

## THE HISPANIC AMERICAN POLICY OF HENRY CLAY, 1816-1828

Soon after the conclusion of their War of Independence, the United States began to show a considerable and healthy interest in the Spanish colonies in South America, where similar movements were in progress. Such manifestation was altogether natural, in view of United States commercial interests, already well defined;<sup>1</sup> the similarity of Hispanic American problems with those of the English colonies before and during the Revolution, and the apprehension of European policies for several years after the Congress of Vienna.<sup>2</sup> Besides, active relations with the people of Spanish America were quite in keeping with the theory of isolation and aloofness from Europe which had already been expressed by Washington and others. It was inevitable, therefore, that Hispanic American policy should become in some degree a political issue.

During the early part of the nineteenth century, American party issues were raised very largely along sectional lines. Differences in environment signified contrasts in wealth, economic interests, education, and ideals. By the close of the War of 1812, political contests were becoming struggles between the old materialistic East and the new idealistic trans-Allegheny West, and political leaders were no longer confined to the coastal states. The leader of the young group of western politicians in the period following the War of 1812, and an outspoken partizan, was Henry Clay, who had made his *début* in national circles in 1806, as a senator from Kentucky. It is impossible to state exactly to what extent Clay represented

<sup>1</sup> C. L. Chandler, *Inter-American Acquaintances*, ch. I.

<sup>2</sup> W. P. Cresson, *The Holy Alliance: the European Background of the Monroe Doctrine*.

the people of the new west and to what extent personal idiosyncracies prevailed in his advocacy of specific issues, but it is certain, that while he always spoke according to his own convictions and understanding, he was essentially a product of the new west; and in his speeches and public work he typified the spirit, the ideals, and the interests of the middle west, which had grown up without respect for precedent, authority, or vested rights. Clay was the mouthpiece of his own state of Kentucky and of the growing Mississippi Valley, and the sentiments which he thundered forth on the floor of the House of Representatives or expressed in communications of state were peculiarly pleasing to his constituents, as will presently appear.<sup>3</sup> His long and consistent championship of the budding Spanish-American nations at the most critical period in their struggles for freedom may therefore be taken as altogether characteristic of western ideals and interests. Through Clay, the west found self-expression and contributed not a little to the cause of Hispanic American independence.

As early as 1810, Clay said, in advocating the extension of United States claims against Spain and France: "I have no commiseration for princes. My sympathies are reserved for the great mass of mankind. . . ."<sup>4</sup> This was the keynote of his life work. Hardly had the War of 1812 with England been brought to a successful conclusion at Ghent, when Clay, who had been a representative at the peace maneuvers, raised his voice in behalf of the struggling peoples of Spanish America, and refused to be silenced either by criticism or by the exigencies of state until the independence of the southern republics had been recognized and their safety assured.

In 1816, the Spanish minister at Washington, hoping to prevent the fitting out of privateering vessels in United States

<sup>3</sup> *Vide*, *North American Review*, 1857, p. 160; A. M. Schlesinger, *New Viewpoints in American History*, pp. 63, 202-203; F. J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, pp. 168, 171.

<sup>4</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 11th Congress, 3rd Session, p. 35; *vide* *North American Review*, 1831, p. 357.

ports, influenced President Madison to urge a new law to enforce neutrality. Clay hotly opposed this, insisting that the neutrality law of 1794, which had for a long time sufficed, was good enough, but in the debate on the question in January, 1817, he proceeded to declare further :

For my part, I wish their (the Spanish colonies') independence. . . . Let them have free government, if they be capable of enjoying it; but let them have, at all events, independence. . . . I may be accused of an imprudent utterance . . . on this occasion. I care not; when the independence, the happiness, the liberty of a whole people is at stake, and that people our neighbors, and brethren, occupying a portion of the same continent imitating our example, and participating of the same sympathies of ourselves, I will boldly avow my feelings and my wishes in their behalf, even at the hazard of such an imputation.<sup>5</sup>

