

Essay I “No. 1 ‘Essays on the Revolution in So. America’”¹

On the occurrence of great events tending in their nature to change the political & commercial relations of civilized States with each other, it becomes the duty of independent nations to guard by every means consistent with justice and honor, against the effects of such events, that menace their peace and national rights. Such is the nature and tendency of the Spanish revolution. Whether a Bourbon, a Braganza, or a Bonaparte reign in the peninsulae of Spain may be [a] matter of very serious consideration with the nations of Europe, but to the U. S. it must be indifferent: as it cannot change their relations with that country in a degree to justify any interference on their part. But on crossing the Atlantic this revolution changes its character, as it relates to the U. S. and involves in its course their future peace & prosperity. The consequences of the establishment of a number of independent Republics on this continent in the whole space comprehended between Louisiana & Patagonia, where the same language will be spoken, and the same laws govern, seem to defy the grasp of the human mind: I confess that I cannot pretend to estimate their extent. I will therefore leave the Spanish Americans beyond the I[s]tmus of Darien to manage their Affairs in the best manner they can, and will use my humble endeavors to point out to my country men some general points where I think the national interests and honor of the U. S. are deeply involved in the consequences of the Revolution in the Spanish dominions on this side of the Istmus. The best Authorities show the following to have been the population of the Kingdom of New Spain commonly called Mexico in the year 1808. Viz

Europeans 74,000

Creoles 1,010,100

Pure Indians 2,320,200

Mixed breed . . . 2,595,000 5,999,300 souls.

Two thirds of this population may be termed civilized, the whole is susceptible of becoming so, & consequently of contributing to the agregate of human perfection and happiness. Cold and unfeeling must be the A[merica]n heart who would regard them in no other light than as degraded dependents of Spain. This population is also spread over an extensive country supposed to surpass all others in natural resources; they are our near neighbors, & may become usefull friends, or inconvenient, even dangerous ennemies, according to the policy we observe towards them. In this interesting country the revolution now ranges with circumstances of violence and public misery allmost without a parallell in History, unless it be found in that of the wars of Cortes and Pizarro. The Spanish government feeling their incapacity to quell this Rebellion have applied to their Allies, who have by treaty agreed to mediate between the insurgent provinces and their Metropolis, and eventually for valuable considerations to guarantee the integrity of the Spanish Monarchy on this continent.²

It is not necessary to calculate here the ability of great Britain to execute the provisions of this treaty, it is sufficient for my argument that a government who has subjugated India, and who openly aspires to the exclusive commerce of the world has made such a contract. But the revolution in Mexico has gone too far for mediation. Consequently British Bayonettes must be employed to reduce and disarm the insurgents; and when that insurrection is thus quelled, who will be the real masters of that country? Will any man in his right senses pretend that the imbecille government of Spain will then have any Authority there? No; a British Chief will dictate laws to, and controul the policy of Mexico; and to suppose that, then the resources of New Spain, will not be turned against the U. S. is extravagant.

It is thus indispensably necessary that the American people interfere in this interesting Struggle; their honor, their interests, humanity, require it. It is time to set a boundary to the

Ambition of Europe: this continent was not created for their sole convenience: much nobler destinies I trust await it.

It is understood on good authority that the Mexicans are unanimous for independence, but they are without arms and without organization. We have the means of supplying those wants. An Auxiliary Army of 5000 regular troops, as many volunteers, and 50,000 stand of arms, would enable them to consummate their independence and to place themselves in a situation to defy the utmost efforts of its [sic] enemies. Then would free and independent Mexico be our friend from the strongest of all considerations, gratitude and a common interest; then should we be amply remunerated for our generous efforts by the good will of a people become free thro' us and by the advantages of an extensive, a peacefull, and a mutually beneficial commerce.

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² In May 1811, the British government, irritated by the refusal of the Spanish regency to open markets in Spanish America, offered to mediate between Spain and its colonies in return for trade concessions and other considerations. The *Cortes* agreed to consider the proposal in return for a loan of £10,000,000; see William W. Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America, 1804-1828* (New Haven, 1951), 66-68. The news was reported in the (Washington) *National Intelligencer*, Oct. 31, 1811.