

THE MOTIVES OF AMERICAN EXPANSION IN THE 1850'S:
CENTRAL AMERICA AND CHINA AS CASE STUDIES

by 613-8302

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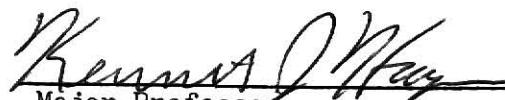
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INTRODUCTION

The United States at the middle of the nineteenth century was growing and dynamic. The preceding half century had witnessed the migration of many Americans from the Atlantic seaboard into the Mississippi River valley and beyond, as far as the California coast and the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest. The establishment of the Oregon Territory and the admission of California heralded the arrival of the American Empire on the Pacific. The Pacific islands and China beckoned to industrious Yankee clipper ship captains. However, stretching between the commercial centers of the East and the ports of the West lay obstacles to their connection: the Great American Desert, mountain ranges, and hostile Indians.

These obstacles and the need for a faster line of east-west communication drew United States attention to the isthmian routes of Central America. Capitalists such as Cornelius Vanderbilt organized steamship companies and secured government mail contracts to transport passengers, merchandise, and mails between the East and West coasts of the United States. Vanderbilt negotiated a right of transit through Nicaragua to facilitate his operation while others obtained permission to build railways across the Isthmuses of Panama and Tehuantepec.¹ In addition, Americans anticipated construction of an interoceanic canal which would accentuate the strategic and economic value of Central America to the United States.

¹Joseph L. Schott, Rails Across Panama: The Story of the Building of the Panama Railroad, 1849-1855 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967); J. Fred Rippey, "The Diplomacy of the United States and Mexico Regarding the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, 1848-1860", Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VI, 503-31.

However, there was more at stake than just a quicker means of intercoastal communication. Americans envisioned Central America as becoming a crossroads for goods destined for the west coast of South America, the islands of the Pacific, and China.² The war with Mexico and the acquisition of California intensified American interest in the development of the China trade. The United States had at last gained "the window on the Pacific" envisioned by Jefferson and John Quincy Adams. President Polk's Secretary of the Treasury, Robert Walker, emphasized this and the growing importance of the Pacific and China in his annual reports. He declared in 1848 that America's "maritime frontier" on the Pacific was nearly equal in commercial terms to the Atlantic coast. Furthermore, Walker believed the United States "admirably situated to command the trade of Asia and the whole western coast of America." Arguing for use of steam as well as sail in implementing this trade, Walker announced the dawn of a "new commercial age".

²Ephraim G. Squier, Notes on Central America (New York: Praeger, 1969 reprint) 24, 236-37, 290. During the Pierce years the United States sent expeditions to Central and South America to survey its land and rivers for commercial expansion. For an account of these explorations, the annual reports of the Secretary of the Navy offer interesting but sketchy reading. During the first year of Pierce's term an expedition was sent to Central America to ascertain the practicability of building an interoceanic canal across the Isthmus of Darien, between Caledonia Bay and the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of San Miguel, on the Pacific; 33 Cong., 2 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 1, Report of the Secretary of the Navy [747] 384-85. The following year an expedition was sent to South America to explore the Parana River in Paraguay. However, the Paraguayan government refused to permit the Americans to ascend the river and the expedition party explored the Salado and Pilcomayo rivers which were in the Argentine Confederation. Further South American explorations are reported in 34 Cong., 3 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 5, Report of the Secretary of the Navy [876] 406. This policy of exploration continued during the Buchanan administration. In 1857 an expedition was organized to survey the Atrato and Truando rivers in New Granada "with the view to the building of a ship canal between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans"; 35 Cong., 1 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 11, Report of the Secretary of the Navy [921] 580. See also James P. Reddick, Jr., "Herndon, Maury, and the Amazon Basin", United States Naval Institute Proceedings, March, 1971, 57-63.

