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By

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INTRODUCTION

Time shapes the destinies of men while the destinies of nations rise and fall in the tides of diplomacy. Oftentimes to avoid shipwreck in tempestuous undulations, the ship of state drops anchor in less resistant waters, sometimes to lose the hunted treasure at the end of the voyage.

Long ago, after Columbus discovered these great Americas, there was jealousy, strife, and race for possession of the lands in the Western Hemisphere, and that spirit of aggression is recorded on the pages of history since colonization and trade solicited the monetary interests of all countries.

Approximately one hundred years ago, all the larger European nations as well as the United States became intensely interested in the construction of an isthmian canal in this hemisphere. However, before this dream was realized, there was to be much controversy, rivalry, and diplomatic intriguing.

This issue was an especially popular one from 1840 to 1850 with the United States and Great
Britain the main contenders. The diplomacy of this period is most interesting to a scholar of history and has always been a matter of curious concern to the writer. Today, especially, when the realization of the inadequacy and futility of the Panama Canal has resulted in the United States appropriating large sums of money for prompt investigation of engineering possibilities there, when Russia and the Latin American countries particularly Panama are agitating for its neutralization, when issues regarding its enlargement and internationalization are quickly moulding themselves into world opinion, the topic is of particular interest and timeliness, not only for the reasons above, but by virtue of the fact that there were similar interests and maneuvers just one hundred years ago.

At that time, the United States by the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty forfeited the right to own exclusively the isthmian canal. It will prove interesting to keep pace with the diplomacy on this issue of the present day and to note whether or not history will repeat itself; however, to understand the present issue, it is necessary to have knowledge of that which has happened previously. The student of diplomacy will ask: "Will
the United States revert to the principles of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty or will her stars and stripes ever wave triumphantly over the canal zone?"

One hundred years ago, the United States' canal interests seemed to be dormant; however, many issues at home demanded her first attention and when she manifested vigilance, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty climaxed a series of treaties of Anglo-American Diplomacy. This treaty was effective over half a century and may have bearing upon future isthmian diplomacy.

It will be the attempt of the writer to discuss these various activities and intrigues of the Anglo-American Diplomacy during the period 1840 to 1850.
CHAPTER I

THE APPEARANCE OF THE BRITISH IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The accounts of the rivalry for a canal route in Central America and of territorial encroachment in that locality are very closely related. The main contestants were Great Britain and the United States with France coming in a slow third.¹

Columbus discovered Central America on his last fateful voyage to the new world in a final attempt to find the much sought after straits to the China Sea. On this exploration in 1502, he skirted the entire coast of Central America and founded Costa Rica, the first colony in Central America. From the very outset, Spain became exceedingly interested in this region because of its strategic position, which was close to the route over which Spain had brought her treasures from Peru and the Orient. In 1522, Guatemala was conquered by the lieutenant of Cortez, Pedro de Alvarado, and gradually one after another of the Central American provinces fell into the hands of Spain.

For well over a century Spain had enjoyed almost exclusive monopoly of trade and commerce in the Caribbean region. Extensive wealth and riches continually poured into the mother country from her vast transatlantic possessions. Early in the seventeenth century, however, buccaneers began to challenge this monopoly. These freebooters often found rendezvous along the eastern coast of Nicaragua and Honduras where they might conveniently pounce upon homeward bound Spanish galleons.

Among these buccaneers Englishmen far outnumbered all other nationalities, and even though the British Government had neither authorized nor recognized their presence there, it nevertheless sometimes connived in the piracy that existed. The British governors who resided in Jamaica after its conquest in 1655 often shared in the buccaneers' booty.²

After some time the freebooters made friends with the natives and presently settled down to more peaceful and honest occupations. The British, very anxious to get a foothold in the strategic Central American region, soon devised a scheme whereby they might share Spain's hitherto much coveted wealth.

without openly violating the latter's sovereignty. The plan, a simple one, consisted merely in placing a protectorate over a certain tribe of natives living along the Mosquito Coast. In this manner the British could conveniently carry on trade with the king of a tribe, at least nominally.3

Thus it was that in the case of the Mosquito Coast, shortly after the conquest of Jamaica, the head of the Mosquitos recognized the suzerainty of Great Britain and was crowned king by the governor of Jamaica. British officers then reported to Bluefields, the capital of the Mosquito Coast, to govern in the name of Great Britain and for her benefit.4

Spain, from the very beginning, bitterly protested against the British presence in this vicinity and ineffectively demanded their withdrawal. European wars ensued, and for the most part, the safety and peace of the British settlers were determined almost entirely by the varying fortunes of Spain and England in the wars in which they were involved.

By the terms of the Treaty of 1763, England

3Ibid., pp. 6-7.
4Ibid., p. 8.
agreed to withdraw her settlements from the Mosquito Coast, and to relinquish her protectorate over this locality. Nevertheless, in spite of her solemn promise, England found loopholes for violating this treaty, and continued to retain her close friendship with the native Mosquitos.\(^5\)

The Treaty of Versailles in 1783 attempted to settle this long disputed controversy between Spain and England. Accordingly, in Article VI, the British were compelled to recognize Spanish sovereignty over the entire isthmus from sea to sea.\(^6\)

According to Lindley M. Keasbey, who apparently is quoting from the original grant, Spain, in return conceded to:

> His Britannic Majesty's subjects the right of cutting, loading, and carrying away logwood in the district lying between the rivers Wallis or Belize, and Rio Hondo. However, these rights were given to the English only under the condition that their concession not detract in any degree from the sovereignty of His Catholic Majesty.\(^7\)

By this agreement, Great Britain retained her possession of the Bahamas, but relinquished her


\(^7\)Ibid.
claim to all settlements in the Bay Islands, and her protectorate over the Mosquito Coast as well. Spain designated a period of eighteen months for the scattered British subjects to return to Belize. However, the allotted time elapsed without the settlers complying with the stipulations.

After repeated protestations on the part of Spain, a supplementary treaty was negotiated in 1786 whereby the boundaries of Belize were to be extended in the south to the river Siboon. Spain, in addition to log cutting which had been ceded in 1760 granted to the British settlers the right to extract neutral products from the earth.\(^8\)

After 1786, the British formally withdrew from the Mosquito Coast but retained their intimate association with the Mosquitos. The decades which followed the Napoleonic wars found the British creeping noiselessly and cautiously back into Central America. Spain, both because of her preoccupation on the continent and the revolutions in the Spanish American colonies, was powerless to stop the ever increasing encroachment of the British in the twenties. Consequently, by 1825, the English had secured a firmer

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 105.
In 1825, the United States government was invited to send delegates to the Pan-American congress to be held the next year in Panama. Great Britain was also invited to attend. The Colombian minister, Salazar, extended the invitation to the United States on November 2 while Mexico had sent one the day previous. In this note Salazar suggested that the subjects to be discussed were of two types: first, matters which concerned the belligerents exclusively; and second, all matters concerning both belligerents and neutrals. The United States was expected to take part in the latter discussions only. It was further pointed out that the United States would be given an opportunity to fix the principle of international law, and to determine the manner of opposing future European colonization and of abolishing African trade. The American delegates failed to arrive to take part in the congress because of party opposition evinced toward President Adams. Because of this lack of cooperation on the part of the United States, little was accomplished at the Pan-American Congress.10


10Ibid., pp. 141-142.
For the next decade or so, the United States government ignored Central America in so far as the principles of the Monroe Doctrine were concerned. Occasionally, however, delegates were dispatched to that locality to investigate the possibilities of constructing a transit route across the isthmus which would be open to all nations on equal terms. Prior to 1840, the state department showed concern over the activities of the British in Central America in so far as the latter affected the transit routes.

