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NEWS & COMMENT.

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THE TERMS

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Politics

From the Boston Centinel.

THE ANALYSIS

Of our Public Diplomatic Despatches.

(Continued.)

These Despatches, as to the most laudable in a full sense, are the late offers to Great Britain and France, as set forth in our several articles and notices.

THIS is the grand point upon which the President and all his friends, existing and to come, are at last shown to have a system of submission to France; he returned to a sense of our neutral obligations; and has, for once at least, manifested an impartiality worthy of Washington. If this is true, he would be entitled to a high degree of credit, a degree proportioned to the difficulty he must have felt in overcoming his deep-seated prejudices. In judging, therefore, of the late offers to France and Great Britain, we ought to require and receive a very high degree of evidence, before we should be obliged to admit, that Great Britain and France had been treated with a tolerable amount of equality.

In analyzing these Despatches, I hold myself bound to prove, that there is not only no evidence of any such impartiality, but that there is proof, not to be resisted, that the offers were perfectly illusory to Great Britain, and so actually arranged and deceitfully expressed, that while a refusal of them was inevitably foreseen on the part of that Court, they might produce a belief, in the minds of this country, that every reasonable measure had been adopted consistent with our honour.

The purpose of the President's declaration to Congress, and also of a part of the committee, in that body, in relation to these offers, is that there were simultaneous propositions made to the Court of St. Cloud and St. James, equally fair and honourable to both nations, and which either of them might have accepted without any derogation to its honour.

We undertake to prove, that these offers were unequal, unjust, and were made under circumstances which rendered it impossible they could be accepted by one of them.—The field upon which I am now entering is a vast one; it calls for great patience in the investigation, inasmuch as it is no trifling task to trace the doublings and windings of cunning politicians, who have devoted their whole lives to Machiavellian politics.—But the reward will be equal to the labour;—the magnitude and importance of the subject not only justify but demand some sacrifices of our ease. If our rulers have honestly and sincerely attempted to rescue us from the evils into which their former errors had plunged us, let them receive the praise which they merit;—but if, instead of attempting to procure us relief, they have continued to pursue the same destructive and ruinous policy which has brought us to the verge of ruin, let them find their punishment in the contempt and indignation of an injured people.

The first remark I shall make upon the documents lately published in relation to the offers made to France and Great Britain, for the repeal of their respective edicts, is this; that while all the correspondence between Mr. Pinkney and Mr. Canning, and between our Minister in London and Mr. Madison, is made known, not one line of the correspondence, or remonstrances, or offers of Mr. Armstrong to the French Cabinet, on the subject of their edicts, is given to the public, unless the letter of Gen. Armstrong, so far as August 6th, 1808, to Mons. Champagny be considered as of this description.—But I do not consider this letter as relating to the offers transmitted to France, because it contains no proposition to rescind the edicts; and because it does not comport with the positive instructions given to Mr. Armstrong, which were to offer to France a declaration of War against Great Britain as an equivalent for her removal of the Embargo.—This letter of Gen. Armstrong is to be sure sufficiently disgraceful, and is entitled to and will receive a most ample examination, hereafter.—My assertion is then without limitation,

that no portion of the real offers made to France is made known. Why this suppression? Can the negotiation with France require more secrecy than that with Great Britain? Are the Administration afraid to permit that part of their policy to see the light? We shall soon see the reason of this secrecy; and should it be probable, that while war and alliances were offered to France, a merely nominal proposition was made to Great Britain, so clogged with conditions, so hampered with qualifications, that it was known it could never be accepted.

Secondly. The offer which Mr. Armstrong was authorized to make to the Cabinet of St. Cloud, as a motive to induce the repeal of its outrageous edicts, was that of War with Great Britain, in case the Cabinet of the latter should not equally withdraw hers.—Scarcely, not, my fellow-citizens, at the extravagance of this proposal! The pacific, the mild, and submissive administration which prefers strife to war, and dares to brave evils tenfold greater than those of war itself in order to avoid it, has surrendered to the Emperor of France the power which he last year claimed of disposing of our fate at his pleasure, and this in the most direct terms.

Surely the administration will not seek a refuge from this charge in its own impolicy, and pretend, that after the compliance of France, it would have been a liberty to declare war against Great Britain. I come to the proof.—In the letter of Mr. Madison to Gen. Armstrong, dated May 2d, 1808, after reciting the power given to the President to suspend the embargo, he adds,

"The conditions on which the suspending authority is to be exercised, will engage your particular attention.—The relation in which a recall of the retaliating decrees by either power will place the United States to the other is obvious, and ought to be a motive, to the measures proposed to the decree which has been manifested by such a prodigious collision between the United States and its adversary, and which must be equally felt by both to avoid one with itself."