He concluded:

The commerce is ours, if our merchants and government should by their united energies secure for us with Asia a rapid and frequent communication by steam. Our products and our manufactures, and especially our coarse cotton fabrics, are precisely what are desired by several hundred millions of their people, who will send us back in return their specie and their rich productions.³

President Millard Fillmore expanded America's role in the Pacific. Both Fillmore and his Secretary of State Daniel Webster were deeply interested in the Pacific and Asia. Fillmore, bred with a New York merchant background, viewed Hawaii as a stepping stone to the Asian trade. Webster had formulated the instructions for Caleb Cushing's mission to China during Tyler's presidency. In 1852 Fillmore and Webster drew up plans to send an American fleet to open trade and diplomatic ties with Japan.⁴

American commercial interest in Central America was also heightened during Fillmore's administration. In August 1852 Fillmore's Secretary of the Treasury emphasized the importance of the Caribbean and Central America in a report to Congress. Speaking of the possibility of building a railroad across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, the report stressed commercial expansion:

Markets would then soon be open to our enterprising merchants in supplying to the hundreds of millions of inhabitants of Asia, and the rich, extensive, and populous islands in the Asiatic seas, not only articles of necessity, but also of luxury, from our surplus but still constantly increasing stores; and our trade with the islands in the Pacific, and to the foreign States on its shores, would, within the same period, increase tenfold.⁵

In the late 1840's the same considerations had motivated an American consul to exact transit and economic concessions from Nicaragua. The

³30 Cong., 2 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 7, Report of the Secretary of the Treasury [538] 14-19.

⁴Samuel Eliot Morison, "Old Bruin": Commodore Matthew C. Perry, 1794-1858 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967) 270-89.

⁵32 Cong., 1 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 112, Report of Israel D. Andrews [622] 796.

British viewed this grant with suspicion as they were increasing their commercial activities and political claims in the area. In turn, the United States was apprehensive over this apparent British encroachment upon what one newspaper called the "American continent". The United States was most worried about four areas: the British protectorate over the Mosquito Indians along Nicaragua's coast; the British settlement of Greytown, situated at the mouth of the San Juan River in Nicaragua; the British settlement at Belize on the coast of Guatemala; and the British claim to a group of islands off the coast of Honduras--the Bay Islands. These British holdings represented a threat to American passage across the transit routes and to United States hegemony in the area.

The mutual concern exhibited by both countries resulted in the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty in the spring of 1850. This treaty provided that neither country would "occupy, colonize, or exercise dominion over any part of Central America." It also stated that the two governments would use their good offices to "procure the establishment of two free ports" on each side of Nicaragua if any ship canal was built.⁶ To the United States, the treaty represented a promised British withdrawal from the area.

However, it soon became apparent that the British had no intention of voluntarily removing themselves from Central America. The ambiguous phrasing of the treaty and subsequent British refusal to withdraw led to a new series of negotiations in 1852. The result was the Webster-Crampton Convention, proposing a quadruple treaty between the United States, Great Britain, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. Greytown was to be ceded to Nicaragua and revenue payments made to the Mosquito Indians. But the convention did

⁶Mary A. Williams, Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy: 1815-1915 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1916) 97-98.

not settle a long standing boundary dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua and thus the latter country refused its adherence. In addition, other events were occurring in Central America which contributed to the convention's failure.

The first of these took place in November 1851 when the Prometheus, owned by Vanderbilt's steamship company, was forced back to Greytown by a British brig-of-war for failure to pay port duties. The situation was further complicated in March 1852 when the British declared the Bay Islands to be one of their colonies. Democratic critics ridiculed the Fillmore administration for failing to pursue an "American policy." The ambiguous nature of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, the failure of the Webster-Crampton Convention, and the conflict between American business interests and British settlements created the impression that the Whigs were inept at settling the Central American question. As Fillmore left office, it was apparent that the incoming Democratic administration meant to pursue an aggressive foreign policy aimed at settling Anglo-American differences in Central America and the Caribbean.⁷

⁷Ibid., 119-20; 139; 145-48.

