

BULLETIN

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THE RECALL OF MONROE

James Monroe, like Edmund Randolph and Paine himself, was sacrificed to the new commercial alliance between Great Britain and the United States. Washington's cabinet was hostile to France, and President Washington's determination to recall Monroe was furthered by Gouverneur Morris, still in Europe, who wrote the president calumnious letters about his successor as American Minister to France. In one dated December 19, 1795, Morris told Washington that he had heard from a trusted informant that Monroe had said to several Frenchmen that "he had no doubt that, if they would do what was proper here, he and his friends would turn out Washington." The recall, dated August 22, 1796, reached Monroe early in November. On his return to America, in 1797, Monroe tried in vain to discover the reason for it. This letter, by Paine, dated September 27, of that year, was addressed to the editors of the "Bien-informe". This introductory comment is by William Van der Weyde, Ed., *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, X, 77, 1928, New Rochelle NY: Thomas Paine National Historical Association.

CITIZENS: In your nineteenth number of the complimentary fifth, you gave an analysis of the letters of James Monroe to Timothy Pickering. The newspapers of Paris and the departments have copied this correspondence between the Ambassador of the United States and the Secretary of State. I notice, however, that a few of them have omitted some important facts, while indulging in comments of such an extraordinary nature that it is clear they know neither Monroe's integrity nor the intrigues of Pitt [Great Britain's Prime Minister] in this affair. The recall of Monroe is connected with circumstances so important to the interests of France and the United States that we must be careful not to confound it with the recall of an ordinary individual. The Washington faction has affected to spread it abroad that James Monroe was the cause of rupture between the two Republics.

This accusation is a perfidious and calumnious one; since the main point in this affair is not so much the recall of a worthy, enlightened and Republican Minister, as the ingratitude and clandestine maneuvering of the Government of Washington, who caused the misunderstanding by signing a treaty injurious to the French Republic.

James Monroe, in his letters, does not deny the right of government to withdraw its confidence from any one of its delegates, representative or agent. He has hinted, it is true, that caprice and temper are not in accordance with the spirit of paternal rule, and that whenever a representative government punishes or rewards good faith, integrity and justice should replace *the good pleasure of kings*.

In the present case they have done more than recall an agent. Had they confined themselves to depriving him of his appointment, James Monroe would have kept silence; but he has been accused of lighting the torch of discord in both Republics. The refutation of this absurd and infamous reproach is the chief object of his correspondence. If he did not immediately complain of these slanders in his letters of the sixth and eighth [July], it is because he wished to use at first a certain degree of caution, and, if it were possible, to stifle intestine troubles at their birth. He wished to reopen the way to peaceful negotiations to be conducted with good faith and justice.

The arguments of the Secretary of State on the rights of the supreme administration of the United States are peremptory; but the observations of Monroe on the hidden causes of his recall are touching; they come from the heart; they are characteristic of an excellent citizen.

If he does more than complain of his unjust recall as a man of feeling would; if he proudly asks for proofs of a grave accusation, it is after he has tried in vain every honest and straightforward means. He will not suffer that a government, sold to the enemies of freedom, should discharge upon him its shame, its crimes, its ingratitude, and all the odium of its unjust dealings.

Were Monroe to find himself an object of public hatred, the Republican party in the United States, that party which is the sincere ally of France, would be annihilated, and this is the aim of the English Government.

Imagine the triumph of Pitt, if Monroe and the other friends of freedom in America, should be unjustly attacked in France!

Monroe does not lay his cause before the Senate since the Senate itself ratified the unconstitutional treaty; he appeals to the House of Representatives, and at the same time lays his cause before the upright tribunal of the American nation.

--selected by Martha Spiegelman

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>The Recall of Monroe</i> , by Thomas Paine	1	<i>Apostles of Revolution</i> , new book	5
Acknowledgments and Announcements	2	Thinking about Peace, from Victor Madeson	5
News from TPF President Edward Dodson	3	A Bit of Paine in <i>The New Yorker Magazine</i>	6
Letter to Paine from Benjamin Franklin	3	The Polish Constitution, from John Skibiski	6
<i>Torture</i> , by Desert Sage (Algernon D'Amassa)	4	<i>Left Forum 2018</i>	7
		<i>Paine as Prometheus</i> , by Frances Chiu	8