
**James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, July 30, 1796, from
Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe Correspondence,
Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt,
Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson

Paris July 30. 1796.

Dear Sir

I have lately recd. yr. favors of the 2 & 21 of March last & by which I find to my surprise, that only two letters from me & those of the last year had reached you, tho' I had written one more of the last year & two of the present one.

Frouille as I informed you in one of these was one of the victims of the reign of terror. Dr. Simm is living & much fortified to find he has a place in yr. memory. The old gent. was some what afflicted with the hypocondra on my arrival & wh. proceeded from the horrible abuses that were practic'd rather before period; but he is now well, having breakfasted with me to day, walking a league to do it, & desires to be affecy. remembered to you. I will procure for you the books you mention, but to execute that of the Encyclopedia it will be well for you to send me an acct. of what you have already recd., as otherwise it may be difficult form the confusion wh. took place, even in those things, here at a certain time; I will also thank you to procure for me a like note of what I have, as I wish to send them at the same time for us both. I believe the work is now complete.

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On this side of the water the scene has greatly changed for the better; in favor of republican govt.; for since the adoption of the new constitution liberty has as it were been rescued from

the dust, where she was trampled under foot by the mob of Paris, when leaders were perhaps in foreign pay, and restored to the elevated station she ought to hold, & where she is becoming as she ought to be, the idol of the country. France never bore, at any period of her history so commanding a position as she now bears, towards all the powers of Europe, nor did she ever approach it. Since the opening of the campaign all Italy has in a great measure been subjugated. The Austrian army combined with the Sardinian & wh. protected Italy (by wh. I mean those powers in the coalition) was vanquished in the very opening of the campaign in several severe actions, & finally driven thro' the tyrol country out of Italy. After this or rather after two or three defeats, Sardinia obtained peace upon terms you have doubtless seen & since all the other powers have done the same Naples excepted & who has no an Envoy here to obtain it. They have all paid money, yeilded pictures & in the instance of the pope, manuscripts of great value, & shut the Engh. from their ports. The French have likewise entered Leghorn upon the principle the Engh. hold it as a deposit for supplies for Corsica &c. & had likewise violated the neutrality of Tuscany agnst. the French, & in pursuit of the Austrians who fled that way. They entered after them the Venetian territory. Thus you see the state of affrs in that quarter. Upon the Rhine too the French have been victorious, in several actions agnst the Imperial forces driving them all on the other side, on wh. side & some distance in the interior, the French armies now likewise are. They seem indeed to have gained a decided preponderance over their enemies here, tho' by no means in the degree they have in the other quarters; for the Austrian armies tho several times defeated, & seeking apparently to shun for the present a genl. action are nevertheless strong & united, protect-

-ing the country by their positions as well as by the forts wh. line the rivers emptying into the Rhine. It is often rumoured that negotiations are depending with the Emperor & in

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Paris, & wh. I think more than probable but yet know nothing certain on the subject. If the French shod. not be discomfited by some sudden reverse of fortune, & wh. there is at present but little prospect, it cannot well be otherwise than that peace shod. be a made soon with the Emperor, since he must now abandon all hope of recovering the Belgic, &c. & since it is to be presumed the French will insist on nothing beyond what they claimed in the commencmt. of the campaign. It is to be observed they have entered Frankfort & upon wh. city they have laid an imposition of 35 millions of florins, a sum I presume beyond the ability of the place to pay it.

The general sentiment is to have no peace with Engld. for the present & to wh. they are inclined as well in gratification of the resentment they bear that country for the trouble it has brot. On this, as in the policy of keeping some employment for the immense force that will be on foot after the war on the continent is closed. It seems to be the fixed determination of this govt. to inflict some great & rigorous punishment upon that nation if in its power, & with this view, & for the purpose of striking at the source of its prosperity all its treaties with the Italian powers are formed are formed, & whereby Engld. will scarecely find admittance into any of their ports. This however of a delicate subject for me to write on, considering this letter passes thro Engld, the bearer Dr. Edwards preferring that rout to the necessity of making a visit to Halifax or Bermuda & wh. he wod. probably be forced to do in case he sailed directly from the port of France. To him therefore I refer you for whatever is interesting in this or any other topic omitted here, & relating to

French affrs & with wh. he is probably well acquainted.