This speech is quite characteristic of the man prior to his becoming secretary of state in 1825, and it helps explain his great popularity among the hero-worshiping Kentuckians, as well as among the South Americans, lending color to the recent assertion that Clay was the first Pan-American.<sup>6</sup>

That Clay had the hearty support of his own state on the question of Hispanic American independence is shown by a series of resolutions adopted in both houses of the Kentucky legislature in January, 1818, partly prompted, no doubt by the prominence of the issue in congress. The state senate, in a resolution "truly expressive of the sense of the people of Kentucky of the 'patriotic' struggle of South America, and on

<sup>5</sup> *Annals of Congress, 14th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 742; cf. Carl Schurz, Life of Henry Clay, I. 146-147; Chandler, op. cit., p. 150. Schurz will have none of the statement that Clay's zeal for the South American patriots was wholly owing to his desire to annoy the Monroe administration.*

<sup>6</sup> *Cf. J. B. Moore, "Henry Clay and Pan-Americanism", in the Columbia University Quarterly, September, 1915; Chandler, op. cit., chap. V, "The Pan-Americanism of Henry Clay". Clay was voted the thanks of the Supreme Congress of the Mexican Republic for these generous sentiments (Niles' Register, XII. 208).*

the general policy which the general government ought to pursue'', resolved:

That the people of this state view with the most lively emotion the patriotic struggles of their South American republican brethren to throw off and break in pieces the yoke of Spanish despotism; to take their stand among the nations of the earth. . . .

That it is, in our opinion, wise policy, as well as justice, for the government of the United States to acknowledge the independence of such former Spanish Colonies in South America as shall have shown themselves capable of vindicating and maintaining rights of self-government.<sup>7</sup>

And the lower house, in repeating these sentiments, included the statement that:

The struggle of the patriots of South America for the rights of self government, is justified by the law of God and nature.<sup>8</sup>

With the debate on the neutrality bill, the question of United States attitude toward the struggling Hispanic American states definitely entered the realm of politics. As Clay and his colleagues had opposed any measure during Madison's administration which appeared likely to interfere in any way with the acquisition of independence by the Spanish-American colonies, so during that of Monroe they attempted to compel the government to grant official recognition to those former colonies of Spain which were apparently maintaining their independence. While there were many other points of divergence between the western party, led by Clay, and the administration, this was made one of the principal issues, and Clay, in his capacity as speaker of the house, gave Monroe and his cabinet little peace.

President Monroe personally did not look with disfavor on the cause of the revolted Spanish colonies, as was indicated in his message to congress on December 2, 1817, in which he said:

<sup>7</sup> *Niles' Register*, XIII. 371.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.

It was anticipated that the contest between Spain and the colonies would become highly interesting to the United States. It was natural that our citizens should sympathize in events which affected their neighbors.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, he felt that the United States must keep impartially neutral for two prime reasons; first, it would not be safe to act on so important a matter without the support of at least one European power of importance, and second, any action favorable to the Spanish colonies would seriously delay, if not entirely prevent, the acquisition of the Floridas from Spain, which was looked upon as a political necessity. Indeed, one is inclined to suspect that Spain appreciated the latter reason, and procrastinated as much as possible in order to prevent any act of recognition by the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, Monroe, on his own responsibility, sent out Messrs. Rodney, Graham, and Bland to South America to investigate and report on existing conditions.<sup>11</sup> To what extent this was intended as a concession to Clay and his friends it is difficult to determine.<sup>12</sup> At all events, when the matter came up in the house in March, 1818, in connection with that part of the annual appropriation bill which called for \$30,000 for compensation to the commissioners, Clay strongly protested at the move, declaring it to be both unconstitutional and impolitic.<sup>13</sup> He therefore moved to insert in the bill a provision to appropriate \$18,000

as the outfit and one year's salary of a minister to be sent from the United States to the independent provinces of the River Plate.<sup>14</sup>

This amendment gave rise to a debate which lasted for several days. In defending his stand, Clay very clearly stated

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII. 236-237.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII. 96, 223; Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 150. See below, p. 467.