CHAPTER I

"SECURITY, COMMERCE, AND PEACE": PIERCE'S POLICY TOWARD CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The recent war with Mexico, while bringing to the surface the controversy over the extension of slavery, reinforced America's belief in the naturalness of its expansion.¹ The past had been dynamic with expansion, and the future promised to satiate fully the desires of the American leaders and people. Sensing this expectation and exemplifying its spirit, Franklin Pierce chauvinistically reaffirmed the nation's destiny in his inaugural

¹Historians traditionally viewed expansion of slavery as the primary objective of President Pierce's foreign policy. In support of this thesis they pointed to events such as the Gadsden Purchase, the Black Warrior incident, filibustering expeditions, and the Ostend Manifesto. See Roy F. Nichols, Franklin Pierce: Young Hickory of the Granite Hills (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931); Allan Nevins, Ordeal of the Union, Vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947). However, other historians have recently reexamined Pierce's foreign policy and have raised questions about this traditional interpretation. Allan Dowty, in The Limits of American Isolation: The United States and the Crimean War (New York: New York University Press, 1971) concludes that Pierce's foreign policy was "determined by considerations of power and calculated to exploit existing circumstances to its advantages." Specifically, British and French pre-occupation with the Crimean War offered the United States the opportunity to increase its limited political and economic influence in Europe. In Dowty's opinion, the war also diverted British and French attention from the Western Hemisphere, thereby enabling Pierce to enlarge American commercial and political interests in Central America and the Caribbean. A chapter by Richard Van Alstyne, which appears in William A. Williams, From Colony to Empire: Essays in the History of American Foreign Relations (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1972) sees the Pierce administration as a typically Democratic attempt to establish American political and economic hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. The significance and value of both of these interpretations is that they view policy decisions in a comprehensive approach rather than one serving only slave interests.

address. The new President proclaimed:

our attitude as a nation and our position on the globe render the acquisition of certain possessions not within our jurisdiction eminently important for our protection, if not in the future essential for the preservation of the rights of commerce and the peace of the world.²

Security, commerce, and peace were to be the objectives of United States policy in Central America and the Caribbean during the Pierce administration. There would be little room for European powers in the region. The Washington Union, the administration's mouthpiece, heralded Pierce's pronouncements as "an American policy for the American continent."³

During the summer of 1853 the President began to implement his "American policy". To pursue a settlement of the Central American question, Pierce appointed James Buchanan as minister to Great Britain. Buchanan was chosen because of his long experience in public affairs and because he understood the importance of Central America to the United States. As Polk's Secretary of State, he had offered \$100,000,000 for Cuba.

As Buchanan prepared to leave for his post, he advised Secretary of State William Marcy how to settle Anglo-American differences over Central America. The United States should tie the Central American question to negotiations about reciprocity between the United States and Canada.

²James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, Volume V (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1905) 198-99.

³Washington Union, March 6, 1853. Pierce's foreign policy was further summarized by the Union in the following terms a week later: "First, an American policy for the independent States of the American continent, excluding as inadmissible all European aggression or coercion in their territorial relations; and, secondly, a recognition of the law of our national growth, which accepts the prospect of new territorial acquisitions in fit time and manner, and always in strict observance of national faith and justice, as a part at once of our national necessity and destiny, and of that great scheme of Providential beneficence which has made our country a leading instrument in ameliorating the condition of mankind." See also Washington Union, March 13, 1853.

Buchanan argued that diplomacy conducted in this manner would give the United States a "powerful lever" against the British.⁴ However, the President had decided to separate the two issues. Pierce did not want to bind the two questions together, possibly jeopardizing the successful completion of both. Also of consideration was the fact that Buchanan, a major figure in the Democratic party, might threaten Pierce's chances for re-election if successful in negotiating both questions.

