

THE MONROE DOCTRINE

BY CHARLES C. THACH

THE Monroe Doctrine ranks among the foremost of the fetishes of these fetish-worshipping United States. Senators, by their own admission, are ready to shed their life blood for its defence. Representatives, though not of the elect whose privilege it is to serve the shrine of Foreign Policy, make Fourth of July orations upon it. American Legion posts and Chambers of Commerce take it under their protection lest it be assailed by the slimy touch of the abominable Red. Presidents and candidates for President stand upon it as upon the rock of their salvation. And, from the grades to the graduate schools, searchers after knowledge listen with bated breath to its exposition by school marms and *Doctores Philosophiae*. Yet probably not one of these passionate partisans, whether pedagogue or politician, Rotarian or legionnaire, could tell you, on penalty of hanging, what the Monroe Doctrine really is.

For once, the reason is not the obvious one, to wit, the ignorance of the expositors. In the first place, the original message in which the doctrine is set forth is not a signal success from the point of view either of logic or of style. Far from measuring up to the high standards of clarity set by the public pronouncements of, say, the late Mr. Harding, it reveals unmistakably that its author suffered a bit from verbal Summer complaint and ideational dizzy spells. Commentators, with the best will to accuracy in the world, can only differ as to the details of its significance.

But the major blame cannot, in justice, be visited on the somewhat muddled head of Mr. Monroe. Though he furnished the

most necessary requisite of a documentary fetish, a considerable degree of vagueness, it has been his most recent successors who have so pulled and hauled the original language of his doctrine as to cause it to lose all meaning, or, what comes to nearly the same thing, to mean anything. Being involved in no matter how humble a piece of oil grabbing, they have rolled their eyes heavenward and proclaimed that they were only applying his principle in all its pristine purity. To them the doctrine has become a diplomatic top bureau drawer, into which anything may be put and from which, after due pawing, anything may be produced.

But, after all, the original message did mean something. It was intended to meet a definite political crisis, to set forth the position of the nation in respect to certain European policies that concerned us deeply. Seen in its proper historical setting, it is neither cryptic nor divine.

II

The European situation that in 1823 occasioned the enunciation of the original Monroe Doctrine seems distressingly familiar to the individual who, in 1924, is enjoying the benefits of the peace that passeth understanding. In 1815, as in 1919, the strongest European military Power had been finally pulled down, after a long and bitter struggle, by the rest of Europe. As in 1919, the winners had met to divide the loot. As at Paris, so at Vienna, the big Powers had made the decisions, while the small fry stood, hat in hand, in the ante-chambers, wondering what was up. To be

sure, 1815 had its advantages over 1919. France, for example, received decent treatment, even after Waterloo. Also, the Powers, having gotten all that their conflicting appetites would permit each to obtain, had for the rest wisely preferred to put Europe in general back where it had been in 1789 rather than risk the evident dangers of attempting to remodel it. But, after 1815, as after 1919, the chief desire of the victors was to rest and digest their spoils. In the one case as in the other, the most convenient bush behind which to hide proved to be a League of Nations.

This League, the so-called Holy Alliance, was the brain-child of Alexander I, Czar of Russia. It took the form, in the first place, of the famous Treaty of the Holy Alliance, a stupendous piece of politico-religious buncombe which bound the contracting parties—ultimately all of Europe except Great Britain, the Sultan and the Pope—to be good Christians and love one another. Evidently, such a covenant might mean anything or nothing. Great Britain maintained that it meant nothing. But Alexander, from the first, believed and argued that it had created a real league, and one which empowered the chief Powers to manage Europe in the name of God and for the protection of their loot and the established order. The real arbiter of European affairs, Prince Metternich of Austria, for a time rather tended to side with Great Britain, and, since he made up not only his own mind, but that of the King of Prussia as well, this fact was decisive. But events soon came that brought him around to Alexander's point of view, whereupon the League became a reality. Those events consisted of a series of Bolshevik scares.