<sup>11</sup> *Niles' Register*, XIII. 223.

<sup>12</sup> *Cf.* Clay's speech of December 3, 1817; *Niles' Register*, XIV. 49; Calvin Colton, *Life and Times of Henry Clay*, I. 215-216.

<sup>13</sup> *Niles' Register*, XIV. 99.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

the interest of the west in South America. He pointed out the rich commercial opportunities in South America, where United States goods could be paid for in the precious metals, and where a favorable balance of trade could be developed. He showed wherein the commercial needs of the two Americas were complementary in character. He believed that the British trade must presently decline, and that the South American trade would prove a good substitute. And, moreover, he insisted that the Hispanic American states would prove to be no agricultural rivals of the United States, for of the estimated \$81,000,000 of exports in 1817, he did not believe that more than \$1,000,000 in goods could compete with those of the United States.<sup>15</sup>

But other statements in his address are more significant in showing the attitude of the new west toward the pending Spanish treaty, involving the Floridas and Texas. On this, Clay said:

The immense country, watered by the Mississippi and its branches, had a peculiar interest. . . . Having but the single vent of New Orleans, for all the surplus produce of their industry, it was quite evident that they would have a greater security for enjoying the advantages of that outlet, if the dependence of Mexico upon any European power were effected. Such a power, owning at the same time Cuba, the key to the Gulph of Mexico, and all the shores of that Gulph, with the exception of the portion between the Perdido and the Rio Grande del Nord, must have a powerful command over our interests. Spain, it was true, was not a dangerous neighbor at present; but in the vicissitudes of states, she might be again resuscitated.<sup>16</sup>

Having laid an economic basis for his cause, Clay proceeded to indulge his bent as an idealist, in presenting the

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126; Colton, *op. cit.*, I. 216-221.

<sup>16</sup> *Niles' Register*, XIV. 126. Clay was answered principally by Forsyth, who challenged the accuracy of Clay's figures, and tried to minimize the importance of securing the free navigation of the Mississippi, saying that was a matter "which might be safely trusted to our gallant tars and the people of the west" (*ibid.*, p. 162).

political and moral phases of the case. Here he outlined what he termed an American policy, which was, to all intents and purposes, a Pan-American scheme:

There could not be a doubt that Spanish America, once independent, . . . would be animated by an American feeling and guided by an American policy. They would obey the laws of the system of the new world . . . in contradiction to that of Europe. . . . In relation to those [European] wars, the several parts of America will generally stand neutral. And as during the period when they rage, it will be important that a liberal system of neutrality should be adopted and preserved, all America will be interested in maintaining and enforcing such a system. The independence then of Spanish America was a matter of primary concern.<sup>17</sup>

While Clay's motion to amend the appropriation bill was lost by a vote of 115-45,<sup>18</sup> the influence of his oratory was far reaching. It is said that the speech of March 24 was translated into Spanish, and read at the heads of different regiments [of the Hispanic-American armies of independence], where it was received with great applause.<sup>19</sup>

The acceptability of Clay's statements to his own people is well shown by the ovation given him at a public dinner in Lexington, Kentucky, after his speech on the appropriation bill. He was lauded

in testimony of respect for his character and services, generally, but especially in evidence of the approbation of his exertion for the patriots of South America.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124; *cf.* p. 130; Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 148-149.

<sup>18</sup> *Niles' Register*, XIV. 101.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, XV. 32. *Cf.* George Canning's statement in the house of commons in 1823, that he had "called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the old".

<sup>20</sup> *Niles' Register*, XIV. 295. At about the same time, Col. Barker, who was one of the "independent minority of 45", was being feted by his constituents at Marietta, Ohio, for his part in favoring American independence.