While these differences with Buchanan were being resolved, the President turned his attention to Mexico. Plagued with internal disorder, Mexico represented a threat to the commercial and security considerations expressed by Pierce in his inaugural address. In hopes of making the Northern provinces into a barrier between the two countries and using them as the route for a transcontinental railroad, the President sent James Gadsden to Mexico in July 1853. Gadsden was instructed to purchase a large tract of land to include the northern parts of the states of Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja. This would provide sufficient territory to build a transcontinental railroad and also give the United States a more extensive frontage on the Pacific for trading purposes. As Gadsden prepared to leave for his post, he asked a commercial house in Charleston to furnish him with information that would familiarize him with the trade relations of the two countries. Gadsden concluded his letter:

Free and uninterrupted intercourse, commercially and socially with Mexico, will accomplish more in harmonizing the disturbing disagreements between the two countries than all the treaties and negotiations which diplomacy may accomplish. They are the great panacea of peace on earth and good-will towards mankind--

⁴John Bassett Moore, ed., The Works of James Buchanan, Volume IX, (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960 reprint) 12-25. Hereafter cited as Buchanan, Works.

the fore-shadowing of the Christian millenium.⁵

While somewhat grandiose in his phraseology, Gadsden expressed the American belief that trade conquered all problems. However, upon arriving in Mexico, Gadsden found Santa Anna firm in his refusal to cede any large tracts of land or commercial advantages to the United States. The treaty finally agreed to in late December gave the United States only land enough for the proposed railroad route.⁶

Marcy continued and expanded the initiative begun in Mexico. Writing to Buchanan, Marcy expressed the hope that the British would abandon their claims in Central America. He argued that "through the Bay of Honduras, and across some of these states, lies one of the most desirable routes to our possessions on the Pacific." The Secretary also wrote of the administration's interest in Cuba and reiterated that the United States would never permit its transfer to another European nation because of its strategic importance:

Standing in that geographical relation (within the sight of our coast) it is imperative upon us to require from it, whatever may be its condition, all the observances imposed by good neighborhood.⁷

Interest in Cuba, settlement of the Central American question and the Gadsden mission to Mexico were part of Pierce's "American policy." While hoping to expand territorially and commercially, Pierce kept a wary eye on Great Britain and France. These two countries had drawn closer

⁵Washington Union, May 24, 1853.

⁶Paul Garber, The Gadsden Treaty (Philadelphia: Press of the University of Pennsylvania, 1923) 82-108.

⁷William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs, Volume VII (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1937) # 2 Marcy to Buchanan, July 2, 1853, 84-95. Hereafter cited as Manning, individual country and volume.

together as a result of the rhetoric and filibustering attempts directed toward Cuba during the latter half of Fillmore's term. However, in the fall of 1853 their attention was drawn to the Crimea where hostilities had broken out between Russia and Turkey. This prevented initial discussion between Buchanan and Lord Clarendon on the Central American question leading the administration and its supporters to view the European situation as possibly holding advantages for the United States.⁸ The Washington Union published a letter from an unidentified "prominent statesman of the South" perfectly summarizing the advantages that would arise from a European conflict:

a general war in Europe can do us no harm, unless we are unwisely drawn into it. The success of Russia cannot injure us, for we have no points of collision with her, and we are at issue with England everywhere almost. Anything that keeps her in check is a benefit to us. If we have wise statesmanship, a general war in Europe will give us the control of all American interests. Confine ourselves to American interests and push our power and progress on this continent, and it is the certain road for us to hold the balance of power throughout the world.⁹

The possibility of conflict in Europe gave new impetus to the administration's hopes for expansion.

In November 1853 Pierce decided to send a special agent to Santo Domingo. The man chosen was William L. Cazneau. Born and educated in Boston, Cazneau had been lured to Texas by land speculation. After participating in events leading to Texan independence, he settled down and attempted to follow the quickest path to wealth. By some unknown manner he attracted

⁸Washington Union, February 3, 1854; see also April 5, 1854, "American Sympathy in the Eastern Question".

⁹Buchanan, Works, IX, # 8 Buchanan to Marcy, September 22, 1853, 55-61; # 16 Buchanan to Marcy, November 12, 1853, 88-97; see also Williams, 155-56.

the attention of Marcy who appointed him to the special mission.¹⁰ Marcy was most explicit in his instructions to Cazneau: he wanted to know if the Dominican Republic could sustain its independence, whether it had been recognized by any European nation, and which country did the most trading there. Marcy recorded United States intentions in the following terms:

A free commercial intercourse between the Dominican Republic and the United States, should that State be in the condition favorable to it, is the principal object this government has in view, and the result of your enquiries will aid the President in deciding upon the policy of attempting to establish more intimate relations both commercial and political than now exist between the two countries.¹¹

Since Cazneau's mission was a fact-finding one, he was to return by February 1, 1854.