The Bolsheviks of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries were of course the Jacobins—that is, those who believed in the doctrines, any of the doctrines, of the French Revolution. Jacobinism was no new thing. Good American conservatives, for example, had, as early as 1793, begun to shiver in their shoes over

French radicalism and American radicals. Then, in true American fashion, they had proceeded to warm themselves by denouncing all foreigners, save the English, by passing laws for their deportation, and by imprisoning all native critics of the government. But with Napoleon at St. Helena, Louis XVIII on the French throne, France under surveillance and, in general, the old order pretty well reestablished, conservatives the world over began to breathe easier. They had, they believed, killed the snake, not scotched it.

The opposite was the case. The serpent began to wriggle first in Germany, more particularly in the German universities. *Burschenschaften*, radical professors, a student bonfire in which emblems of the old régime were consumed, and finally an assassination by a weak-minded young fanatic comprised the first Bolshevik uprising. Metternich, who, like our own Charles the Baptist, could sniff a Red across an intervening field of Bermuda onions and regarded the highest conceivable statesmanship as consisting in sealing up his country against the contamination of all new ideas, made short shrift of the young intelligentsia. The famous Carlsbad decrees were, at his instigation, issued. The universities were placed under the supervision of officials whose duties were to prevent the teaching of "dangerous" doctrines and to watch the students lest, by any chance, they should be so revolutionary as to try to think. The press was successfully muzzled. The world seemed safe once more.

But this was but the prologue to horrors coming on. Revolutions broke out in Spain, in the Kingdom of Naples, and in Piedmont. Metternich, thoroughly alarmed, for the first time, threw the full weight of his influence behind Alexander's league, which now really began to function. Successive congresses of the Powers met at Troppau, at Laibach and at Verona. The business of saving Europe was formally undertaken. Austria was commissioned to set things right in Italy, and

France in Spain. Troops crossed the Alps and the Pyrenees, put down the revolutionists, abolished constitutions, and restored wobbling monarchs to their thrones.

The years 1820-23 saw, in short, the triumph of the league idea—the idea that Europe was under the supervision of the great Powers, that those Powers had the right to intervene in the internal affairs of any State that threatened to become “revolutionary.” The new principle was thus set forth in the preliminary protocol of the Troppau Congress:

States which have undergone a change of government due to revolution cease to be members of the European Alliance, and remain excluded from it until their situation gives guarantees for legal order and stability. If, owing to such alterations, immediate danger threatens other States, the Powers bind themselves by peaceful means, or if need be by arms, to bring back the guilty State into the bosom of the Great Alliance.

III

Had the Holy Alliance stopped at this point there would have been no Monroe Doctrine. European Powers were quite free, thought the Fathers, to bedevil one another in whatever fashion seemed good in their own eyes. It was none of our business. But the next stage of the development of the Alliance's policy began to concern the Americas directly. It was proposed to apply the new European doctrine to the former Spanish colonies in South and Central America, which had taken advantage of the disturbed condition of the Continent and the dire plight of Spain during the Napoleonic period to revolt and establish their independence. They, too, were revolutionists. They, too, had subverted legitimate authority. They, too, consequently, should be restored to the bosom of the Great Alliance.

At this juncture it became necessary for the Monroe administration to act, for the chief, though not sole reason, that it was approached by Great Britain with a proposition for joint action. There were many reasons for anxiety on the part of the Mother Country. She feared Russia and

Russian influence in the Holy League. She had, moreover, nothing to gain by guaranteeing the continental *status quo*, since she received in return no guarantee of her imperial possessions. In general, then, she had as many reasons for disliking Alexander's league as she has for liking the 1919 model. Further, a rehabilitated France with an army in the middle of Spain seemed ominous. Might not France want pay for her act of Service in restoring Spain to the Great Alliance? And might not that pay take the form of Cuba? And, in any event, was not the proposed restoration of the Spanish colonies an undesirable thing? As free and independent States their commerce was largely in English hands. If they were restored as colonies it would be a Spanish monopoly again.