Clay displayed his sectional South American sympathies again in connection with the Florida question. In February, 1819, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams completed a treaty with Spain, which provided for the cession to the United States of the whole of Florida, and fixed the southwest boundary at the Sabine River, thus excluding Texas. The United States senate unanimously approved the treaty, but the king of Spain did not sign it within the stipulated period of six months. It was possible, therefore, to take the stand that as the terms of the agreement had not been fulfilled, it consequently became void. Clay immediately made this assertion, insisting that the treaty ought not to be renewed.<sup>21</sup>

The treaty hung fire for several months, but before it was consummated, Clay scored a notable victory in his efforts to force the administration to declare in favor of the new republics. On April 3, 1820, he introduced a resolution in the House, stating that:

It is expedient to provide by law a suitable out fit and salary for such minister or ministers, as the president, by and with the consent of the senate, may send to any of the governments of South America which have established and are maintaining their independence from Spain.<sup>22</sup>

This resolution was carried by a small majority, but until negotiations with Spain were concluded, no executive action on the resolution could be taken.<sup>23</sup>

Clay naturally ascribed the "watchful waiting" policy of the administration to weakness and fear. In an address at Lexington, Kentucky, on June 7, 1820, he scored President

<sup>21</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 163. Monroe and Adams had agreed to the Rio Grande in deference to what they thought was New England sentiment against southwest expansion and the opportunity for the spread of slavery. Jackson thought it most important to secure Florida, regardless of Texas, as he believed the former "the vulnerable spot in our national armor". Clay hardly forgave Jackson for this. *Vide* Colton, *op. cit.*, I. 238-239, 259-260.

<sup>22</sup> *Niles' Register*, XVIII. 112.

<sup>23</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 165-166; Colton, *op. cit.*, I. 239; Chandler, *op. cit.*, p. 153.



Monroe, and incidentally made some statements with regard to the place of the United States in the western hemisphere which sound strangely like parts of the so-called Monroe Doctrine, which was formulated a few years later. Clay insisted that the United States had always acted on the principle of recognizing the *de facto* government of any nation, and that free, independent and sovereign states existed in South America which were refused recognition. He continued:

We are the natural head of the American family. I would not intermeddle in the affairs of Europe. We wisely keep aloof from their broils. I would not even intermeddle with those of other parts of America, further than to expect the incontestible rights appertaining to us as a free, sovereign, and independent power; and I contend, that the accrediting of a minister from the new [La Plata] republic is such a right.<sup>24</sup>

Further attempts to coerce the administration by means of a congressional appropriation for the sending of a minister or ministers to South America were defeated in February, 1821, by a small margin, though a resolution expressing sympathy with the Hispanic American states, and authorizing the President,

whenever he may deem it expedient to recognize the sovereignty and independence of any of the said provinces,

passed by a large majority.<sup>25</sup> However, a few weeks later (February, 22), the Spanish treaty was proclaimed,<sup>26</sup> and although Clay had opposed it to the last, its completion removed one of the greatest obstacles to his South American policy. On March 8, 1822, President Monroe sent a message to congress, recommending the recognition of the existing South American states, which was enthusiastically granted.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Niles' Register*, XVIII, 327; Colton, *op. cit.*, I, 225-228, 233.

<sup>25</sup> *Niles' Register*, XIX, 398, 400; Schurz, *op. cit.*, I, 167.

<sup>26</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I, 165; Colton, *op. cit.*, I, 237.

<sup>27</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I, 167; Colton, *op. cit.*, I, 244; J. B. Henderson, *American Diplomatic Questions*, p. 300.

This official recognition was not the end of the struggle which had been waged for the sovereignty of the Hispanic American peoples, but it marks the end of the first phase of the question as a political issue in the United States.