There is to be sure no small portion of Jeffersonian spirit around and amidst this sentence, but we translate it into our native language.—The relation in which we stand to Great Britain is that of peace, though as clearly a condition of peace, as our administration could make it.—This relation was to be changed in favour of France, if she should accept our offer;—it could not be changed, but into a state of war, which it nearly resembled before;—and that this was the meaning of the sentence, is plain from the following words, the promise and assurance of a change of this relation "ought to be a motive proportioned to the desire which has been manifested by each to produce collisions between the United States and its adversary."

That this word "collision" was a milder, philosophical term for war, is evident by the observation, that this desire to produce collisions had been manifested.—Now though Great Britain has not only never manifested a desire to produce war between us and France, but probably would deem it injurious to her interests, yet France had, by the letter of Mons. Champagny, not only urged us to war, in express terms, but had declared for our cabinet, and people, that we were at war actually with Great Britain.—It was to this manifestation of the desire of France, that Mr. Madison undoubtedly referred.

But in order that no doubt might hang over the intentions of the government, to offer an alliance offensive and defensive to France, as a condition of the repeal of her edicts, Mr. Madison adds in the same letter,

"On the other hand, should the (France) set the example of revocation, Great Britain would be obliged, either by following it, to restore to France the full benefit of neutral trade, which she needs, or by persevering in her obnoxious edicts, after the pretext for them had ceased, to render collisions with the United States inevitable."

Now as Mr. Armstrong was directed to urge this argument upon France, and as we had a partial non-importation act in force against Great Britain, and a still more hostile measure in the interdiction of her public ships, it was a direct offer to France of engaging in the way upon the condition therein expressed.—Unless therefore, it is avowed, that the offer was illusory, Mr. Jefferson must have pledged the peace of the country and placed it at the disposal of France. If other proofs were wanting of the positive nature of this offer, they can be found in the following extract of Mr. Madison's letter to Mr. Pinkney, of April 20, 1808, in which he has unwarily dropped his metaphorical expressions.

"Should the French government revoke so many of its decrees as violate our general rights, or give explanations and assurances having the like effect, & entailing it therefore to the removal of the embargo, as it applies to France, it will be reasonable to view a perseverance of Great Britain in her retaliatory orders in any other light than that of war."

Here, then, is a precise proof of impartiality.—To Great Britain, Mr. Jefferson says,

"Repeal all your orders—repeal them in totidem verbis, (and as we shall shew by and by) with the article, nay insulting offer of simply placing her on the footing in which she stood at the moment they were issued, on the simple condition of withdrawing our embargo, which formed no part of the motives for issuing them."

But to the Great Emperor of France, our good friend and ally, who burns, sinks, seizes, confiscates, imprisons and destroys at his good pleasure, either the property or persons of both friends and foes, he mildly says,

"Repeat or rescind so much only of your decrees as relates to us, or give assurances and explanations to the like effect and we will declare War against your enemy."

What! When the perfidious violation of the embargo of Decrees, as to the French orders, was at that moment visible in the seizure of our ships and cargoes at Antwerp, and throughout the continent of Europe; when a solemn treaty made by this Emperor himself was hourly and habitually violated, was our government not only content to accept their verbal assurances in place of a repeal, but to make these assurances the foundation of a War against Great Britain!

But I shall be told, that although Mr. Armstrong had positive instructions to make these proposals, yet that in fact they were never made. This is a matter which rests in the breast of the Administration alone.—They know the motives which have induced them to suppress the correspondence between the French government and our minister on that point. But I may be permitted to make two remarks in this place.—

1st. That in Mr. Armstrong's instructions to offer a war against Great Britain if she should not assent, he had also it;—and as he is continued in place and confidence there is no reason to presume that he failed to comply with the wishes of the government.

2d. That Mr. Armstrong acknowledged the receipt of the aforesaid letter by the St. Michael giving him the above mentioned instruction, on the 20 day of June last; but the only communication to the French government on this subject, which is published, is dated the 6th day of August, and is totally variant from his instructions.

Is it credible, that as both the French and American ministers were during that period in Paris, Mr. Armstrong was guilty of the culpable neglect of being silent on this topic when then the comments of our embargo rested upon the issue and when he was ordered to lose no time in obtaining a definitive reply?