The situation was all the more delicate by reason of the fact that Great Britain, by practically withdrawing from the Holy League—she had been represented at its last meetings only by an unofficial observer—had deprived herself of all important continental support. Her traditional policy of balancing the lesser States against the strongest continental Power manifestly would not work any more. Under these circumstances, her only recourse was to turn to the United States for assistance. There seemed no other available monkey for the chestnuts, which were unmistakably in the fire.

Nor was this all. Canning suspected, and with complete justice, that the United States itself harbored designs on Cuba. Here was an opportunity to kill two birds with one diplomatic stone. If the United States could be lined up against the proposed intervention of the Holy Alliance, and at the same time persuaded not to take any territory from Spain, British interests would be nicely protected.

So reasoned Mr. Canning, and he accordingly approached the American minister, Richard Rush, with a proposition for a joint declaration of policy by the two nations to the effect that recovery of the colonies by Spain was deemed hopeless,

that recognition of their independence was a matter of time and circumstances, that amicable settlement of the dispute over them would not be hindered, that neither nation aimed at taking possession of any of them, and that neither "could see the transfer of any one of them to any other Power with indifference."

The negotiations that ensued between Canning and Rush came to naught. The question of recognizing the independence of the colonies provided an insurmountable obstacle. The United States had taken this step in 1822, but Canning, for his own reasons, was still unwilling to go so far. Rush correctly maintained that, under the circumstances, the two nations simply could not take joint action. Canning refused to give way, and then, to Rush's surprise, suddenly dropped the negotiations without warning or explanation. Despite Rush's mystification, the cause is now clear. France had finally given England the desired assurance that she was not seeking territorial aggrandizement. The chestnuts being out of the fire, Cousin Monkey was no longer needed.

But Canning had started something. When Rush's accounts of the initial correspondence reached Washington, the worthy Mr. Monroe was much disturbed. Forthwith he forwarded copies of the despatches to the demi-gods of his party, Jefferson and Madison, and asked for their advice. Jefferson, canny diplomat that he was, replied that Great Britain was the power that could do us the most harm and that here was an opportunity to get her friendship and her support for our policy "of ousting from our land all foreign nations," and her coöperation in making "our hemisphere that of freedom." Consequently, he advocated accepting the British offer. Madison went even further, advising an extension to the nations of Europe.

In the meanwhile, the Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, had returned to Washington from a Summer visit to Massachusetts. On his arrival he was confronted, not only with the necessity of for-

mulating a policy with respect to the British proposals, but also of answering two remarkable communications from the Russian minister, Baron de Tuyl. The first of these was to the effect that the Russian government had been informed that the new State of Colombia had appointed a minister to the Russian court and that, *fidèle aux principes politiques qu'elle suit de concert avec ses allies*, his Imperial Majesty had no intention of dealing with revolutionists. The second was, in the words of Adams, "an exposition of principles relating to the affairs of Spain and Portugal in a tone of passionate exultation at the counter-revolution in Portugal and the impending success of the French army in Spain; an *Io Triumphe* over the fallen cause of revolution with sturdy promises to keep it down."

Adams immediately set to work on his replies to Rush and de Tuyl. The two matters, as he saw, were but different aspects of the same thing. The only right to existence that the United States possessed was the right of revolution. Russia, in two impudent communications, had directly challenged that right. The Alliance was threatening to extend its principle of intervention to put down revolution to the Americas, though Adams, for one, had little fear that anything practical would come of the threats. Great Britain's invitation for joint action, with its badly concealed purpose of keeping the United States out of Cuba, would not do. And, in any event, Adams, sturdily though intelligently 100 per cent American, had no desire "to come in as a cockboat in the wake of a British man-of-war." What was needed was a counterblast to the pronouncements of the Holy League, one which would set forth the contrary principles of international relations that the United States sponsored, and so serve warning that the Americas would organize their relations to each other and the rest of the world on the basis of the latter, not the former.