If Clay's motives through these years had rested on a political basis alone, he might well have rested on his oars after having thus gained his point. But, as Schurz says:

there is no doubt that those appeals were on his part not a mere manoeuver of opposition, but came straight from his generous impulses. The idea of the whole American continent being occupied by a great family of republics would naturally set his imagination on fire. . . . This tendency was reinforced by his general aptness to take a somewhat superficial view of things.<sup>28</sup>

And it is interesting to note that while Clay and John Quincy Adams had been bitter political enemies for a number of years, once the Spanish treaty was *un fait accompli*, and recognition had thereafter been willingly granted the South American republics, the two men were presently able to establish the closest political partnership on the basis of agreement on foreign policy.<sup>29</sup>

The second phase of Clay's work in behalf of the Hispanic American peoples is in connection with his efforts to insure their permanence and safety. In 1815, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and England entered into a Quadruple—popularly termed the "Holy"—Alliance, in the interests of European peace on a basis of "legitimate" monarchy and the suppression of revolutionary tendencies. This alliance, acting as the concert of Europe, presently adopted a doctrine of intervention for the sake of restoring to European sovereigns any of their dominions which might have revolted. In 1820 there were some preparations for intervention in America for the sake

<sup>28</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 168.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171. Early in 1824, the Kentucky Legislature passed a resolution expressing entire approbation of the recognition of the independence of the Spanish American republics. See *National Intelligencer*, January 28, 1824.

of restoring to the king of Spain his rebellious American colonies. The British minister, George Canning, had proposed to Richard Rush, minister from the United States, that a joint declaration be issued by Great Britain and the United States against the projected intervention.<sup>30</sup> This was refused by American state authorities, but the impending danger did not fail to rouse Clay's oratory on behalf of the Hispanic American patriots. Speaking to an enthusiastic audience at Lexington, in July, 1821, he said, after once more advocating recognition of the new republics:

It had seemed to him desirable that a sort of counterpoise to the Holy Alliance should be formed in the two Americas in favor of national independence and liberty, to operate by the force of example and moral influence; that here a rallying point and an asylum should exist for freemen and for freedom.<sup>31</sup>

This was quite in keeping with what Clay termed an American policy, a part of which, at least, found more weighty expression in the Monroe pronouncement two years later. After all, as is now generally understood, the seeds of the Monroe Doctrine were sown by Jefferson and Clay; the actual phrasing was largely the work of John Quincy Adams, while Monroe's name attached to it chiefly by virtue of his presidential office.<sup>32</sup>

However, the Monroe Doctrine, the work of both political parties, failed to receive any legislative confirmation at the time it was issued. Early in 1824, Clay offered a resolution in the house without debate, stating that the American people

<sup>30</sup> Col. E. M. Lloyd, in the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, XVIII. 77-99; cf. Richard Rush, *The Court of London, 1819-1825*, pp. 16, 366.

<sup>31</sup> *Niles' Register*, XX. 301; James Schouler, *History of the United States*, III. 291, n.; Colton, *op. cit.*, I. 241.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. D. C. Gilman, *James Monroe*, pp. 156 ff.; *Niles' Register*, XXV. 219; W. C. Ford, *Documents on the Genesis of the Monroe Doctrine*, in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, XV. (1901), 373-436; W. F. Reddaway, *The Monroe Doctrine*, p. 25.

would not see without serious inquietude any forcible interposition of the allied powers of Europe in behalf of Spain, to reduce to their former subjection those parts of America which have proclaimed and established for themselves, respectively, independent governments, and which have been solemnly recognized by the United States.<sup>33</sup>

This was essentially what Monroe had said at the beginning of the session, yet Clay's resolution was never called up for debate.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, in giving instructions to the United States delegates to the Panama Congress in 1826, Clay felt compelled to warn them that the Monroe Doctrine was to be interpreted to the assembled Hispanic American delegates as meaning only that each American nation should resist foreign influence and intervention with its own means.<sup>35</sup>

Clay's later endeavors in behalf of the Hispanic Americans were somewhat circumscribed by his political ambitions and activities. In the presidential campaign of 1824, he made a strong bid for the chief executive office, basing his claims to consideration very largely on his reputation as the "benefactor of the human race and lover of liberty".<sup>36</sup> But his rival, Adams, could also point to his services to the South Americans; and after the latter's election, it was this similarity of views on South America probably more than any other factor which made possible the coöperation of Adams and Clay as members of the same administration.