Cazneau arrived in Santo Domingo in January and sent back a dispatch describing the country as dependent upon European diplomacy for its freedom from Haiti. The fact that the United States had been ignoring a "sister republic" led her naturally to look to Europe for protection. A new administration in the Dominican Republic more receptive to the United States demanded a more flexible American response. Cazneau believed the time had arrived for the establishment of "advantageous relations between our own and the Dominican people."¹² He returned to the United States proclaiming the economic and political importance of the area and argued for immediate recognition by the United States.

Cazneau's recommendations were approved. In June he was sent back

¹⁰Charles C. Tansill, The United States and Santo Domingo, 1798-1873 (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1938) 176.

¹¹National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Diplomatic Instructions, Special Missions, Marcy to Cazneau, November 2, 1853, 34. Hereafter cited Diplomatic Instructions, Special Missions.

¹²Tansill, 176-77.

to Santo Domingo to negotiate a treaty that would grant the United States a tract of land on Samaná Bay for use as a naval station in return for American diplomatic recognition. His instructions stated that the United States should have complete control over the protection of persons and property within the area ceded. Marcy summed up the American position:

Such a place in the occupancy of the United States constantly resorted to by our steamers and other vessels could not fail to give stability to the Dominican Republic.¹³

In addition to Cazneau's diplomatic mission, the administration dispatched the U.S.S. Columbia to survey Samaná Bay to ascertain its "fitness for a convenient depot for naval purposes."¹⁴

Cazneau, in a letter to the New York Herald, wrote of the importance of his new mission. He believed the islands of the Caribbean an extension of the "American continent" and argued that it was the duty of the United States to "promote our commerce with all the republican States on this continent." He concluded:

Our ships are in a position to do their carrying-trade, and our manufacturers and provision-growers to supply nearly all the requirements of their people. It is our interest to cherish the power, production, and general welfare of all these American States, for their wealth and strength contribute to our own. It is so much added to the aggregate of American force, in opposition to the present and future pretensions of European dictation.¹⁵

While Gadsden and Cazneau probed for territorial and commercial advantages in Mexico and Santo Domingo, Buchanan had persuaded the British to open negotiations on Central America. He was optimistic that he could convince the British to abandon the Mosquito coast and after a diplomatic

¹³Diplomatic Instructions, Special Missions, Marcy to Cazneau, June 17, 1854, 49.

¹⁴33 Cong., 2 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 1, Report of the Secretary of the Navy [747] 383.

¹⁵Washington Union, June 13, 1854.

"struggle" agree also to relinquish their hold on the Bay Islands. However, Buchanan did not think they would leave the Belize. This was "the Depot of British manufactured goods and foreign merchandize designed for Central America."¹⁶ The American minister believed the British should be permitted to retain their settlement at Belize as their removal from the Bay Islands was the more important American objective. Buchanan stressed the commercial and strategic importance of Ruatan, the largest island of the group. In his opinion, it was

an Island of great value and importance on account of its excellent harbors, which are rare along the coast Such is its commanding Geographical position that Great Britain, in possession of it, could completely arrest the trade of the United States, on its passage to and from the Isthmus.¹⁷

Although preliminary discussions had taken place, Buchanan still had not received the British response. The British remained preoccupied with the situation in the Crimea.

The lull in negotiations coincided with new Spanish policies in Cuba. This entailed the freeing of Black slaves that had been imported into the island. Pierce's attention was drawn to the island in response to southern concerns over this policy of "Africanization". Southerners feared this would encourage slave revolts in the South and therefore could not be tolerated. Agitation over "Africanization" easily converted into a move for acquisition of the island. On February 28, 1854 the Black Warrior, an American vessel was seized in Havana harbor. The ship and her commander were charged with violating port regulations. An outcry over "Africanization" and the seizure was quick in coming from the United States. Before the news reached Washington, the Louisiana state legislature passed resolutions

¹⁶Buchanan, Works, IX, # 20 Buchanan to Marcy, January 10, 1854, 136.