The fundamental principle on which he took his stand was a simple one:

Considering the South Americans as independent nations, they themselves have the *right* to dispose of their condition. *We* have no right to dispose of them either alone or in conjunction with other nations. Neither have any other nations the right of disposing of them without their consent.

He would, he said, bring the whole business "to a test of right and wrong." The foundation stone of the American constitutional system was, he believed, republicanism. "The principles of this form of policy are: 1, that the institution of government, to be lawful, must be pacific—that is, founded upon the consent and by the agreement of those who are governed; and 2, that each nation is exclusively the judge of the government best suited to itself, and that no other nation can justly interfere by force to impose a different government upon it."

It is easy to criticize this doctrine of Adams. It was the half practical, half doctrinaire product of a mind that was still in large measure dominated by all the grand and glorious generalizations of the Eighteenth Century *philosophes*. It assumed many things concerning the Latin Americans that were not true. But that is beside the point. The main thing is that this doctrine was the essential part of the Monroe Doctrine. Adams, indeed, had his way, though Monroe censored his communications to Tuyl and Rush. Jefferson's recommendation of a joint declaration was not followed. Madison's suggestion of a world doctrine rather than a purely American one was ignored. And, despite Monroe's verbosity, the final message said in different words what Adams had already declared in his draft notes: If Latin-America chooses to become independent of Spain, wins and maintains that independence, and sets up governments of its own, sound international law requires that it be permitted to do so without interference by outside Powers. The United States, naturally interested in American affairs as distinct from European affairs, consequently declares to the Holy Allies "that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this

hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." It is, in short, the doctrine of the right of a people to govern or misgovern itself as it pleases. So far as the Americas were concerned, we would see to it that the other American nations had their chance without European interference.

The remaining portion of the message which is considered to be a part of the doctrine, namely, that part which declares the Americas to be closed to future colonization, rests on the same foundation. "The American continents," it sets forth, "by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintained, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European Powers." Such colonization would violate, not our rights, but the rights of these States which we had recognized as independent—and our geographical position gave us a special interest in upholding their rights. The United States thus stood committed to two great principles in international relations: independence and non-intervention. Supervision of the affairs of the American States by a League of great Powers was not to be. The hour of the Holy League had struck. As Canning put it, "Things are getting back to a wholesome state again. Every nation for itself and God for us all.—The time for Arcopagus and the like of that is gone by."

IV

Such *was* the Monroe Doctrine, a statement of the right of the Latin-American peoples to work out their own salvation free from outside interference, and of the interest that the United States had in the preservation of this right from European interference. For some seventy-five years it stood the wear and tear of actual operation remarkably well. Polk, to be sure, added a new provision, and one which was scarcely a logical deduction from the original principle, namely, that a Latin-American State could not even voluntarily alienate territory to a European Power.

The annexation of Texas, despite claims to the contrary, was no violation either of the letter or the spirit of the doctrine, which, indeed, had contemplated just such a voluntary accession to the Union, not only of Texas, but also of Cuba. Even the forcible annexation of California and New Mexico was not so black as it has been painted, for Mexico did her fair share in making the war inevitable and the territory in question was practically masterless long before it began.

The growth of American interest in a trans-isthmian canal, however, led to the enunciation of a doctrine which was certainly not in accord with the original principle that Latin-America could do with its own as seemed best to itself. This doctrine, the so-called doctrine of "paramount interest," was to the effect that the United States claimed the exclusive right to protect and guarantee any canal built across Central America. This, obviously, was a clear denial of the right of the States possessing canal routes to enter into what agreements they chose concerning their territory. But, in any event, the new doctrine scarcely came to any practical importance during the period prior to 1898.