With his appointment as secretary of state, Clay's utterances on Hispanic American affairs take on a distinctly more conservative tone. This may be accounted for in several ways. The increased responsibilities of the department of state undoubtedly had a sobering effect; the idealist was forced to become more of a practical statesman. Moreover, much of

<sup>33</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 209; Rush, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

<sup>34</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 210-212; H. Petin, *Les États-Unis et la Doctrine de Monroe*, p. 51; G. F. Tucker, *The Monroe Doctrine; A Concise History of Its Origin and Growth*, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 269.

<sup>36</sup> *Niles' Register*, XXVIII. 62-63.

the work he had undertaken for his South American neighbors had been accomplished. But a certain amount of disillusionment was also taking place. The newly established Hispanic American republics had not proved to be "asylums for freemen and for freedom". And as his new official duties brought more and more information as to the extent of violence, fraud, and misgovernment in Hispanic America, Clay's enthusiasm and feeling of fraternalism gave place to a reserved attitude and a calculated policy of safeguarding the interests of the United States by refusing to assume any further embarrassing obligations for conditions in the western hemisphere.

Nevertheless, Clay did not cease his efforts to end Spanish wars in South America as essential to the best interests of his own country. In May, 1825, he wrote Henry Middleton, United States minister at St. Petersburg, officially asking that the czar be persuaded to employ his good offices to stop the war between Spain and the remaining Spanish continental colonies. In this bit of diplomacy Clay the statesman is apparent, while Clay the idealist is not in evidence. He attempted to make his proposition attractive by suggesting that if Spain persisted, it would undoubtedly provoke Hispanic American privateers to attack the Spanish West Indies, and even Spain itself.

If, on the contrary, Spain should consent to put an end to the war, she might yet preserve what remains of her former American possessions. . . . From this point of view, it is evident, that it is not so much for the new states themselves, as for Spain, that peace has become absolutely necessary. Their independence of her, whatever intestine divisions may, if intestine divisions shall unhappily await them, is fixed and irrevocable.<sup>37</sup>

Most of the relations between the United States and the Hispanic American republics during the remainder of Clay's control of the department of state were connected in some way with the project for a Pan-American congress. A grand council of the South and Central American republics had been

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XXX. 49-54, 61-62, 78-82, *passim*.

planned by Bolívar, "El Libertador", as early as 1821. In 1825, plans for such a meeting were definitely under way, and in April of that year, Clay was approached simultaneously by the Mexican and Colombian ministers, who inquired whether the United States would favorably consider an invitation to be represented at the congress to be held at Panama City.<sup>38</sup> This was directly in line with what Clay had suggested at various times since 1816.<sup>39</sup>

The proposal to send delegates was promptly agreed to, with the proviso that the United States would participate only in matters which pertained to the western hemisphere, but would not, of course, discuss the existing situation with Spain. This reply was considered satisfactory, and invitations were formally issued to the United States. But the Pan-American ointment did not remain undefiled. To begin with, difficulties arose with Mexico over the conclusion of a treaty of friendship and commerce. The United States minister, Joel R. Poinsett, found that Mexico had already signed a treaty with Great Britain, whereby Britain was given most-favored-nation treatment, along with the other powers, including the United States, from such benefits. Poinsett objected to this, and was strongly supported by Clay, who pointed out that the position and responsibility taken by the United States in Hispanic American affairs gave the United States a right to expect to be placed in the most favorable position. He pointed out, also, that Mexico having invited the United States, but not Britain, to participate in the Panama Congress, would seem to admit this contention. It was

deemed better to have no treaty, and to abide by the respective commercial laws of the two countries, than to subscribe to a principle wholly inadmissible, and which, being assented to in the case of Mexico, might form a precedent to be extended to others of the new states.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 267.

<sup>39</sup> See above, pp. 464, 466, 468.

<sup>40</sup> *Niles' Register*, XXX. 80.