The Captaincy-general of Central America, including all the present day Central America and a portion of Mexico, took advantage of the weakened condition of Spain during the Napoleonic wars and declared their independence on September 15, 1821. Almost immediately, however, Mexico, under the leadership of Iturbide who was seeking to build up an empire in the new world, seized the reins of government. Civil war ensued resulting in the surrender of Iturbide to his rival, Santa Anna, on April 23, 1823.

Fearing that Santa Anna might continue the course followed by Iturbide, the Central American colonies made up of Guatemala, Honduras, San Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, joined together
In 1824 as the Independent Federal Republic of Central America.

In all the Central American States there now grew up two political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. The former had been responsible for the organization of the Central American Union and likewise had upheld the Monroe Doctrine and had favored a Pan-American organization under the protection of the United States; the latter had never favored any organized federation and had set about to disorganize the union formed in 1824. Civil wars raged between both parties under the leadership of Rafael Carrera, Guatemalan dictator of the Conservative group, and Francisco Morazan, Liberal leader of Honduras. Finally, with the defeat and execution of Morazan in 1840, the Federal Union dissolved.\(^{11}\)

Simultaneously with the dissolution of the Central American Union, the British drove the Central American authorities out of Bay Islands, and the governor was given orders to eject any foreigner who attempted to get control of Rautan.

Thus by 1840, British agents in Central America virtually controlled three definite areas: Belize, or British Honduras; Rautan, the largest

of the Bay Island group; and the Mosquito Shore which embraced the east coast from Cape Honduras to the mouth of the San Juan River. From policy, of course, the British home government did not openly countenance the occupation of these areas, but generally accepted the results. Thereupon followed a series of intrigues and rivalry on the part of Great Britain and the United States governments to secure a foothold in Central America to take care of future emergencies, especially to secure transit rights across the Isthmus.

To understand the canal diplomacy in Central America from 1840 to 1850, it will be necessary to trace the growth of the canal idea in the United States. During the two decades prior to this period the various administrations dispatched delegates to investigate possibilities of a waterway between the Atlantic and the Pacific. The discouraging reports brought back by these representatives retarded the progress of the United States in the formation of its concept of the canal. The writer will attempt to discuss the growth of this idea in the following chapter.
A shorter water route from Europe to Asia had been the dream of many explorers before Columbus began his journey in 1492. Of like ambition were Balboa, Cortez, Magellan and numerous others. Charles V of Spain studied the possibilities of constructing an artificial canal in the Caribbean region and four routes were cited as being worthy of notice: Darien, Panama, Tehauntepec and Nicaragua. However, Charles became too much preoccupied with domestic affairs to carry out this project.

In 1823, the Central American Congress discussed the feasibility of constructing a canal, but because of the weakness of the Spanish American States and of the chaotic conditions prevalent in that region, it was decided to turn to a stronger nation to execute such a project. Accordingly, in 1824, Señor Canas, diplomatic representative of the Central American Federation at Washington, called the attention of the United States government to the importance of such a waterway and asked the United States to cooperate with them in constructing a canal. Henry Clay, secretary of state,
enthusiastic about this undertaking, promised to ask the United States government to investigate the situation.

At approximately the same time, ministers from Colombia and Mexico invited the United States to attend the Pan-American Congress to be held in Panama in 1826. Since President Adams was largely responsible for the Monroe Doctrine, the Committee on Foreign Affairs eagerly awaited his reply. After due consideration, he asked Henry Clay to notify the ministers, Obregon and Salazar, that the United States heartily favored such a congress in that it might bring about more friendly relations between the Americas. However, before the United States would agree to send delegates, the state department demanded that full particulars regarding the subject matter to be discussed, the powers and authority to be given to all delegates, and the general organization of the convention be submitted to Clay. 12

The ministers replied to Clay's inquiry by stating the impossibility of answering all his demands in an entirely satisfactory manner; nevertheless, they did suggest topics such as ways of

handling further European attempts at colonization on the American continent, the abolition of slave trade, and the independence of Haiti would be treated.  

Mr. Adams, despite the fact that he was not entirely pleased with the reply, informed the ministers that "representatives would be sent should the United States senate...give their advice and consent;" to the senate he said, "Ministers on the part of the United States will be commissioned to attend."

President Adams' notification provoked bitter opposition from some senators who feared that the question of slavery would be brought into prominence again and undo the work of the Missouri Compromise. In defending his position, Adams declared in a special message to congress on March 14, 1826 that:

"Objects of the highest importance, not only to the future welfare of the whole human race, but bearing directly upon the special interests of this union, will engage the deliberations of this congress of Panama whether we are represented there or not."

Adams won the battle at the expense of his popularity and proceeded to appoint Richard C. Anderson of Kentucky and John Sargeant of Pennsylvania.

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as delegates. Instructing the American representatives, Clay said:

If the question of the construction of an interoceanic canal should be submitted for the consideration of the congress, the representatives of the United States must sustain the principle that the advantage to be derived from a direct passage from one ocean to another shall not be conferred on any single nation, but shall be extended to all nations of the world on payment of just compensation or reasonable dues. Moreover, the delegates were to insist upon the most-favored-nation principle in commercial relations and a more liberal interpretation of the rights of neutral countries during time of war. They were likewise to encourage the Central American States to resist any encroachment in that region by European nations.

The two delegates, appointed by Adams, never arrived at Panama as Richard Anderson died on the way; the other, John Sargent, had not left the states when word came that the congress had been adjourned to Tacubaya. Randolph, Van Buren, Polk, Buchanan, and Calhoun, senators who had bitterly opposed this move, rejoiced at the outcome. Furthermore, the United States was not the only nation which lacked representation at the congress—Chile, Brazil

15Ibid.
and Buenos Aires also failed to have delegates there. 16

Great Britain sent Edward Dawkins to the congress with definite orders to find out the views of the delegates on the policy of reconciliation with the mother country. England wished to have a share in adjusting conditions in Latin America and thereby compete with the United States for the regard of the Latin American people. Dawkins proposed a plan of recognition of the individual Central American States by the British government each on a pecuniary basis which met with the unanimous disapproval of the delegates. Likewise, Canning had instructed Dawkins also to take special notice of the views, policies and feelings of the American governments toward each other, and the degree of influence! the United States might have upon them. He was advised further that Great Britain would not oppose a loose league formed among the various Latin American States, but that the United States was not to head such a confederation. Rippy says that Canning feared a league of "American liberalism and democratic republicanism

16 Ibid.
would be formed against European conservatism."17

In the meantime, through Werweer, a Dutch representative at the Panama Congress, the King of Holland had become very much interested in the idea of a canal project. A company was formed, the king at its head, to construct a canal through Nicaragua. Werweer was then sent back to Central America to secure a treaty which would give Holland the necessary concessions. The Central American States, fearing that the United States had lost interest in the project, and that England was not yet awakened to the opportunities that awaited anyone attempting such a canal, immediately accepted Holland's bid and granted liberal concessions to the Dutch on December 19, 1830. Holland was given not only exclusive right-of-way but also a monopoly of the coasting trade.18

When the United States heard of Holland's generous grant, Mr. Livingstone, secretary of state, instructed Mr. Jeffrey, our minister to Holland, that the United States was the most interested party in any such project and that we would expect all the

advantages granted to other nations. Accordingly, Jeffrey was told to secure for the United States the majority of stocks in the Holland Company and a share in its monopoly. The project resulted in an unfulfilled dream, as the Belgian revolution broke out at this time and turned Holland's attention to more pressing affairs in the homeland.19