On the other hand, the two chief applications of it in those years were in complete accord with the spirit of the original message. When Seward finally brought about the downfall of the Maximilian government in Mexico during the sixties by forcing Napoleon III to withdraw his troops he was undoubtedly protecting the Mexicans from a rule which had been forced on them by a European Power and was maintained only by its troops. Similarly, when Grover Cleveland forced Great Britain to arbitrate her dispute with Venezuela, he was, he thought, preventing a European Power from acquiring, by virtue of her superior might, the territory of a defenceless neighbor.

But Cleveland was the last of the old order. McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft, Knox, Wilson, Hughes, differing *toto caelo* from each other in other respects, have been as

one in transforming the Monroe Doctrine from one of national independence and non-intervention into one of American suzerainty and intervention. It has been a singularly hypocritical and unedifying performance. All have given lip service to the doctrine, have proclaimed it the ark of the covenant of our foreign policy. All have heaped Latin-America with fine phrases about independence, equality and sovereignty. And all have busied themselves in denying, so far as their acts went, all three, until finally the nation today stands committed to a policy which seeks to determine the very form and personnel of the Latin-American governments, and which denies that right of revolution which, as it happens, is the basic principle of the very doctrine which we have always professed to revere and apply.

It began with the Spanish War. Our purpose, we declared at the outset, was not to "exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control" over Cuba, but "to leave the government and control of the island to its people." But, with the war over, we established a protectorate, despite Cuba's opposition. We annexed Porto Rico, whose right to determine her own affairs amounted to nothing in the face of the desire of the United States to keep her. The basic assumption of the original doctrine, that the Latin-Americas had both the right and the capacity to work out their own future, went overboard once and forever.

If Mr. Roosevelt did not intervene in the Panama "revolution," then intervention has lost all meaning. A rebellion of a portion of Colombia, if not actively fomented by American agents, was certainly assured of success by American troops, American recognition, and a guarantee treaty. Santo Domingo came next, and with it a "modification," an "extension" of the Monroe Doctrine that completely reversed its original significance. This modification took the form of the "doctrine of preventive intervention," by virtue of which the United States has claimed and exercised the right to intervene in the affairs of any

Latin-American State whenever, *in its opinion*, a state of affairs threatens to arise which may produce European intervention, which, in turn, may produce occupation of territory, which *may* ultimately produce annexation. If this is a doctrine of non-intervention, of national independence, then, of course, black is white.

Followed Mr. Taft and Mr. Knox. The region of Central America was their especial preserve. "The United States," said Mr. Taft, "has been glad to encourage and support American bankers who were willing to lend a helping hand to the financial rehabilitation of such countries, because the financial rehabilitation and the protection of their customs-houses from being the prey of would-be dictators would remove at one stroke the menace of foreign creditors and the menace of revolutionary disorder." American bankers, those notorious extenders of the helping hand, were no longer, it would seem, "foreign" to Central America. And the "sacred right of revolution" had become mere "revolutionary disorder."

Nor did the great crusade for the rights of small nations produce a change so far as the small nations of America were concerned. The Great Crusader himself informed the Pan-American Scientific Congress that the Monroe Doctrine had set up a partial protectorate over Latin-America and that it contained no pledge concerning the method in which we would exercise the powers that flowed from it. Nicaragua was bribed into a treaty that made her, to considerable degree, our ward, thus partially consummating an abortive plan fathered by Mr. Taft, which looked toward the creation of a complete protectorate. Santo Domingo and Haiti found that their world was much safer for deserving Democrats than for democracy, which, for purposes relating to this hemisphere, was interpreted to be synonymous with government by the marines. Mexico, too, discovered that her government had, for the future, to conform to the ideals of governmental morality entertained by the admin-

istration then in power in the United States. Huerta, not so conforming, got no recognition, and hence no credit and no arms. Without these, his existence was, of course, impossible and power passed from him to successors who had our approval.

