VII Constitutional monarch, was followed by an attempt to reconcile the colonies and the mother country, but in vain.

The South American provinces in 1821 had achieved their independence, and a recognition had become justifiable. The United States came to this conclusion when the Florida treaty with Spain was ratified in February, 1821.

Chapter III

RECOGNITION

When the 17th Congress met in December, 1821, Clay was no longer a member and with him had disappeared the ardent desire by Congress for recognition. But President Monroe, for his part, was not far from recognition when he declared in his message to this Congress

....that it would be impossible for Spain to reduce these colonies by force, and equally so that no conditions short of their independence would be satisfactory to them. It may therefore be presumed, and it is earnestly hoped, that the Government of Spain, guided by enlightened and liberal councils, will find it to comport to its interests and due to its magnanimity to terminate this exhausting controversy on that basis. To promote this result by friendly counsel with the Government of Spain will be the object of the Government of the United States.....¹

The communications from the American agents in South America convinced the administration that the time had come for recognition. In January Adams replied to one of the frequent demands of the Colombian agent Torres, that the President had the matter of recognition under

¹ Richardson, Messages. vol.II. p.105.

consideration. On January 28, 1822, Adams wrote to Todd, who had returned from Colombia that "it is probable that the formal recognition of the Republic of Colombia will ensue at no distant day."²

On March 8, 1822, responding to a call for documents of January 30th, President Monroe recommended that the independence of the South American republics be acknowledged. He outlined briefly the long struggle of the colonies, the sympathy of the people of the United States and the policy of neutrality that had checked that sympathy. From the review of the situation in South America he concluded "that its fate is settled, and that the Provinces which have declared their independence and are in the enjoyment of it ought to be recognized."³

In this same message the President presumed that Spain would soon become reconciled to the separation, yet he admitted that he had received no recent information on that subject from Spain, or from the other Powers. It had been understood for some time that the Powers were not yet prepared for recognition. But the President's stand

² Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence. vol. I p. 144.

³ Richardson, Messages. vol. II. p. 116.

upon this matter was expressed clearly when he declared that "the immense space between those powers, even those which border on the Atlantic, and these Provinces makes the movement an affair of less interest and excitement to them than to us...."⁴

In the message also, the President stated his views on relations with the parties involved. He was looking toward the future for he said

In proposing this measure it is not contemplated to change thereby in the slightest manner our friendly relations with either of the parties, but to observe, in all respects, as heretofore, should the war be continued, the most perfect neutrality between them. Of this friendly disposition an assurance will be given to the Government of Spain, to whom it is presumed it will be, as it ought to be, satisfactory. The measure is proposed under a thorough conviction that it is in strict accord with the law of nations, that it is just and right as to the parties, and that the United States owe it to their station and character in the world, as well as to their essential interests, to adopt it. Should Congress concur in the view herein presented, they will doubtless see the propriety of making the necessary appropriations for carrying it into effect.⁵

With the departure of Henry Clay from the House of Representatives the question of recognition had been restored to its proper place, the State Department. There was no one whose interests would cause them to make use of a generous popular sentiment to drag the foreign policy of

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

the government into Congress. The sentiment continued to exist and it was felt by Adams and Monroe as keenly as by Congress and the people. The purely factious nature of Clay's advocacy of recognition is shown by the fact that the 17th Congress felt no necessity to take the matter from the hands of the President. Even after the documents called for in January, 1822, the papers paid no attention to the subject. The message of March 8 was received with calmness, though with general satisfaction. It does small credit to Clay's political wisdom that he spent four years in advocacy of an assured cause, and that for all his efforts he could not hasten by a day the advance of the government in recognizing the South American Republics.

During the weeks following March 8, 1822, the message with its accompanying documents was reprinted generally throughout the country. The information published at this time was not new, and was received accordingly without general enthusiasm. South America had already gained its independence, so recognition was an acknowledgement of a fact and it came too late to be considered as an emotional appeal.

The Spanish minister in Washington, Don Joaquin de Anduaga, registered a formal protest with the Secretary of State as soon as Monroe's message reached him. The notice of March 9 was about what might have been expected. Where is "the right of the United States," he demanded, "to sanction and declare legitimate a rebellion, without cause, and the event of which is not even decided?"⁶ He denied the fact of independence, and reserving to Spain all her rights in the province despite the act. In his reply of April 9, Adams justified the action of the executive, admitted the reservation of Spain's rights, for recognition has no effect upon existing rights, and then closed the controversy.⁷ No other European power expressed formal disapprobation of the policy of the United States.

The formal steps in recognition occupied three months in the spring of 1822. The message of the President was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, which on March 10, reported resolutions sustaining the policy

⁶ Amer. St. Papers and For. Rel. vol. IV. p. 845.

⁷ Ibid., p. 846.

of the administration and instructing the Committee on Ways and Means to report a bill for the salaries of ministers to South America. After slight debate, the resolutions were adopted with but one dissenting vote. On April 10, the debate on the bill for the missions was begun. This bill was passed by Congress and signed by the President in spite of the protests of Spain.⁸ On June 19, 1822, John Quincy Adams presented Mr. Manuel Torres as Charge d'Affaires from the republic of Colombia to the President. This incident was chiefly interesting as being the first formal act of recognition of an independent South American Government.

⁸ Annals of Congress, 17 Cong., 1 Sess., p. 1314, 1382, 1518.

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