From this time on, the United States was very much interested in a canal. On March 3, 1835 John Clayton introduced a resolution into the senate favoring presidential action in the interest of a canal project across the American isthmus and at the same time recommending that President Jackson negotiate with the Central American Governments and with New Granada in order to protect by treaty any company that would attempt to construct an isthmian canal. The main specification was that if any such project were undertaken, it should provide for free and equal navigation for contracting parties on the payment of reasonable tolls to those capitalists who would undertake to finance the canal enterprise under government sanction.20

President Jackson heartily approved of this

19Ibid.

resolution and appointed Charles Biddle of Philadelphiat make preliminary investigations of the possibilities of constructing a canal through Nicaragua to be followed by similar observations at Panama. Biddle disobeyed orders and went directly to New Granada where he secured for himself an exclusive grant to a right-of-way across Panama. He returned to the United States soon afterwards and told Forsyth, secretary of state, that he thought it would be presumptuous to make any decision in regard to either route as New Granada was on the verge of being dismembered before two years would elapse and probably within nine months. He advanced three reasons for this statement: There were no common interests between the provinces of the isthmus and the other parts of the state; influential leaders were attempting to place the isthmus under British control; the people living in the isthmus realized that they occupied the only part of the country capable of yielding commercial facilities.21

In referring to Biddle’s mission, John Forsyth reprimanded McAfee, agent at Bogotá, for

permitting Biddle, wholly unauthorized as he was, to enter into an agreement with New Granada. Forsyth declared that Biddle had been an official delegate of the United States government, sent to Central America merely to make specific observations regarding the best possible location for the construction of an isthmian canal. He admitted the fact that a private individual could enter into contract with foreign governments, but it was not permitted a diplomatic representative to do so without expressed instructions to that effect from the state department. 22

In 1839 the United States senate approved a second resolution advising the President to open up negotiations with other nations and in particular with those nations who had territorial jurisdiction in the vicinity of Panama, with the aim of constructing an interoceanic canal between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Before the United States government could follow out this proposed resolution, New Granada granted concessions to a French Company to build either a railroad or a canal across

22 Forsyth to McAfee, September 23, 1836, Ibid. pp. 350-351.
Panama. Aware of these concessions to the French Company and hoping that they would not materialize, President Van Buren sent John Stephens to survey a route and to estimate the possible cost of constructing an adequate canal. Stephens, after a thorough investigation of the proposed project, estimated the cost at $25,000,000 but at the same time admitted that he thought the construction of any canal quite impractical at this time as the Central American States were far too unsettled to warrant the United States risking such an undertaking.

While the United States was waiting for further developments, Prince Louis Napoleon, a prisoner at Ham, conceived the idea of resuming the concession granted to the French Company a short time before, but which had been abandoned due to lack of funds. With the fall of the monarchy in July, however, Louis Napoleon relinquished his dream of an isthmian canal because state interests at home demanded all his attention.

Another country to show its interest in the canal at this time was Belgium. William S. Murphy, special agent of the United States to Central America, informed Daniel Webster, secretary of state, in a letter dated June 16, 1842, that an envoy of Prince Leopold was in Guatemala at the time endeavoring to obtain a grant of the Port of Santo Tomas and the exclusive navigation of the River Motagua. Several years previous to this time, Guatemala had granted the port to Mr. Young Anderson and he in turn had sold it to a Belgian Company. The English Council had backed this project because the English commercial and agricultural company which controlled the Vera Paz grant had contracted to sell to the Belgian Company a portion of their grant for a large sum. Murphy was quite concerned over the Belgian plan because he feared that the United States would be excluded from all participation in trade and commerce in that area. Consequently, he requested an interview with the President of Guatemala to ascertain the terms of the grant. To his astonishment, he learned that Belgium was to obtain from 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 acres of land including the
Port of Santo Tomas and the Montagua River, and in return the company was to pay Guatemala $160,000. This grant was to insure exclusive navigation of the River Montagua for a period of twenty years.  

At this time, the United States Supreme Court had just handed down a decision in connection with the exclusive right claimed by an oyster company to fish in the Delaware harbor and river. The decision held that no private company or individuals could be given such a privilege by the United States government. Using this decision as an example, Murphy persuaded the President of Guatemala to declare the Belgian grant null and void. When the British heard of Murphy's action, they immediately circulated pamphlets in London to the effect that the United States agent had ruined their business deal.  

Murphy's success in alarming the United States concerning the expediency of securing immediate control of an isthmian canal resulted in the treaty with New Granada on December 12, 1846, four years after his report. President Polk with the senate

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26 Ibid.
realized the grave responsibility which the United States assumed in guaranteeing "the perfect neutrality" of New Granada in this treaty, but in view of the importance of a transisthmian canal and of the newly awakened interests and consequent rivalries of the different nations, the United States felt fully justified in signing the treaty.

In 1849, Elijah Hise, appointed by Polk as chargé d'affaires to Guatemala, negotiated a treaty with Nicaragua in which the United States practically granted the same rights to Nicaragua as they had conceded to New Granada, but the United States refused to support this unauthorized treaty as the British had already moved into Nicaraguan territory.27

Hoping to placate matters, President Taylor, in 1849, sent George Squier as a special agent to Nicaragua with explicit orders to obtain all concessions short of involving the United States in any serious controversy with Great Britain. Obediently, Squier signed treaties with Nicaragua and Honduras in order to insure control of that region by the United States. The story of the negotiations of these treaties will be told in the next chapter.

Thus one after another of the various nations dreamed of owning an interoceanic canal which would connect the Atlantic and the Pacific. However, the realization of such a project was blocked by too many insurmountable difficulties. In the first place, they had to reckon with the physical and engineering features of the region. Next in consideration would be the diplomatic problems and control of the canal during peace as well as during war. Another important reason and perhaps the determining factor was that the greatest difficulty of all lay in the weakness and inability of the Central American States to protect any canal constructed in their vicinity. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that both Great Britain and the United States began actively maneuvering to gain control of the strategic area where they felt that the canal most probably would be constructed. Consequently, from 1840 to 1850, Great Britain and the United States engaged in a series of intrigues.

In the following chapter, the writer will attempt to show the further encroachment of the British into Central America during the period of 1840 to 1850 and the countermoves on the part of the United States to halt British progress.
CHAPTER III

BRITISH EXPANSION IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND
THE GROWING CONCERN OF THE UNITED STATES
FROM 1840 TO 1850

Colonel Juan Gulindo, Central American minister during Jackson's administration, in 1837 appealed to the United States government to take action against the encroachment of Great Britain in Central America. At the time, Jackson was ill-informed and unconcerned about British activities there; hence he soon dismissed the subject on the ground that he thought it inexpedient for the United States to interfere, although in 1835 he had been interested in a canal project and had dispatched Biddle for purposes of investigation. Jackson's failure to heed the appeal of Colonel Juan Gulindo represents lost opportunities on the part of the United States to exercise beneficial diplomacy since a state of civil war existed in Central America from 1837 to 1841, while simultaneously, the British seemed to grow bolder each day.