And what of the Hon. Charles Evans Hughes? As might have been expected from so distinguished a former ornament of the Supreme Bench, he jettisoned morality and took legality aboard. No Latin-American government, the edict went forth, would be recognized if it was of revolutionary origin, or if its ideas concerning private property and the right of the State in relation thereto did not conform with those of the United States. More than that, revolutionists could get no arms here, but established governments might. Legitimacy, as a hundred years ago, became the order of the day.

V

"States which have undergone a change of Government due to revolution cease to be members of the European alliance and remain excluded from it until their situation gives guarantees for legal order and stability." So declared the Holy Allies a hundred years ago, and so, in substance, *mutatis mutandis*, declares Mr. Hughes today. A hundred years ago John Quincy Adams wrote: "Considering the South Americans as independent nations, they themselves have the *right* to dispose of their condition. *We* have no right to dispose of them." On the basis of that principle the Monroe Doctrine was enunciated.

It is an odd situation. The doctrine against which the Monroe Doctrine was aimed has become the Monroe Doctrine. Who would be so much a traitor as to deny the great truth enunciated by Mr. Root that the doctrine "has grown continually a more vital and insistent rule of conduct for each succeeding generation of Americans?" Abandon it? Only one bribed by Russian gold would suggest such an act. Verily, a fetish is a strange thing!

ABOVE PARADISE

BY JAMES BRANCH CABELL

IT began when Palnatoki rode forth and made his brag. "I am the champion of the Ænseis. In the Northland there is nobody mightier than I; and if a mightier person live elsewhere, it is not yet proven. Who is there in this place will try a fall with me?"

Behind him the pagan army waited, innumerable, and terrible, and deplorably ill-mannered. These shouted now: "We cry a holmgang. Who will fight with Red Palnatoki, that is overlord of the Swan's bath, and that slew the giants in Noenhir?"

Then from the opposed ranks came clanking and shining in full armor the most notably religious of the Christian lords, Donander of Évre. And he said: "I, howsoever unworthy, messire, am the person who will withstand you. I also have fought before this morning. Under Count Manuel's banner of the Silver Stallion I have done what I might. That much I will again do here today, and upon every day between this day and the holy Morrow of Judgment."

After that the Christian army shouted: "There is none mightier than Donander! Also, he is very gratifyingly modest."

But Palnatoki cried out scornfully: "Your utmost will not avail this morning. Behind me musters all the might of the Ænseis, that are the most high of gods above Lærath, and their strength shall be shown here through me."

"Behind the endeavors of every loyal son of the Church," Donander said, "are the blessed saints and the bright archangels."

"Indeed, Donander, that may very well be the truth," replied Red Palnatoki. "The

old gods and the gods of Rome have met to-day; and we are their swords."

"Your gods confess their weakness, Messire Palnatoki, by picking the better weapon," Donander answered him, courteously.

With these amenities discharged, they fought. Nowhere upon earth could have been found a pair of more stalwart warriors: each had no equal anywhere existent between seas and mountains save in his adversary: so neatly were they matched indeed that, after a half-hour of incredible battling, it was natural enough they should kill each other simultaneously. And then the unfortunate error occurred, just as each naked soul escaped from the dying body.

For now from the North came Kjalar, who guides the souls of pagan heroes to eternal delights in the Hall of the Chosen: and from the zenith sped, like a shining plummet, Ithuriel to fetch the soul of the brave champion of Christendom to the felicities of the golden city walled about with jasper of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Both emissaries had been attending the combat until the arrival of their part therein; both, as seasoned virtuosi of warfare, had been delighted by this uncommonly fine fight: and in their pleased excitement they somehow made the error of retrieving each the other's appointed prey. It happened thus that the soul of Donander of Évre fared northward, asleep in the palm of Kjalar's hand, while Ithuriel conveyed the soul of Red Palnatoki to the heaven of Jahveh.

Ithuriel's blunder, it is gratifying to record, did not in the outcome really matter.