¹⁷Ibid., January 6, 1854, 120-21.

requesting Congress to take "decisive and energetic measures to thwart and defeat" such outrages.¹⁸

News of the Black Warrior reached Washington on March 9th. Marcy was outraged. He viewed it as symbolically threatening all Americans engaged in foreign enterprise and regretted not having available naval vessels to redress the insult.¹⁹ Pierce and Marcy were under enormous Southern pressure to use the incident as an excuse for immediate annexation of Cuba. However, the administration was concerned with the British and French attitude toward such a move. In a dispatch to Buchanan dated March 11th, Marcy expressed fear that their present alliance against Russia might possibly be turned against American ambitions toward Cuba.²⁰ Evidence of such an accord had appeared on January 31, 1854 when Lord Clarendon delivered a speech in Parliament calling for Anglo-French harmony in all parts of the world. If an agreement did exist the public outcry for annexation of Cuba might force the administration into conflict with Great Britain and France.

The Democratic Congress requested the pertinent correspondence on the Black Warrior affair on March 15th, the same day that Charles W. Davis departed on a secret mission to Cuba to investigate the "Africanization" policy. Two days later, Pierre Soulé, the United States minister to Spain, was instructed to demand an indemnity from the Spanish government for the seizure of the Black Warrior.²¹

¹⁸Philip S. Foner, A History of Cuba and its relations with the United States, Vol. II (New York: International Publishers, 1963) 103.

¹⁹Ivor D. Spencer, The Victor and the Spoils: A Life of William L. Marcy (Providence, R. I.: Brown University Press, 1959) 319.

²⁰Manning, Great Britain (VII), # 29 Marcy to Buchanan, March 11, 1854, 102-05.

²¹33 Cong., 1 Sess., H. Ex. Doc. No. 76 [702]; Diplomatic Instructions, Special Missions, Marcy to Davis, March 15, 1854, 51-59; Manning,

While the administration remained uncertain over the British and French position, Buchanan moved on his own initiative. Unaware of the Black Warrior's seizure, Buchanan held a conference March 17th with Lord Clarendon and asked if any treaty or understanding existed in relation to "the present or the prospective condition of the island?" Clarendon assured him none existed or was contemplated.²² This dispatch reached Washington on Saturday, April 1st. Its contents aided Marcy in writing new instructions to Soulé. Marcy instructed Soule to offer \$130,000,000 for Cuba and if that failed

you will then direct your efforts to the next most desirable object, which is to detach that island from Spanish domination and from all dependence on any European power.²³

During May Senator John Slidell of Louisiana kept the pressure on Pierce by urging the rescinding of the neutrality laws, thus "legalizing" filibustering expeditions to Cuba. In the meantime, Davis returned from his mission and reported that "the emancipation of the slave and consequent Africanization of the Island" would bring about a bloody race war. But the South's hopes for "legalized" filibustering were dashed on May 31st when President Pierce issued a proclamation against such activities.²⁴ Pierce hoped to expand through diplomatic means but opposed practices that would create distrust of American intentions and honor in Europe.

In Central America a sequel to the Black Warrior incident was

Spain (XI), # 10 Marcy to Soulé, March 17, 1854, 174-75.

²²Buchanan, Works, IX, # 25 Buchanan to Marcy, March 17, 1854, 166-67. News of the seizure of the Black Warrior reached Great Britain on March 22nd. See London Times of March 22, 1854.

²³Manning, Spain (XI), # 13 (Confidential) Marcy to Soulé, April 3, 1854, 177. The emphasis is my own.