The Mexicans, considering themselves pledged to England, refused to make the necessary concessions, and the commercial negotiations fell through on the very eve of the Panama Congress.<sup>41</sup>

Another unpleasant situation arose in connection with the almost simultaneous discoveries that there was a large French fleet, on a war basis, cruising in the West Indies without any declared object, and that the French had been invited or permitted to send an agent to the Panama Congress.<sup>42</sup> In this connection, Clay authorized James Brown, United States minister to France, to make clear the position of the United States on such a point.

With the hope of guarding, beforehand, against any possible difficulties . . . that may arise, you will . . . add that we could not consent to the occupation of those islands by any other European power than Spain, under any contingency, whatever. Cherishing no designs on them ourselves, we have a fair claim to unreserved knowledge of the views of other great maritime powers in respect to them.<sup>43</sup>

This was a slight improvement on the original Monroe Doctrine, regarding the transfer of existing European holdings. The French government issued a courteous reply to this representation, but the result was, nevertheless, to breed a feeling of suspicion and restraint in the United States at a time when, for the success of the Panama Congress, one of entire frankness and confidence was necessary.

Under such circumstances, with revolt and civil war rife in the newly-emerged southern republics, and with the United States in ill humor, the Panama Congress was foredoomed to failure. Representatives, bearing varying types of instructions, assembled at Panama City in June, 1826, from four of the new states. President Adams had meanwhile appointed

<sup>41</sup> *Vide ibid.*, pp. 113-115, *passim*.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83; A. B. Hart, *The Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, p. 119; Petin, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

John Sergeant and Richard C. Anderson as delegates to the congress from the United States. But the United States representatives were seriously delayed in their departure by congress. The senate took great exception to the whole business, and questioned the right of Adams to send commissioners without its advice and consent. Even the house divided on the matter of voting a small appropriation for the commissioners,<sup>44</sup> and the necessary funds were not provided until late in the summer of 1826.

Meanwhile, Clay prepared instructions for the delegates. They were to watch, and advise, and talk, but not to act, unless on commercial matters, the slave trade, or neutral rights. They were to spread what propoganda they could for democratic government, freedom of speech and religion, and were to comport themselves generally as benevolent big brothers. Clay even departed from his ideals and principles enough to advise against the recognition of Hayti as an independent state, since a slave insurrection there might cause one in the southern United States. All enterprises in behalf of Cuba and Porto Rico were to be discouraged for the same general reason.<sup>45</sup> Besides, it was feared that with Cuba and Porto Rico in anarchy, some strong European naval power might become established there, and thus control the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi River—which was unthinkable to Clay. The Panama meeting, then, was to be regarded as a “diplomatic conference”, but not as having any power to bind any of the states represented. There were to be no “entangling alliances”.<sup>46</sup>

The Panama Congress was a doleful fiasco. One of the two United States delegates, Anderson, died en route, and

<sup>44</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 271-272.

<sup>45</sup> While Clay did not personally approve of slavery, he felt under obligations to his slave-holding constituents, even to the extent of aiding Spain in retaining its island colonies.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 270-271; J. B. Lockey, *Pan-Americanism: Its Beginning*, pp. 409 ff., 427.



Poinsett was chosen to take his place. But meanwhile, the Hispanic American delegates had met, passed a few well-sounding resolutions, and adjourned to meet at Tacubaya, Mexico, in the following year—all before the United States envoys arrived.

Great was Clay's chagrin at the report of the mission. Adams and the other members of the government figuratively shrugged their shoulders and disclaimed responsibility for the scheme. Clay felt it incumbent upon him to once more defend his Hispanic American policy. On August 30, 1826, he spoke at a dinner given him by the citizens of Lewisburg, Virginia. After having referred to the election of 1824, he brought up the question of the Panama mission, asking his hearers whether they would not have acted as he did.

