



Monroe on Recognition of the Independent States of South America

Below is an excerpted and annotated version of President Monroe's March 11, 1822, response to a House resolution introduced January 29 (included beneath President Monroe's message). All of the language in the excerpt is from the original, except for the annotations in parentheses, which define words in italics or provide additional information. Periods of ellipsis indicate gaps in the edited text. Anyone desiring the full text should consult the "[Journal of the Senate of the United States of America, 1789-1873](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(sj01170)))" for Monday, March 11, 1822 [[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(sj01170\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(sj01170)))] on the EDSITEment-reviewed website [American Memory](http://memory.loc.gov/) [<http://memory.loc.gov/>].

President Monroe's Message:

In transmitting to the House of Representatives the documents called for by the resolution of that House, of the 30th January (see below), I consider it my duty to invite the attention of Congress to a very important subject....

The revolutionary movement in the Spanish *provinces* (possessions) in this hemisphere attracted the attention and excited the sympathy of our fellow citizens from its *commencement* (beginning). This feeling was natural and honorable to them, *from causes which need not be communicated to you* (for reason I don't need to tell you). (Monroe understands that Americans who only recently won their independence from a European power tend to be sympathetic to revolutionary movements.) ... Through the whole of *this contest* (the revolutionary conflicts) the United States have remained neutral....

This contest has now reached such a stage... that it merits the most profound consideration whether their right to the rank of independent nations, with all the advantages incident to it, in their intercourse with the United States, is not *complete* (a foregone conclusion). *Buenos Ayres* (Argentina) assumed that rank by a formal declaration in 1816, and has enjoyed it since 1810, free from invasion by the parent country. The provinces composing the Republic of Colombia, after having separately declared their independence, were united by a fundamental law of the 17th of December 1819. A strong Spanish force occupied, at that time, certain parts of the territory within their limits, and waged a destructive war. That force has since been repeatedly defeated.... Chili declared independence in 1818, and has since enjoyed it undisturbed; and of late by the assistance of Chili and Buenos Ayres, the revolution has extended to Peru. Of the movement in Mexico our information is less *authentic* (reliable), but it is, nevertheless, distinctly understood, that the new government has declared its independence, and that there is now no opposition.... For the last three years the government of Spain has not sent a single corps of troops to any part of that country; nor is there any reason to believe it will send any in future....

Civil wars too often excite feelings which the parties cannot control.... The delay... in making a decision on this important subject, will... have afforded... proof to Spain, as it must have done to other powers, of the high respect entertained by the United States for her rights, and of their determination not to interfere with them. The provinces belonging to this hemisphere are our

neighbors, and have, successively, as each portion of the country acquired its independence, *pressed their recognition* (asked the United States to recognize them) by an appeal to facts not to be contested, and which they thought gave them a just title to it. *To motives of interest this government has invariably disclaimed all pretension* (The United States has no self-interest at stake in these conflicts), being resolved to take no part in the controversy.... When we regard, then, the great length of time which this war has been prosecuted, the complete success which has attended it in favor of the *provinces* (revolutionaries in their home countries), the present condition of the parties, and the utter inability of Spain to produce any change in it, we are compelled to conclude that its fate is settled, and that the provinces which have declared their independence... ought to be recognized.

Of the views of the Spanish government on this subject, no particular information has been recently received.... The immense space between those powers, even those which border on the Atlantic, and these provinces, makes the movement an affair of less interest and excitement to them, than to us. It is probable, therefore, that they have been less attentive to its progress than we have been.

In proposing this measure, it is not contemplated to change thereby, in the slightest manner, our friendly relations with either of the parties, but to observe, in all respects, as heretofore, should the war be continued, the most perfect neutrality between them. Of this friendly disposition, an assurance will be given to the government of Spain.... The measure is proposed... in strict accord with the law of nations; that it is just and right as to the parties; and that the United States owe it to their station and character in the world, as well as to their essential interests, to adopt it. Should Congress concur in the view herein presented, they will doubtless see the propriety of *making the necessary appropriations for carrying it into effect* (passing bills to cover the expense of recognizing the newly independent South American states).

JAMES MONROE.

The resolution to which President Monroe was responding:

Mr. Nelson, (a Republican) of Virginia, submitted the following resolution...

Resolved, That the President of the United States be requested to lay before this House such communications as may be in the possession to the Executive. from the agents of the United states With the governments south of the United States which have declared their independence; and the communications from the agents of such governments in the United States with the Secretary of State, as tend to *shew* (show) the political condition of those governments, and the state of the war between them and Spain, as it may be consistent with the public interest to communicate.