Thus then I believe it is proved that to France, a solid, direct and positive, offer was made of an engagement in the War on her side, if she should withdraw her edicts, or if not, that the offer we made to her was merely illusory and insincere, for we offered her nothing else.—we could offer her nothing else. Why this offer was not accepted, I shall hereafter consider, when I shall make some general remarks on the policy disclosed by these despatches. That no correspondent, analogous or equal offer was made to Great Britain I propose next to establish; but on the contrary that the offer in effect was insulting to the understanding of that cabinet, as the vindication of it, as a fair measure, is equally so to that of the good People of the United States.

THE ANALYSIS

Of our Public Diplomatic Despatches.

No. II.

Here the present administration proved their impartiality in their late offers to Great Britain and France, by making the repeal of their respective Orders and Decrees.

WE say NOT—and we now proceed in the proof. We have already shewn that the motive and inducement offered to France to induce a relaxation to her unjust Decrees, was no less than a declaration of war against Great Britain, in case the latter should refuse to withdraw her Orders.

We have also assigned a great variety of reasons, to shew that Great Britain, destroyed at least as much favour at our hands,

her Orders having been second in point of time, colourable at least in point of retaliation, less extensive and unprincipled in their terms, not charged like the others with a perfidious breach of treaty, not issued, like those of her enemy, against a submissive and complying friend, but operating against one who had assumed a hostile attitude, and who was threatening actual war.

So far, however were Mr. Jefferson's offers from being impartial to the two belligerents, that to Great Britain, in lieu of the substantial offer of war against her enemy, in case she should repeal her Orders, and her enemy should refuse to rescind his, he simply offered to repeal our Embargo, and animated, in terms too loose to produce any confidence, that he might leave the Embargo to operate against France.

That he did not offer to Great Britain, as he did to France, a war with its enemy, would be apparent to every reflecting man, from two obvious considerations, independent of the evidence I shall presently cite from the despatches.

Firstly. It is impossible that Great Britain should not have accepted the offer.—A war on our side against France would not only have perfectly fulfilled the whole object of the British Orders, but by rendering the blockade of the French ports totally unnecessary, it would have relieved Great Britain from vast expenses, and have liberated her forces for other objects.—Our aid too, though small compared to her own vast power, would have been extremely convenient to her, and the monopoly which such a war would produce of all our commerce would have been of vast advantage to her power. Besides, as no maritime nation but the United States was neutral, the Orders themselves would have been virtually repealed by our embarking in the war, since she did not require those Orders to enable her to capture all the ships of her enemies, and her allies could have no trade with France.

Secondly. The letter of Mr. Canning to Mr. Pinkney, of September 29d, 1808, proves that Great Britain understood both Mr. Pinkney's verbal offers, written offers, in this light; for he distinctly answers these offers on the ground that they extended solely to the removal of our Embargo, which, if intended as a measure of impartial hostility, he remarks was unjust, as France was the aggressor and Great Britain the injured party, withdrawing a measure aimed not at her but at her enemy, France.

Thirdly. That our government understood their own offer in this light, is evident from the following inadmissible clause in the letter of Mr. Madison, of July 18, 1808, to Mr. Pinkney.—

"It will be difficult therefore to conceive any motive in Great Britain to reject the offer you will have made, other than the hope of inducing, on the part of France, a perseverance in her irritating policy towards the United States, and on the part of the latter, hostile sentiments against us."

This sentence proves not only that our government never offered to Great Britain as she had done to France, a war with France as a condition of a compliance with our offers, but that she had not even offered, in decided terms, to adopt any hostile measures whatever against France, in case the latter should refuse to follow the example of revocation.—For if our offer to Great Britain had been either of a war with its enemy, or even of hostile reinforcements, in case of the refusal of the latter to follow the example of repeal, it is not possible to conceive how Mr. Madison could BELIEVE, that her motive for rejecting such an offer must be a wish to produce the very effects which the offer itself promised.

This argument is refuted in the accuracy of a syllogism, and can no more be refuted than a correct mathematical demonstration.—It is thus perceived, that the evil genius of art and duplicity will sometimes leave his vacancies in a state of self-condemnation.

We now proceed to prove, that the inferences we have drawn from these important collateral considerations, are confirmed by the despatches themselves;—and that the offers were shamefully (we do not say purposely) vague and ineffectual.

The first letter on this topic, is from Mr. Madison to Mr. Pinkney, dated April 20, 1808, and it merits this singular remark, done, that while it puts the alternative case of France repeating her edicts and the refusal of Great Britain, and states, expressly, that such a case would produce war with the latter, yet it never puts the other possible case, of a repeal by Great Britain, and adherence by France.—Of course, Mr. Pinkney was misinstructed on this point.