

**James Madison to James Barbour, December 5, 1823. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.**

**TO JAMES BARBOUR. MAD. MSS.**

Decr. 5, 1823.

Dear Sir Your favor of the 2d was duly recd. the evening before the last. I thank you for it and return as desired the Pamphlet of Cunningham, your remarks on which appear very just.

You ask my views of a Resolution to be proposed to the Senate advising a Treaty of Co-operation with G. B. agst. an interference of the Allied powers for resubjugating S. America.<sup>1</sup> You will take them for what they are worth, which can be but little with my imperfect knowledge of the facts & circumstances that may be known to yourself.

<sup>1</sup> Barbour was then a Senator from Virginia. He said in his letter: "The most important part [of the President's message] will refer, but remotely however, to the probable interference of the Allied Powers in the internal concerns of the Spanish provinces. The information received furnishes too much ground to believe that a design of that sort is seriously meditated. I have a serious thought of proposing a resolution advising the President to co-operate by treaty with Great Britain to prevent it. If it be not asking too much of you I should be very much gratified with your views on this interesting subject."— *Mad. MSS.*

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The Message of the Presidt. which arrived by an earlier mail than usual, has I observe distinctly indicated the sentiments of the U. S. with respect to such an interference.<sup>2</sup> But in a case of such

<sup>2</sup> Madison wrote to Monroe, December 6:

“I rec , by yesterday's mail your favor of the 4th, covering a copy of the Message & another copy under a blank cover. It presents a most interesting view of the topics selected for it. The observations on the foreign ones are well moulded for the occasion, which is rendered the more delicate & serious by the equivocal indications from the Brit. Cabinet. The reserve of Canning after his frank & earnest conversations with Mr. Rush is mysterious & ominous. Could he have stepped in advance of his Superiors? or have they deserted their first objects? or have the allies shrunk from theirs? or is any thing taking place in Spain which the adroitness of the Brit Govt. can turn agst. the allies, and in favor of S. America? Whatever may be the explanation, Canning ought in Candour, after what had passed with Mr. Rush, not to have withheld it; and his doing so enjoins a circumspect reliance on our own Councils & energies. One thing is certain that the contents of the Message will receive a very close attention every where, and that it can do nothing but good anywhere.”— *Mad. MSS.*

peculiarity & magnitude, a fuller manifestation of the National will may be expedient, as well to bear out the Executive in measures within his Department, as to make the desirable impressions abroad. The mode you have thought of would certainly be of great avail for the first purpose, and if promulged for the second also; But would not declaratory Resolutions by the two Houses of Congress be of still greater avail for both? They would be felt by the Executive as the highest sanction to his views, would inspire G. B. with the fullest confidence in the policy & determination of the U. S. and would have all the preventive effect on the Allied powers of which they are susceptible from a monitory measure from this quarter.

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It can hardly be doubted that G. B. will readily co-operate with this Country, or rather that she wishes our co-operation with her agst. a foreign interference for subverting the Independence of Spanish America. If the attempt can be prevented by remonstrance she will probably unite with us in a proper one. If she begins with that, she will not hesitate, to proceed, if necessary, to the last resort, with us fighting by her side. If any consideration were to restrain her from that resort even without our co-operation, it would be the dilemma of seeing our *neutral* commerce & navigation flourishing at the expence of hers; or of throwing us into a war agst. her by renewing her maritime provocations.

On the whole I think we ought to move hand in hand with G. B. in the experiment of awing the Confederated Powers into forbearance; and if that fail in following it by means which cannot fail, and that we cannot be too prompt or too decisive in coming to an understanding & concert with her on the subject. This hemisphere must be protected agst. the doctrines & despotisms which degrade the other. No part of it can be as secure as it ought to be, if the whole be not so. And if the whole be sound & safe, the example of its principles will triumph gradually every where.

How much is it to be regretted that the Brit. Govt. shrunk from even remonstrance agst. the invasion of old Spain and that it has not the magnimity to interpose, late as it is in behalf of the Greeks. No nation ever held in its hand in the same degree the destiny of so great a part of the civilized world, and I cannot but believe that a glorious use would be made of the opportunity, if the head of the Nation was worthy of its heart.