²⁴Richardson, V, 272.

developing. Hoping to expand American commerce, the administration had appointed Solon Borland as minister to Nicaragua in 1853. However, Borland exceeded his instructions and concluded a treaty which provided a United States guarantee of Nicaraguan sovereignty over territory occupied by the British.²⁵ His activities had embarrassed the administration, and his correspondence with Marcy had been less than cordial. Deciding to resign his post, Borland stopped at Greytown before returning to the United States. While there, a mob attempted to arrest an American ship captain accused of murder and in the process threatened American property. Borland intervened on the American's behalf, forcing the crowd to disperse at gun point.²⁶ He then sent an account of the happenings to Washington.

As soon as he received Borland's report, the President sent the Cyane under the command of Captain Hollins to Greytown. Upon his arrival, Hollins demanded an apology for the indignity committed against Borland and American property. When none was forthcoming, he gave the settlement an additional twenty-four hours to comply with his demands. This period also expired without reply and Hollins turned the guns of the Cyane on the town and bombarded it for $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours.²⁷

The President, upset over such a drastic response, nevertheless approved Hollins' action. Calling Greytown and its inhabitants "a heterogeneous assemblage [of] blacks and persons of mixed blood" the President stated Hollins' withdrawal

²⁵Manning, Central American States (IV), # 3 Marcy to Borland, June 17, 1853, 45; # 13 Borland to Marcy, February 22, 1854, 385.

²⁶³³ Cong., 1 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 85 [702] Borland to Marcy, May 30, 1854, 5-7; Nichols, 344.

²⁷Milton Offutt, "The Protection of American Citizens Abroad by the Armed Forces of the United States", John Hopkins University Studies: Historical and Political Science, Volume 46, 32-35.

would have encouraged in these lawless men a spirit of insolence and rapine most dangerous to the lives and property of our citizens . . . and probably emboldened them to grasp at the treasures and valuable merchandize continually passing over the Nicaraguan route.²⁸

Secretary of the Navy Dobbin commended Hollins for administering "punishment from a sense of justice to his countrymen whose property is destroyed and whose flag is insulted".²⁹ Marcy, while realizing the diplomatic consequences believed the administration would stand by Hollins.³⁰ Administration approval of Hollins' actions were regretted by Buchanan who viewed continuing British intragence on the Central American issue a result of the bombardment.³¹

The administration's unflinching endorsement of Hollins points out a traditional concern of American diplomacy: protection of lives and property abroad. Long range objectives of expansion meant nothing if such "outrages" against Americans went unanswered.

The move for acquisition of Cuba appeared to be aided in July when revolution broke out in Spain. In Soulé's opinion the opportune moment had arrived to press Spain on the issue.³² The administration responded to the situation by instructing him to call a meeting of American ministers to Great Britain, France, and Spain.³³ The meeting took place in October even though the revolution had failed.

²⁸Richardson, V, 284.

²⁹33 Cong., 2 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 1 [747] 385.

³⁰Buchanan, Works, (Private & Confidential) Marcy to Buchanan, August 8, 1854, 242.

³¹Ibid., # 40 Buchanan to Marcy, August 18, 1854, 248.

³²Manning, Spain (XI), # 28 Soulé to Marcy, July 18, 1854, 799.

³³Ibid., # 19 Marcy to Soulé, August 16, 1854, 193.

The ministers called for the immediate annexation of Cuba by the United States. The Manifesto stated that as long as the island was a Spanish possession it would represent an "unceasing danger" and "a permanent cause of anxiety and alarm" to the United States. Soulé urged Marcy to prepare for war with Spain and "to be done with" the Cuba problem. Buchanan, who had been dominated by Soulé at the conference, argued that the United States should "if necessary [be willing] to risk war" to acquire Cuba.