In the interior relations the aspect is equally flattering as in the exterior. The financial system, it is true, is bad but yet not worse than it has been ever since my arrival. Their national domain is the great fund, & two or three times they have passed laws for throwing this away but upon an idea the plan adopted was solid & wod. be productive: soon, however, it was discovered that these plans were visionary, & answered no end but to cede their property & give discontent to the whole nation, a few land jobbers in each

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district excepted & some foreigners of the same respectable description, & whereupon they came back upon what they had done & remodified it. They seem to consider the ill success of the plan as a kind of breach of contract on the part of the purchasers, & therefore making it void ab initio. One thing, however, is to be observed that they never do the purchasers any real injustice, so far as to enable them to say they are made to pay even so much as a third of the value of the property: they only give them cause to make a great noise abt. publick faith &c. and wh. you know none are so apt to make as those who have no faith at all .This govt. seems to have a horror of banks, funding systems &c. & therefore attempts every other resource to preference to those.

In other views the prospect is excellent. The part of discontented among those who were marshalled on the side of the revolution, diminish daily & seems to be gradually reducing to those who dishonored it in the days of Robertspre. & his associates; men who were probably in the pay of foreign powers & employed to perpetuate those atrocities

merely to make the revolution odious & thus oppose it, & who in consequence expect punishment from any established order of things. There are it is true some exceptions to this, and among men of principle who seem to fear the govt. will incline too much into the other scale, but at present I see no cause for such a suspicion. And on the side of royalty its adherents likewise seem daily to diminish in numbers & to be likewise declining to those who are inflicted with a bias for that kind of govt. wh. nothing can eradicate: upon those minds no proof can work conviction. But the ranks of this corps throughout France has lessened, since this govt. was established comparatively to nothing. Before this event the people of this country estimated the merits of republican govt. by those of the revolution, & therefore it is not surprising that many, and even among those who were ardent & active agents in putting it in motion, shod. have shrunk from it. Europe presented no example of republican govt. or of any other kind of free govt. upon wh. they cod. dwell with pleasure & therefore the revolution was their only standard. But since this govt. was established a new and more impressive example is before them, & wh. be assured has produc'd already

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a wonderful effect in reconciling the bulk of the people to it. I have this from many quarters & therefore confide in what I communicate.

This is a short sketch of the actual state of things here according to the view I have of it, & wh. may be durable or fluctuating according as events

yet depending may unfold themselves: for yet the scene of this great movement is not closed, nor can any one pronounce what its issue will be untill it is closed.

I rejoice that you pay attention to the improvement of my farm near you, since we look to it as to a plan of comfort from the unquiet theatre on wh. we now stand: for to me & in more views than one it has been a very unquiet one indeed. But I think you can readily perceive why it is so, when you contemplate all the circumstances that apply to me, in regard to publick events since my arrival in the country: tis therefore unnecessary & unsafe to enter into them upon the present occasion. We never meant a long continuance here, & probably the term we had in view may yet be shortened. I wish therefore I could form a commencement of the house you suggested this fall or as soon as possible & upon wh. head one of my letters was very minute: upon this I shall write you soon again.

I have done everything in my power in favr. of Mr. DeRieux but without effect. We have a small house next his aunt's & wh. we took to supervise the education of our child at St. Germain's, as likewise that of Mr. Jones's & a son of John Rutledge's who are at school there, in the hope too of seeing the old lady & interesting her to assist him. But she shuns me, as she would an officer of the peace from whom she expected a process of the revolutionary kind: and a visit wh. Mrs. M made her sometime since in the hope of appeasing her fears of importunate solicitation was rendered very disagreeable by her abruptly opening the subject, as soon as she entered & speaking of nothing else whilst she staid, but the im-

-possibility of rendering any service to her nephew. Under these circumstances it will I fear be impossible to obtain any thing for him. I will however if possible. The order some time

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since inclosed for his uncle I still have, being unwilling to forward it, lest it shod. be paid in assignats or mandats, but I will attend to this object also in suitable time.

We are well & desire to be affectionably remembered to Mr. & Mrs. Randolph, Maria, & all our good neighbours. I thank you for information that my brother is well, & the more so because I never hear from him with great & sincere esteem believe me sincerely your friend

Jas. Monroe

[P.S.] Augt. 6. 96.

I have just heard that I am charged with having become a speculator here, with other things still more exceptionable, & go knows what. I send therefore by this opportunity to Mr. Madison an ample refutation of these charges, advising that they be published if my friends think fit. He will probably see you on the occasion. I think I can ride any storm if I get safe to port from the sea upon wh. I an now imbarked. Surely no man was ever in the hands of such a corps as I am at present.

RC (Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress).