
LETTERS CONCERNING THE ANNEXATION OF CUBA.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE, WITH ACCOMPANYING PAPERS, IN RESPONSE TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE OF MARCH 2, 1901.

DECEMBER 5, 1901.—Read; referred to the Committee on Relations with Cuba and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate:

I transmit herewith a report from the Secretary of State, with accompanying papers, in response to the resolution of the Senate of March 2, 1901, requesting him "to send to the Senate copies of letters written by Thomas Jefferson to President Madison and President Monroe concerning the annexation of Cuba."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

WHITE HOUSE,
December 5, 1901.

The PRESIDENT:

In response to the resolution of the Senate of March 2, 1901, calling for "copies of letters written by Thomas Jefferson to President Madison and President Monroe concerning the annexation of Cuba," the Secretary of State has the honor to lay before the President, with a view to their transmission to the Senate, copies of papers as listed below.

Respectfully submitted.

JOHN HAY.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 4, 1901.

Inclosures.

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, October 17, 1823.
Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, October 24, 1823.
Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, October 24, 1823.

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson.

OAKHILL October 17, 1823

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

My own impression is that we ought to meet the proposal of the British govt., & to make it known, that we would view an interference on the part of the European powers, and especially an attack on the Colonies, by them, as an attack on ourselves, presuming that if they succeeded with them, they would extend it to us. I am sensible however of the extent, & difficulty of the question, & shall be happy to have yours & Mr Madisons opinions on it. I do not wish to trouble either of you with small objects, but the present one is vital, involving the high interests, for which we have so long & so faithfully, & harmoniously, contended together. Be so kind as to enclose to him the despaches, with an intimation of the motive.

With great respect & regard I am dear Sr, your friend

JAMES MONROE

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison.

[Th: J. to J. Madison.]

I forward you two most important letters sent to me by the President and add his letter to me by which you will percieve his primâ facie views. This you will be so good as to return to me, and forward the others to him. I have recieved Trumbull's print of the Dectn of Independance, & turning to his letter am able to inform you more certainly than I could by memory that the print costs 20. D. & the frame & glass 12. D. say 32. D. in all. to answer your question, Pythagoras has the reputation of having first taught the true position of the sun in the center of our system & the revolution of the planets

around it. his doctrine, after a long eclipse was restored by Copernicus, and hence it is called either the Pythagorean or Copernican system. health and affectionate salutations to Mrs Madison and yourself

MONTICELLO, Oct. 24, 23.

From Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe.

MONTICELLO Oct. 24. 23.

DEAR SIR 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 independance. that made us a nation; this sets our compass, and points the course which we are to steer thro' the ocean of time opening on our view. 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 2d. never to suffer Europe to intermeddle in Cis-Atlantic affairs. America, North & South, has a set of interests distinct from those of Europe, and peculiarly her own. she should therefore have a system of her own, separate and apart from that of Europe. while the last is laboring to become the domicil of despotism, our endeavor should surely be to make our hemisphere that of freedom. one nation, most of all, could disturb us in this pursuit; she now offers to lead, aid, and accompany us in it. by acceding to her proposition, we detach her from the band of despots, bring her mighty weight into the scale of free government, and emancipate at one stroke a whole continent, which might otherwise linger long in doubt and difficulty. Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of any one, or all on earth; and with her on our side we need not fear the whole world. with her then we should the most sedulously nourish 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 it's consequence, is not her war, but ours. it's object is to introduce and to establish the American system, of ousting from our land all foreign nations, of never permitting the powers of Europe to intermeddle with the affairs of our nations. it is to maintain our own principle, not to depart from it. and if, to facilitate this, we can effect a division in the body of the European powers, and draw over to our side it's most powerful member, surely we should do it. but I am clearly of Mr Canning's opinion, that it will prevent war, instead of provoking it. with Great Britain withdrawn from their scale and shifted into that of our two continents, all Europe combined would not dare to risk war. nor is the occasion to be slighted, which this proposition offers, of declaring our Protest against the atrocious violations of the rights of nations by the interference of any one in the internal affairs of another; so flagitiously begun by Bonaparte and now continued by the equally lawless alliance, calling itself Holy.

But we have first to ask ourselves a question. do we wish to acquire to our own Confederacy any one or more of the Spanish provinces? I candidly confess that I have ever looked on Cuba as the

most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of states. the controul which, with Florida point this island would give us over the Gulph of Mexico, and the countries and the Isthmus bordering on it, as well as all those whose waters flow into it, would fill up the measure of our political well-being. yet, as I am sensible that this can never be obtained, even with her own consent, but by war; and as her independance, which is our second interest, and especially her independance of England, can be secured without it, I have no hesitation at abandoning my first wish to future chances, and accepting it's independance with peace and the friendship of England, rather than it's association, at the expence of a war, and her enmity. I could honestly therefore join in the declaration proposed that we aim not at the acquisition of any of those possessions, that we will not stand in the way of any amicable arrangement between any of them and the mother country: but that we will oppose, with all our means, the forcible interposition of any other power, either as auxiliary, stipendiary, or under any other form or pretext, and most especially their transfer to any power, by conquest, cession, or acquisition in any other way.

I should think it therefore advisable that the Executive should encourage the British government to a continuance in the dispositions expressed in these letters by an assurance of his concurrence with them, as far as his authority goes, and that as it may lead to war, the Declaration of which is vested in congress, the case shall be laid before them for consideration at their first meeting under the reasonable aspect in which it is seen by himself.

I have been so long weaned from political subjects, and have so long ceased to take any interest in them, that I am sensible that I am not qualified to offer opinions worthy of any attention. but the question now proposed involves consequences so lasting, and effects so decisive of our future destinies, as to kindle all the interest I have heretofore felt on these occasions, and to induce me to the hazard of opinions, which will prove my wish only to contribute still my mite in what may be useful to our country, and praying you to accept them at only what they are worth, I add the assurance of my constant and affectionate friendship and respect.

TH: JEFFERSON