A little more concern, however, was manifested by the Harrison administration when, in 1841
Webster, secretary of state, sent Murphy to Central America with specific orders to insist upon the idea that the United States considered Central America to have the same rights on the isthmus as Spain had enjoyed there. As regards the political situation he was instructed thus:

If you find the states composing the former Confederation of Central America at war themselves, or in a state of hopeless dissention, there will be no reason for prolonging your stay, and you will therefore return. If any confederation exists of some but not all of those states, and this confederation appears to possess the character of a regular and settled government, you will give this department full information on that subject to the end that it may be considered, whether abandoning the former treaty it may not be expedient to propose to treat with such new government.28

Murphy arrived at his destination on December 25 and two months later on February 4, 1842 submitted the following observations:

I find 1st the federal government abolished — 2nd. neither war nor dissention among the states—each apparently settled down into a new league or confederacy acting on all occasions relating to other countries, in concert and confederacy—each having its separate state government in full power and authority—and this state of affairs most likely to continue for a long period of time. I find England through her colonial government, offering to enter into treaty relations with these states in their present condition—and lastly I find

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28Webster's instructions to Murphy (quoted)
the states willing and anxious to renew their treaty relations with these United States. Applying this state of affairs to that clause of my instructions, I feel it my duty to remain here and wait the further orders of the government.²⁹

At the same time Murphy strongly urged that the United States should lose no time in arranging treaties with Honduras, Costa Rica and San Salvador. Moreover, he insisted that the United States flag of commerce be placed on the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua.

Following a more thorough investigation of conditions in Central America, Murphy reported to the state department in June that British colonial agents were arousing much hostility in that region because of Great Britain's claim to the Mosquito Shore. Murphy busied himself to find out the origin of the British claim as well as to get a sketch of the history of the Mosquito Shore and notified Webster of his findings:

The establishment of the English on the Mosquito Shore appears to have taken place at a very early period. First by buccaneers, and afterwards by men employed in the contraband trade, carried on at an early period between Jamaica and the Spanish main...It is further contended that the Mosquito Shore was never conquered by the Spaniards, and never subjected to the jurisdiction of Spain; that the

²⁹Murphy to Webster, February 4, 1842, Ibid., pp. 177-178.
English settled on that coast very early, contracted an intimate acquaintance and connection with the Mosquito Indians who were then a very warlike people. That they thus became very much attached to the English nation in so much that under the Government of the Duke of Albermarle over Jamaica they made a formal cession of their territory to the king of England.\textsuperscript{30}

Murphy further reported that the English had attempted in 1840 to negotiate a treaty with Guatemala, Honduras and other Central American States with the expressed purpose of fixing boundary lines between the Honduras and the Mosquito territory. At that moment, Guatemala was involved in a war with San Salvador, and therefore was not interested in any such negotiations with England until the latter would first relinquish all her claim to any territory belonging to Guatemala and confine herself to Belize exclusively. Honduras ignored the British proposal on the ground that no dispute existed between her boundary and that of the Mosquito territory. Moreover, Honduras asserted that she recognized the boundaries laid down by the constitution of 1839 which were practically the same as those acknowledged by the Spanish Kings.\textsuperscript{31}

Murphy's report also included the informa-

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., pp. 185-186.

\textsuperscript{31}Murphy to Webster, February 4, 1842, Manning, \textit{Op. Cit.}, III, pp. 174-175.
tion that Archibald MacDonald, superintendent of Belize, appointed Patrick Walker and Richard Harvey together with two other gentlemen to be named by Honduras to act as mediators. MacDonald suggested that the meeting take place either at Truxillo or at Belize. Honduras replied that the government was entirely ignorant of the existence of the Mosquito monarchy and acknowledged the boundary as laid down by Spain. Therefore, no appointment was made by Honduras.\textsuperscript{32}

A bolder step had been taken in 1841 when MacDonald accompanied by the Mosquito King went down to San Juan at the mouth of the river, pulled down the Nicaraguan flag and raised the Mosquito emblem instead. He claimed this region in the name of the Mosquito King and ordered the Nicaraguan commandant to evacuate by March 1. Despite this bold demand on the part of Great Britain, Nicaragua remained in San Juan because she denied the existence of a Mosquito monarchy. Since the British ceased to enforce their claim, the subject was dropped for the time.\textsuperscript{33}

However, this dismissal was short-lived.

\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 174-175.

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}
The British government, true to form was always eager to seize any opportunity of gaining further foothold in Central America and on April 16, 1842, notified the Central American authorities that Great Britain demanded the immediate liquidation of claims amounting to $47,613.70. These demands were based on the fact that the Central American authorities had in the past levied special taxes on British citizens, and when the latter had refused to pay the "unjust" taxes, were thrown into prison and suffered the confiscation of their property. A warning issued by Vice Admiral Adam and Colonel MacDonald from Belize stated that if the Central American States continued to refuse justice to the claimants or failed to make reparations by June 1, her Majesty's government would be forced to take action.\textsuperscript{34}

In compliance with this demand, Honduras paid her debts but Nicaragua and San Salvador refused. Consequently, on July 18, 1842, Nicaragua received the following proclamation from Belize regarding a blockade of San Juan:

Whereas, persons in authority in the states of Central America did some time since impose grievous pecuniary exactions on several subjects of her Britannic Majesty resident in those states, which imposts were not in the nature of a general

\textsuperscript{34} Savage to Webster, June 18, 1842, Manning, \textit{Op. Cit.}, III, pp. 197-198.
tax on the other inhabitants of the said states...

Whereas, after repeated applications for redress in the name of her Britannic Majesty, and governments of the states of San Salvador and Nicaragua have not only failed to come to any arrangement for granting compensation, but have also met such applications by evasive and discourteous replies...

Whereas I have received instructions from her Britannic Majesty's Government to insist upon the just claims of her subjects for the injuries they have suffered... By virtue of the power and authority to me delegated by the said instructions, and in order to enforce the said claims, I hereby declare the Port of San Juan de Nicaragua, situated at the mouth of the river of that name, to be blockaded and all commercial intercourse with the said Port shall be prevented and cease.35

Consequent on this proclamation, Henry Savage, in charge of the Central American legation, enclosed copies of the above British threat and strongly urged that the American government take a definite stand in regard to British activities in Central America. However, from all appearances, the warning was unheeded by the state department.

This inactivity on the part of the United States was due to the fact that the administration was well occupied with domestic affairs in the forties—this partially excuses her unwillingness to take a definite stand. At this time, the Polk

administration was launching a program of expansion—a period of "Manifest Destiny" had dawned: In 1842, the United States settled its northeast boundary by the Webster-Ashburton treaty; in 1845, the United States annexed Texas; in 1846, the United States fixed its northwest boundary at the forty-ninth parallel; in the same year, the United States fought a war with Mexico; and by 1848, the United States' flag waved over all the territory between the Atlantic and the Pacific, and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

Meanwhile, Great Britain was looking with jealous eyes upon the expansion of the United States in the southwest. Logically, then, the British became more persistent in their aggression in Central America which aroused great concern on the part of the United States. There ensued a very definite race for an isthmian canal in Central America involving strategies on the part of both the United States and Great Britain.

It is worthy of note that President Polk in December of 1845 restated the Monroe Doctrine in which he declared that the United States could not

In silence permit any European interference in the North American Continent, and that attempts
at such interference would be resisted at "any and all hazards."

The above comment was provoked mainly because of the Texas question; however, Polk went on to quote the clause in Monroe's doctrine which said that America was not open to European colonization, and added "this principle will apply with greatly increased force should any European power attempt to establish any new colony in North America. 36

Commenting on the fact that Polk placed special emphasis upon "North America" in his application to the Monroe Doctrine, and failed to take any notice of British aggression in Central America, David Thomas attributes this oversight to the fact that the United States was on the verge of war with Mexico. He observes further that at the time of settlement of the Oregon question that the United States uttered not a single complaint against British activities in Central America. The fact that a regular government had been set up in Belize in 1843 and that in the future Belize was to be known as British Honduras went entirely unheeded!

However, Polk's silence on this issue does

not indicate that he was unaware of happenings in Central America; it is true, he was unwilling at this time to use any force against British action, but the fact that he opened negotiations with New Granada proves his vigilance and his alertness.

Thus on June 23, 1845 James Buchanan, secretary of state, informed Bidlack, agent in Central America, that the United States was greatly interested in any project that would facilitate transportation between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. He was also much concerned lest another nation should get exclusive rights there. Consequently, he urged Bidlack to make a commercial treaty with New Granada immediately.\(^\text{37}\)

It happened that President Mosquera of New Granada was extremely eager to make such a treaty with the United States; at that time, he felt a great need for some sort of foreign guarantee since he was apprehensive over the recent British moves in the Caribbean region. After a number of conferences with the president of New Granada, Bidlack wrote to Buchanan on October 2, 1846 giving him an account of the negotiations up to this point and asking for additional instructions for drawing up

\(^{37}\text{Parks, Op. Cit., pp. 200-201.}\)
the treaty. The state department received the agent's urgent request but did not send an answer until January 1, 1847.38

In the meantime, Bidlack growing impatient and fearing lest the United States lose a golden opportunity of making a satisfactory treaty, and having received no word from the state department proceeded to negotiate a treaty with New Granada on December 12, 1846. Similar to other treaties, with the exception of Article XXXV, the treaty of New Granada provoked endless comments. By this Article

The government of New Granada guarantees to the government of the United States that the right-of-way of transit across the isthmus of Panama, upon any modes of communication that now exist or that may hereafter be constructed, shall be open and free to the government and citizens of the United States.

Under this treaty, New Granada granted co-extensive rights to the United States receiving in return an absolute guarantee for the sovereignty of New Granada:

And in order to secure to themselves the tranquil and constant enjoyment of these advantages, and for the favors they have acquired by the 4th, 5th, and 6th articles of this treaty, the United States guarantees, positively and efficaciously to New Granada, by the present stipulation, the perfect neutrality of the

38Ibid.
before-mentioned isthmus with the view that the free transit from the one to the other sea may not be interrupted or embarrassed in any future time while this treaty exists; and, in consequence, the United States also guarantees in the same manner, the rights of sovereignty and property which New Granada has and possesses over the said territory.39

Bidlack forwarded the above treaty to Buchanan and awaited the senate's ratification. However, when Polk saw this treaty he was very much concerned about Article XXXV, so before submitting it to the senate he referred it to his cabinet which he found "to entertain serious doubts"...whether this stipulation (Article XXXV) was consistent with our United States' long established policy "to cultivate friendships with all nations, entangling alliances with none." However, after "mature consideration" he submitted it to the senate on February 10, 1847.40

In defending this treaty before the senate, Polk expressed the opinion that the United States had not been asked to guarantee a country in which it had no particular interest; neither was it necessary to make secure any place with the exception of the Isthmus of Panama; again,

39Ibid., p. 203.

Great Britain and France would likely make similar treaties. Indeed, he felt that such a guarantee was absolutely necessary and indispensable to the construction of a railroad or a canal across the territory.41

The senate delayed consideration of the treaty until December because of more "urgent business;" however, it was not considered then but on January 3, 1848, on the motion of Chairman Sevier was referred to his committee and ordered to be printed in confidence. Not until June 2 was it reported without amendments when it was immediately tabled. The next day, Senator Hannegan, the new chairman of the foreign relations committee moved its consideration, and after almost two days of debate was ratified by a vote of 29 to 7. Finally, on June 10, the United States and New Granada exchanged ratifications and proclaimed the treaty two days later which was one and one-half years after Bidlack had signed it at Bogotá and approximately two years after New Granada asked the United States to make such a treaty.42

One week later, in a letter to Thomas Foote,
agent at Bogotá, Mr. Clayton, referring to this treaty, showed deep concern about Article XXXV which conceded to us the right-of-way across the isthmus of Panama but declared the consideration for this grant and those contained in the 4th, 5th, and 6th Articles to be a guarantee on our part of the neutrality of the isthmus and of the rights of sovereignty and property over the same. He added:

Such intimate connection existing between two governments make it necessary for the State Department to be accurately informed in regard to matters touching the foreign relations or domestic policy of New Granada. That republic is largely indebted to subjects of Great Britain and if the British Government should deem it expedient to enforce the payment of the interest on this debt and of such of the principal that maybe due, it might elect to seize the Isthmus of Panama for the purpose of indemnifying its subjects...Hence the obligations which we have incurred give a right to offer unasked, such advice to the New Granadian Government in regard to its relations with other powers as might tend to avert from that republic a rupture with any nation which might covet the Isthmus of Panama. 43

This treaty with New Granada was to remain in force for a period of twenty years, and then if neither party desired to break the agreement at the end of the specified time, it was to continue.

The United States' conclusion of the treaty with New Granada and the results of the war with Mexico encouraged British agents to attempt to secure control of the Nicaraguan canal route in order to check the United States position in Panama. Accordingly, early in 1847, Lord Palmerston, who had succeeded Lord Aberdeen in the preceding July, wrote to Chatfield, consul general at Guatemala, to Walker, Consul general at Bluefields, and to O'Leary, the British representative at Bogotá, asking for all possible information regarding the boundary claimed by the Mosquito King; furthermore, what territory they thought the British Government should demand. The replies varied somewhat, although most of them agreed that the Mosquito King had claimed dominion, quite fully, south to Chisiqui Lagoon, which was situated near the isthmus of Panama. All agreed that the British should insist upon everything down to the San Juan River. The British Privy Council studied the report carefully, then notified Chatfield that from henceforth, Great Britain considered the Mosquito boundary as extending from Cape Honduras to the mouth of the San Juan River. 44

Chatfield, in accordance with his orders, notified the Central American States of the stand that Great Britain had taken and declared that she would look unfavorably upon any encroachment by any nation upon the Coast of Mosquito.

President Guerrero of Nicaragua protested in vain against this action on the part of the British in a letter dated December 15, 1847, declaring that:

My secretary of state for internal and foreign relations informs you on this day by a communication addressed to your minister for foreign affairs, of all the circumstances which have taken place between us and the British agents; and of the critical situation in which these circumstances place this government, it being the well known design of the Court of London to establish colonies on our coasts and to render itself the master of the interoceanic canal for which so many facilities are presented by the isthmus in this state...I have therefore to recommend to you in the most urgent manner to give your attention to this pressing affair.45

At the same time, Henry Savage, chargé d'affaires in Nicaragua, had a similar letter from Buitrago, minister of Nicaragua, who likewise stated the seriousness of the situation and concluded by saying that he felt that:

The United States, sincerely desirous of preserving relations of good understanding with all governments, cannot in silence permit any

European interference on the North American continent and should any such interference be attempted, will be ready to resist at any and all hazards, as his excellency, the President of that respected Republic solemnly declared to the congress of the union of December 2, 1845.46

Realizing that some action had to be taken by the United States at this point, Polk sent Elizah Hise, chargé d'affaires of Guatemala, to investigate conditions in that area. He was further instructed to do what he could to restore the disrupted Central American Union and thus counteract, at least in part, the encroachments of the British. If at all possible he was to conclude commercial treaties with Guatemala and San Salvador, but on no condition whatsoever was he to make any agreements with Nicaragua, Honduras or Costa Rica until the state department would advise him to that effect.

Perhaps Polk's principal reason for dispatching Hise to Central America was to obtain accurate information regarding British actual encroachments upon the territories of Nicaragua, Honduras, and Costa Rica.

When Lord Palmerston heard of Hise's mission, he immediately sent a complete history of the Mosquito protectorate to Crampton, British representative at

Washington, informing him that the British Government would be ready at any time to vindicate its claims and actions in San Juan. Palmerston used this opportunity to instruct Chatfield to employ all possible strategies to defeat Hise's mission in that region.

Hise did not arrive until October of 1848 and proceeded immediately to investigate conditions in that area. Promptly he wrote the state department on October 26 giving a description of Guatemala and vicinity, declaring:

That the very best part of this valuable country has been appropriated by Great Britain to herself, including the island of Roatan, one of the most beautiful and valuable in the world of the same extent...There can and will be no effectual means of preventing the spread of British dominion over the whole of Central America, unless the government of the United States interfered firmly and shall carry out that celebrated declaration made by President Monroe officially, once favored by the congress and nation at large and now approved at least by the present administration and its friends. I have not been charged with this subject nor instructed particularly to take any action upon it. Indeed, I could do nothing more than to say to these states of Central America—be firm, do not yield, protest, etc. They cannot fight England...Now will the United States suffer Great Britain to enact on the stage of North America the same bloody tragedy which she has already performed in Hindostan and elsewhere and stand by and endure that she shall have a commercial monopoly in all these fertile regions on the very continent of North America?

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Hise concluded the above account with a petition for the necessary instructions and authority to negotiate a treaty with Nicaragua but received no reply. He wrote a second time in May, 1849 stressing the urgency of the situation; receiving no word from the United States, he proceeded to make a treaty with Nicaragua and to sign the same on June 21 of the same year.48

Although Hise had no instructions to negotiate with Nicaragua, he justified his act on the ground that his urgent requests had not reached the United States because of the revolutionary conditions in Central America. He vindicated his audacity by stating that he felt he had prevented an English company from getting the concession he had obtained.49

The resulting treaty gave the United States exclusive right to build a canal through Nicaragua, and pledged the United States to protect Nicaragua and all her territory. Before the United States learned of this treaty, Hise was recalled and a new administration, under Taylor, appointed George


Squier, "a man interested in archeology and who had a taste for a quarrel." Squier's first mission was to inform Nicaragua that the treaty made by Hise was ineffective because the latter had acted without proper authority.  

Anticipating Hise's treaty, Chatfield, fearing that he was losing ground, precipitately notified Nicaragua on October 23 that on the following January 1, 1849 the Mosquito King would resume his lawful control of San Juan. On the date set, Patrick Walker, accompanied by the Mosquito monarch, boarded the British warship, "Alarm" for the port. When they reached their destination, they ordered the Nicaraguan flag pulled down and in its place the Mosquito emblem to be raised. San Juan was then christened "Greytown". Eight days after the Mosquito forces had taken charge, Nicaraguans descended upon them and retook the port, raising their own flag.

The Nicaraguan triumph was for the moment only, since on February 8, two British warships appeared on the scene, from which Captain Loch with

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two hundred sixty-five English marines emerged to recapture Greytown. They overtook the Nicaraguans and proceeded to New Granada to demand a quick surrender and terms. The treaty was signed on March 7, 1849 at which time Nicaragua was forced to give up all claim to San Juan and to the custom house located there. 52

On the other side of the picture we find that Squier, before departing for his destination, had been carefully instructed by John Clayton, Buchanan's successor, to make commercial treaties with all the Central American States. However, his special duty was to procure protection for the Atlantic and Pacific Ship Company of New York by a treaty with Nicaragua. This plan would provide American citizens with a right-of-way across the isthmus for a transit line that would be open to all nations. The United States, however, had no intention of providing a guarantee of Nicaraguan independence for such a concession. 53

Squier lost no time in carrying into effect his orders and proceeded to investigate matters.


immediately. On October 25, 1849 he submitted his candid opinion in a letter to Clayton declaring that:

I am satisfied, from an examination of the policy which has been steadily pursued here by Great Britain for the past fifteen years that it has been her intention to possess herself of all Central America.54

Confidently, Squier set about to make treaties with the Central American States but before he had time to act, Chatfield, suspicious of Squier's motives, decided to seize the Gulf of Fonseca on the grounds that Honduras had neglected to pay her debts amounting to $30,000, long overdue.

Squier, hoping to check Chatfield, sent a letter to Francisco Ferrer, director of Honduras, on August 16, 1849 stating that:

He had been informed that the British were planning to seize Tiger in the Gulf of Fonseca soon. He further declared that:

Although the foreign policy of the United States has uniformly been that of non-interference in the affairs of other nations, still she has asserted and is determined to maintain the principle of the exclusion of foreign influence from domestic and international concerns of the American Republic. Nor will she consent to forcible acquisition by foreign powers of any portion of the North American Continent...The question now arises--how can this danger be arrested and the selfish designs of Great Britain thwarted? The only measure which occurs to me is the speedy adjustment

of a treaty between Honduras and the United States...\textsuperscript{55}

Squier proceeded to ask Honduras to appoint a commission immediately to make a treaty with the United States which would secure the interests, integrity and safety of this state.

Honduras lost no time in answering Squier's letter and immediately agreed to the plan. Accordingly, on October 10, 1849 the following agreement was reached whereby:

The Republic of Honduras cedes to the United States of North America, the island of Tiger in the Gulf of Fonseca for the time pending the ratification or the rejection of the general treaty between the two republics, this day signed by the undersigned plenipotentiaries of the same, providing such time shall not exceed eighteen months.\textsuperscript{56}

However, before Honduras could arrange this transaction, Chatfield ordered Captain Paynter, Commander of Her British Majesty's Steamer, "Gorgon," to seize Tiger Island on October 16, 1849 and to raise the British flag.

Thereupon, Mr. Clayton, duly alarmed at this situation, immediately consulted the committee on Foreign Affairs to ascertain whether or not the

\textsuperscript{55}Squier to Ferrer, August 16, 1849, Ibid., p. 344.

\textsuperscript{56}Squier to Guerero, October 16, 1849, Ibid., p. 401.
senate would support him if he invoked the Monroe Doctrine. To his dismay, he soon learned that such a backing could not be expected. He concluded that the next best thing to be done was to make some arrangement whereby both the United States and Great Britain would mutually pledge themselves that neither would attempt to build a canal independently of the other.\(^{57}\)

\(^{57}\)Ibid., pp. 45-46.
CHAPTER IV

THE CLAYTON-BULWER TREATY

Clayton, learning that the senate would not back him if he invoked the Monroe Doctrine, decided that his only alternative was to arrange some kind of joint treaty with Great Britain regarding the strategic canal area. Consequently, he lost no time in instructing Bancroft, American minister to London to interview Palmerston and find out if Great Britain had any intention of renouncing her claim to the Mosquito Coast. If Great Britain appeared adamant in her retention of San Juan, Bancroft was to send a formal protest to the British government demanding that she renounce her claim immediately.

Bancroft had considerable difficulty in procuring an interview with Palmerston. However, during the interval that elapsed Bancroft engaged in long conversations with Castellon, minister of Nicaragua, regarding the latest happenings in Central America. The latter, discouraged by his failure to solicit the interest of Palmerston who would not even give Castellon a hearing, turned to Bancroft for a sympathetic ear. His susceptibility
inspired Castellon to ask if there were any possibility of the United States receiving San Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras into the American Union and on what conditions this might be done; he was charged to ascertain if Nicaragua particularly might benefit by this adoption, whereupon Bancroft promised to refer the matter to the state department.

At length, Bancroft obtained an interview with Palmerston who, with remarkable indifference and very few words informed Bancroft that Great Britain was not interested in colonization; at the same time, Palmerston was obdurate in his insistence that Great Britain had no intention of renouncing her claim to the Mosquito Coast.

Following this declaration of Great Britain's position, Bancroft presented evidence to show the United States' disavowal of the British claim to the Mosquito Coast. Upon this declaration, Palmerston refused to discuss the matter any further. This rupture resulted in Clayton's recalling Bancroft.

By the time that Bancroft had obtained an interview with Palmerston in London, the Squier Treaty had been negotiated in this hemisphere. Because Clayton feared that Great Britain would hear...
of the terms of the treaty with Nicaragua, and because he was concerned that temporarily the United States had no minister in London, he charged William S. Rives, the United States minister to France, to stop in London enroute to the French capital to consult with Lord Palmerston. This happened in the latter part of 1849 during the interval which elapsed between Bancroft's recall and Lawrence's arrival as representative to England.  

Rives was commissioned to discuss the Central American question together with the United States' special interest in a canal to be opened to all nations. Rives informed Palmerston that the United States had recently negotiated a treaty with Nicaragua and that:

Citizens of the United States had entered into a contract with the state of Nicaragua to open, on certain conditions, a communication between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by the river San Juan and the Nicaragua Lake; that the government of the United States, after the most careful investigation of the subject, had come undoubtedly to the conclusion that upon both legal and historical grounds the state of Nicaragua was the true territorial sovereign of the river San Juan as well as the Nicaragua Lake, and that it was, therefore, bound to give its countenance and support, by all proper and reasonable means, to rights lawfully derived

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by their citizens under a grant from the sovereign. 59

Rives also stated:

That the United States would not, if they could, obtain any exclusive right or privilege in a great highway, which naturally belonged to all mankind, for they well knew that the possession of any such privilege would expose them to inevitable jealousies and probably controversies which would make it infinitely more costly than advantageous; that while they aimed at no exclusive privilege for themselves, they could never consent to see so important a communication fall under the exclusive control of any other great commercial power; that we were far from imputing to Her Britannic Majesty's government any views of this kind, but Mosquito possessions at the mouth of San Juan could be considered in no other light than British possession and his lordship would readily comprehend that such a state of things, so long as it was continued, must necessarily give rise to dissatisfaction and distrust on the part of other commercial powers. 60

Rives communicated further to Lord Palmerston that the United States was highly indignant not only over Great Britain's pretensions in Central America but over the recent seizure of Tiger Island as well. 61

In defense of the British seizure of Tiger Island, Palmerston maintained that Chatfield had previously warned Honduras on January 26, 1849

60Ibid.
61Ibid.
that unless the British claims were satisfied, he
would be obliged to lay a lien on Tiger Island until
the debts were paid in full. Palmerston said that
Squier was well aware of this British threat when
he deliberately negotiated with Honduras to take
over this island for a period of eighteen months;
moreover, the British government had no intention
of keeping Tiger Island permanently.

Explaining the same incident in a letter
to Clayton on February 15, 1850, Palmerston declared
that the British had not acted without legitimate
reason and forethought, and that they were fully
justified in exacting a just redress for the debts
owed to the British, now long overdue. Although the
seizure of Tiger Island was a legitimate act, never-
theless, the government of Great Britain, when it
heard of Chatfield's steps, notified him that he
should not have carried out his threats without
specific orders from Great Britain.

The hitherto indifferent Palmerston, now
awakened to the earnestness of the United States
policy in Central America permitted himself no
delay to acquaint Lawrence upon his arrival in
London, that Tiger Island had been restored to
Honduras; for as soon as Admiral Hornby, head
naval officer on the Pacific, heard of Chatfield's
action, he immediately sent word that the detachment that was placed there in charge of the island was to be withdrawn immediately. Lest Lawrence be led to believe that the British had cancelled the Honduran debts and moderated their policy, Palmerston concluded by saying that Great Britain had no intention of abandoning or repudiating the debts.62

Determined to prosecute his plans in Central America, Clayton instructed Lawrence, in a private letter of February 15, 1850 to arrange for an interview as soon as possible with Palmerston to let him understand that the United States was interested in calling a convention in regard to opening up interoceanic communications, but unless Great Britain renounced her protectorate over the Mosquito Kingdom and agreed not to colonize further either in her own name, or in the name of the Mosquitos, the United States would not consider Great Britain an interested party and would exclude her altogether from consultation and consideration. In this interview, Lawrence learned that Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer, newly appointed British minister to the United States, who was

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62Ibid.
yet in London, was unwilling to accept the proposal recently made by the United States wherein the territory on both sides of the Nicaraguan canal for one hundred miles would be considered neutral. 63

Clayton, alarmed at the seriousness of the situation in Central America and fearing lest the United States and Great Britain would yet come to blows, determined to take things into his own hands. When Lawrence received notification to this effect, he was somewhat irritated since he had spent time and money collecting documentary sources dealing with the history of the Mosquito Kingdom and the utter illegality of the English claims. Since all the transactions were to be carried on in Washington from this time, Lawrence sent his collected materials to the archives of the state department. 64

According to Lawrence's report of April 5, England was ready to yield everything in Central America but her protectorate over the Mosquito Kingdom. In commenting on this protectorate,

Lawrence was quite sure that

Whenever the history of the conduct of Great Britain shall be published to the world, it will not stand one hour before the bar of public opinion without universal condemnation.65

Concluding his report, Lawrence commented that Palmerston had told him that they need not discuss the problem any further as Bulwer had already left for Washington to discuss the matter personally with Clayton.

The moderate and the pacifist, Clayton, fully cognizant of the fact that the United States was in the midst of a bitter debate over the question of slavery at home, sought at least a temporary solution to the Central American problem. However, in dealing with the Central American question, he was not actuated by any particular allegiance to the Monroe Doctrine. He did demand that the British must surrender Greytown before any agreement could be reached. He might have insisted upon Great Britain renouncing all her claims in Central America, but feeling the impossibility of such an accomplishment, he compromised by attempting to stop any further British encroachment into the Caribbean region. In adopting an Anglo-American

policy, he thought he was taking care of the question of the Mosquito Kingdom. 66

Primarily interested in the question of interoceanic communication rather than British encroachments, Clayton presented Squier's treaty to the senate on March 19, 1850 urging that body to consider the efficacy of such a treaty, and the necessity of prompt action in its regard. Bulwer, hearing of Clayton's actions, sought an immediate interview with the secretary of state to inform him that Great Britain was perfectly willing to enter into an agreement with the United States in regard to a canal.

A satisfactory agreement having been reached between Clayton and Bulwer, they proceeded to draw up a joint treaty on April 19, 1850. The intention of both governments as set forth in the preamble of the treaty was to make known their views and intentions with reference to any means of communication by ship canal which may be constructed between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by the way of the Rivers San Juan de Nicaragua, and either or both of the Lakes of Nicaragua or Magua, to any port or place on the Pacific Ocean. 67

Article I of this treaty declared that neither the United States nor Great Britain would ever obtain for itself exclusive control over any canal; that neither would construct fortifications, occupy or colonize, nor exercise any authority over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast or any part of Central America. This article was to cause much difficulty later on as the words "Central America" turned out to be an ambiguous term; the second article provided for the neutralization of the canal in case of war between the contracting parties; the third guaranteed protection for the persons and property of whosoever undertook to build a canal; the fourth made provisions for obtaining territorial rights from the states concerned; the fifth insured the neutrality of the canal as long as it was managed in a mutually agreeable manner. Neither party was to withdraw its protection without a six months' previous warning. In Article VI, both parties agreed to invite every state with which it was on friendly terms to accede to this convention. By Article VII, the first company offering to construct a canal according to the rules and regulations drawn up, was to be supported by both governments. The most
important article of all was the eighth one which declared that:

The governments of the United States and Great Britain having not only desired, in entering into this convention, to accomplish a particular object, but also to establish a general principle, they hereby agree to extend their protection, by treaty stipulations, to any other practicable communication, whether by canal or railway, across the isthmus which connects North and South America, and especially to the interoceanic communications, should the same prove practicable whether by canal or railroad, which are now proposed to be established by the way of Tehauntepec or Panama.68

The wording in Article I puzzled even the negotiators. Bulwer wrote a short note to Clayton on June 29 telling him that the British government did not understand the restrictions in Article I of the treaty to apply to her Majesty’s settlement at Honduras or its dependencies. Here was an ambiguity, for whether or not the Bay Islands were included in this disclaimer was by no means certain from the wording of the treaty to any one not even to Clayton or Bulwer.69

Clayton received Bulwer’s note and sent his reply on July 4 respecting Honduras and its dependencies; he assured Bulwer that England had twice

69Ibid.
approved of Article I which described the country that was not to be occupied by either party:

It was neither understood by them or us to include the British colony of Honduras commonly called British Honduras, nor the small islands in the vicinity which maybe called its dependencies. To this settlement and these islands, the treaty we negotiated was not intended by either of us to apply. The title to them, it is now and has been my intention, throughout the whole negotiation, to leave, as the treaty leaves it, without denying, affirming, or in any way meddling with the same, just as it stood previously. The chairman of the committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, William King, informs me that the senate perfectly understood that the treaty did not include British Honduras. The difficulty now springs from the use of the term "Central America" which we adopted because Palmerston had assented to it and used it as the proper term, we supposed it would be satisfactory to your government. 70

At this point, it is of interest to note Buchanan's reaction to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty while it was pending ratification by the senate.

He wrote to a friend:

If Sir Henry Bulwer can succeed in having the first two provisions of the treaty ratified by the senate, he will deserve a British peerage. The consideration for our concessions is the relinquishment of the claim to the protectorate of the Mosquito Shore—so absurd and unfounded that it has been ridiculed even by the London Times. Truly Sir Henry has brought this claim to a good market when he found a purchaser in

Mr. Clayton. The treaty altogether reverses the Monroe Doctrine, and establishes it against ourselves rather than European governments.71

While public opinion was concentrating on the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and fashioning itself into expressions similar to the future president's, Clayton secretly filed a copy of his reply to Bulwer in the archives of the state department. Perkins says that it was indeed perilous on the part of Clayton to accept the judgment and assurance of one man, William King, in so important an undertaking as an international agreement. The meaning was so questionable that even in the senate, the issue of British Honduras and its dependencies was evaded.72

Furthermore, the debates over this treaty were all held in executive sessions and have never been reported. However, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was ratified by a decisive vote of 42 to 12 on April 19, 1850 and was of historic consequence until 1901.


CONCLUSION

The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, despite the fact that it has been condemned by many historians and diplomats as one of the most ignoble treaties ever made, in all probability, prevented a war in the fifties between the United States and Great Britain. Moreover, it was responsible for holding the British in check by compelling them to evacuate Greytown in return for the privilege of enjoying equal rights in the construction and control of any canal to be built. It is true that this pact, likewise, forbade the United States to colonize in the Central American region, and because of this self-denying clause, James Buchanan held that this treaty reversed the Monroe Doctrine. The writer has already pointed out the fact that the repeated appeals of the Nicaraguan government went unanswered by Buchanan when secretary of state while the British meanwhile grew bolder in their attempt to carve out for themselves spheres of influence in Central America.

In view of the fact that the United States was threatened with serious domestic troubles, that it had finished a war with Mexico and was on the verge of the Civil War, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty
was neither a base surrender on the part of the United States as some critics hold, nor was it a diplomatic triumph.

On the other hand, we are aware that this treaty failed to put an end to British activity in Central America. But had the United States made any active attempt to expel Great Britain from this area prior to 1850? On the contrary, the various administrations, aside from a casual interest in a canal project, utterly ignored British activities in Central America. It was not until Harrison's administration that the state department began to manifest any definite concern over happenings in that region. Some authorities have insisted that Clayton recognized British sovereignty in Central America when he negotiated the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. But, on the other hand, Dexter Perkins, one of the best authorities on the Monroe Doctrine, says that the treaty did not recognize British sovereignty at all; on the contrary, he holds that it left open the question of Belize and the Bay Islands, but did no more. He declares that "mere failure to deal with the problem did not necessarily mean a surrender to principle."73

As to whether or not the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was a real violation of the Monroe Doctrine has long been discussed by historians. Before attempting to answer the question, however, it might be well to summarize the three ideas as set forth in 1823. The three principal provisions stated in the Monroe Doctrine were: (1) that the United States declared the American continent no longer open to European colonization; (2) the United States would consider any attempt on the part of European countries to extend their systems to this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety; and (3) the United States would consider any interposition or interference on the part of a European nation as an unfriendly act.

It might be remarked here that the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was not an actual violation of the Monroe Doctrine for the simple reason that the United States had not attempted to interpret, much less, enforce this doctrine. Fifty years later, it is true, it would have been considered a violation. Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that Great Britain held at the time the treaty was made her claim in Central America far outdated the principles outlined by the Monroe Doctrine. And
finally, Clayton realized from experience that the senate would not support him if he were to assume a belligerent attitude toward the activities of Great Britain in Central America. For in 1849, when the British had seized Tiger Island and Clayton indignantly had wanted to invoke the Monroe Doctrine, the senate had refused its assent to Clayton's proposal.

Although the treaty itself did not violate the Monroe Doctrine, it goes without saying that the British activities in Central America were a flagrant violation of the doctrine of 1823. It seems unfair, to the writer, to judge Clayton too severely for what he attempted to do when his predecessors failed to devise any kind of a workable policy which would effectively exclude British activities in Central America. Neither is it entirely fair to judge an act in the fifties in the light of twentieth century diplomacy.

Fortunately, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850 was not a lasting one, but was superseded by the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901. Perhaps the most lasting benefit of the Treaty was the fact that it aroused an heretofore apathetic American public to the realization of the import
of a canal in Central America and to the necessity
of this canal being under the control of the United
States.
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This thesis is based almost entirely upon William Ray Manning's, Diplomatic Correspondence, (Inter-American Affairs) 1831-1860, which is an extremely valuable monumental work, carrying all the correspondence of the United States taken from the original manuscripts of the state department. The editor of this remarkable work, an eminent scholar of diplomacy and a former professor of Spanish American History but since 1918 connected with the state department, is well qualified to make such a valuable contribution.

In 1923, Mr. Manning edited Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States Concerning the Independence of the Latin-American Nations in three volumes; while in 1932, he published Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860 in six volumes. These volumes are arranged by areas in alphabetical order; Argentina (1938); Bolivia and Brazil (1932); Central America (2 v. 1933-1934); Chile and Colombia (1935); and the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and France (1935).

For the British side of the question, the writer was unable to procure any such valuable documentary collection, so it was necessary to rely wholly upon secondary works for this viewpoint.
One of the most exhaustive studies that has been made of this period was contributed by Mary Wilhelmine Williams, who was awarded the Justin Winsor prize in American history in 1916. Miss Williams worked in the British archives and had access to valuable original sources.
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