Those republics, now containing a population of more than twenty millions, duplicating their numbers probably in periods still shorter than we do, comprising within their limits the most abundant sources of the precious metals, offer to our commerce, to our manufacturers, to our navigation, so many advantages, that none can doubt the expediency of cultivating the most friendly relations with them. . . .<sup>47</sup>

Then he declared that the interest of the southern states in Cuba had much to do with sending the mission to Panama.

No subject of our foreign relations has created with the executive government more anxious concern than that of the condition of the island, and the possibility of prejudice to the southern states, from the convulsions to which it might be exposed. . . . If there be one section of this union more than all others interested in the Panama mission, and the benefits which may flow from it, that section is the south. . . . The slave holding states cannot forget that they are now in a minority, which is in a constantly relative diminution, and should certainly not be the first to put a principle of public action by which they would be the greatest losers.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Niles' Register*, XXXI. 60-62.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62. Congressmen from the south had protested against the Panama mission as likely to involve entangling alliances. But by this time, Cuba, where Spain was believed to be poorly entrenched, was beginning to loom up as a possible slave section to offset the loss of Texas in 1819.

Nevertheless, Clay was deeply disappointed at the meager results of his diplomatic efforts.<sup>49</sup> Even his attempts to purchase Texas from Mexico in March, 1827, came to nothing. His pique is reflected to some extent in his attitude toward Bolívar. In 1825, at a public dinner, he had proposed the toast, after a lengthy and laudatory speech, "General Bolívar, the Washington of South America, and the President of Colombia". In 1827, Bolívar wrote Clay an appreciative note, saying,

all America, Colombia, and myself, owe your excellency our purest gratitude for the incomparable services you have rendered to us, by sustaining our course with a sublime enthusiasm.<sup>50</sup>

But on this occasion, after waiting almost a year, Clay replied coldly:

I am persuaded that I do not misinterpret the feelings of the people of the United States, as I certainly express my own, in saying, that the interest which was inspired in this country by the arduous struggles of South America, arose principally from the hope, that, along with its independence, would be established free institutions, insuring all the blessings of civil liberty. To the accomplishment of that object we still anxiously look. . . . But I would be unworthy of your consideration . . . if I did not . . . state, that ambitious designs have been attributed by your enemies to your excellency, which have created in my mind great solicitude.<sup>51</sup>

However, in spite of numerous disappointments, the service on which Clay seems to have chiefly prided himself was that to the Spanish American republics.<sup>52</sup> His practical works are summed up in a letter written him by Richard Rush, June 23, 1827:

. . . Next to their own exertions, the South Americans owe to you more than to any other man in either hemisphere, you having led the

<sup>49</sup> Schurz, *op. cit.*, I. 293-294.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Colton, *op. cit.*, I. 244.

<sup>51</sup> Colton, *op. cit.*, I. 244-245; Lockey, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>52</sup> *Cf.* Chandler, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-150.

way to our acknowledgment of it. This is truth, this is history. Without our acknowledgment, England would not have taken the step to this day. . . . I give Mr. Canning no credit for the part he acted. It was forced upon him by our lead, which he never had the magnanimity to avow, but strove to claim all the merit for England, or rather for himself.<sup>53</sup>

But the loyalty of Clay to national ideals and interests can not obscure the fact that at heart he embodied the traits of the west. Perhaps the best epitome of his greater aims and motives is contained in a letter of invitation to a public dinner, sent him by his own people in Lexington, Kentucky. The committee said (July 15, 1826) :

In your long career as our representative, you were always found on the side of political liberty, human happiness and improvement. Two great continents hail you as the bold champion, and successful promoter of their best interests, their dearest privileges, and most valuable blessings. . . .

And to this, Clay replied, in part :

. . . It has, indeed, been always my aim, as you truly state, to be on the side of political liberty, human happiness, and improvement. . . .<sup>54</sup>

HALFORD L. HOSKINS.

Dickson Professor of History,  
Tufts College.

<sup>53</sup> Colton, *op. cit.*, I. 211.

<sup>54</sup> *Niles' Register*, XXX. 375.