

Thomas Jefferson to Gouverneur Morris, June 13, 1793, with List of Enclosures, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE U. S. MINISTER TO FRANCE J. MSS. (GOUVERNEUR MORRIS)

Philadelphia June 13, 1793.

Dear Sir, —The insulated state in which France is placed with respect to all the world almost by the present war, has cut off all means of addressing letters to you through other countries. I embrace the present occasion by a private individual going to France directly, to mention that since the date of my last public letter, which was April 24, & which covered the President's proclamation of Apr, I have received your Nos. 17 to 24. M. de Ternant notified us of his recall on the 17th of May, & delivered the letter of the Provisory Executive council to that effect. I now inclose you the President's answer to the Council, which you will be pleased to deliver; a copy of it is also inclosed, open, for your information. Mr. Genet delivered his credentials on the same clay on which M. de Ternant took his leave, and was received by the President. He found himself immediately immersed in business, the consequence of this war. The incidents to which that gives daily rise, & the questions respecting chiefly France& England, fills the Executive with business, equally delicate, difficult & disagreeable. The course intended to be pursued being that of a strict & impartial neutrality, decisions, rendered by the President rigorously on that principle, dissatisfy both parties, & draw complaints from both. That you may have a proper idea of them, I inclose you copies of several memorials & letters which have past between the Executive & the ministers of those two countries, which will at

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the same time develop the principles of the proceedings, & enable you to justify them in your communications should it be necessary. I inclose also the answer given to Mr. Genet on a proposition from him to pay up the whole of the French debt at once. While it will enable you to explain the impracticability of the operation proposed, it may put it in your power to judge of the answers which would be given to any future proposition to that effect, & perhaps to prevent their being brought forward.—The bill lately passed in England prohibiting the business of this country with France from passing through the medium of England is a temporary embarrassment to our commerce, from the unhappy predicament of it's all hanging on the pivot of London. It will be happy for us should it be continued till our merchants may establish connections in the countries in which our produce is consumed & to which it should go directly.

Our Commissioners have proceeded to the treaty with the North Western Indians. They write however that the treaty will be a month later than was expected. This delay should it be extended will endanger our losing the benefit of our preparations for the campaign, & consequently bring on a delicate question whether these shall be relinquished for the result of a treaty in which we never had any confidence? The Creeks have proceeded in their depredations till they assume the appearance of formal war. It scarcely seems

possible to avoid it's becoming so. They are so strong, & so far from us as to make very serious addition to our Indian difficulties. It is very probable that some of the circumstances arising out of our affairs with the Indians, or with the belligerent powers of Europe may occasion the convocation of Congress at an earlier day than that to which it's meeting stands at present.

I send you the forms of the passports given here. The one in three columns is that now used: the other having been soon discontinued. It is determined that they shall be given in our own ports only, & to serve but for one voyage. It has also been determined that they shall be given to all vessels *bonâ fide* owned by American citizens *wholly*, whether built here or not. Our property, whether in the form of vessels, cargoes, or anything else, has

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a right to pass the seas untouched by any nation, by the law of nations: and no one has a right to ask where a vessel was built, but where is she owned? To the security which the law of nations gives to such vessels against all nations, are added particular stipulations with three of the belligerent powers. Had it not been in our power to enlarge our national stock of shipping suddenly in the present exigency, a great proportion of our produce must have remained on our hands for want of the means of transportation to market. At this time indeed a great proportion is in that predicament. The most rigorous measures will be taken to prevent any vessel not wholly and

bonâ fide owned by American citizens from obtaining our passports. It is much our interest to prevent the competition of other nations from taking from us the benefits we have a right to expect from the neutrality of our flag; and I think we may be very sure that few if any will be fraudulently obtained within our ports.

Tho our spring has been cold & wet, yet the crops of small grain are as promising as they have ever been seen. The Hessian fly however to the North, & the weevil to the South, of the Potowmac, will probably abridge the quantity. Still it seems very doubtful whether we shall not lose more for want of the means of transportation, & I have no doubt that the ships of Sweden & Denmark would find full employment here.