The Manifesto reached Washington in early November as it became known that Cazneau's mission to Santo Domingo had failed. His failure was due in large part to the efforts of the British and French consuls in Santo Domingo. Several vessels from the British and French West Indies fleet visited Santo Domingo in November and December which subverted his efforts. To further complicate Pierce's situation, the Democrats suffered heavy losses in the autumn elections, losing control of the House.³⁴ Taking these factors into consideration, Marcy instructed Soulé to make one last attempt at negotiating the sale of Cuba. However, if his efforts met with no positive response it would be "evident that the time for opening . . . negotiations has not arrived." This was an empty gesture; the assumptions that Pierce had acted upon since April were destroyed by events in Santo Domingo and the ill-worded Ostend dispatch.³⁵

The fact that Buchanan, Soulé, and Mason had held a conference in October was well-known but its results were mostly conjecture. When Congress convened in December, resolutions were introduced asking for full

³⁴Buchanan, Works, IX, # 47 Buchanan to Marcy, October 31, 1854, 271-72; Foner, 100-01; see also Nichols, 366-71 and Spencer, 318-33; For a text of the Ostend Manifesto see Buchanan, Works, IX, 260-66.

³⁵Manning, Spain (XI), # 27 Marcy to Soulé, November 13, 1854, 196-201; Foner, 103-05; Tansill, 190-97.

disclosure of the Ostend correspondence. Debate began on Cuba and Pierce's foreign policy generally. It would last intermittently into February.

Congressman W. W. Boyce of South Carolina, represented moderate southern opinion and probably the majority of Americans, when he objected to the acquisition of Cuba on grounds that it would weaken both the north and the south. While not discounting its supposed advantage to the South, Boyce stated that it was not strictly a southern cause:

The annexation of Cuba would furnish an increased market, for certain agricultural productions of the middle and northwestern States, and the Manufacturers of the eastern States, and to the extent of this increased trade; and even beyond it, under the preference given to our own vessels in the coasting trade, the shipping interest of the North would be benefited.³⁶

Boyce noted that Cuba seemingly represented an increase in territory, population, and commerce, as well as an improved military position. However, he saw the annexation as a break with traditional United States expansion and warned that the acquisition of Cuba represented a new policy; one aimed at acquiring "maritime colonies". The benefits of annexation would be outweighed by the increase in sectional cleavage, expense of administering the island, and increasing the navy.

Rebounding from the Ostend Manifesto and the November elections, the administration continued to press for a policy that would facilitate the "natural" course of American expansion. John Wheeler was sent to Nicaragua with instructions to re-negotiate the Borland treaty. He was to omit any United States guarantee of Nicaraguan claims against the British protectorate on the Mosquito coast.³⁷ Wheeler successfully negotiated a new draft of the treaty in June 1855 minus the binding clause. The American representative

³⁶Congressional Globe, 33 Cong., 2 Sess., Appendix, 91-94.

³⁷Manning, Central American States (IV), # 3 Marcy to Wheeler, October 23, 1854, 63.

thought his treaty most important in that it denied the power of the Nicaraguan government to demand extraordinary contributions from American citizens.³⁸ The inclusion of this article would alleviate many of the difficulties that arose between American citizens residing in Nicaragua.

In June 1855 a filibustering expedition organized by William Walker landed at Realejo.³⁹ Walker had organized a previous expedition into Baja California which ended unsuccessfully when needed reinforcements were detained by United States authorities. His aim now was to seize control of the Nicaraguan government and establish himself as dictator. Walker met little opposition and consolidated his control over Nicaragua during the summer and early autumn.

Wheeler, seeing an opportunity for further concessions, immediately recognized the regime. The United States minister "confidently believed that the present condition of things will be permanent--and that substantial peace, for the first time, in 30 years, reigns in Nicaragua."⁴⁰ In another dispatch Wheeler added:

In my opinion the present Government of Nicaragua will be permanent, and I trust that the influences that may guide her counsils may be so tempered by Law and Justice, that the change of Rulers will not be regretted, either by their own Sons, or the civilized world Then will come a confederated Union of the Five Republics, and with it I trust Peace, Science, and civilization.⁴¹

However, Wheeler's optimistic outlook was not held by President Pierce and

³⁸National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Diplomatic Dispatches, Central American States, # 16 Wheeler to Marcy, June 11, 1855.

³⁹William O. Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers (New York: MacMillan Co., 1916) Chapter X.

⁴⁰Manning, Central American States (IV), # 27 Wheeler to Marcy, October 30, 1855, 484.

⁴¹Ibid., # 29 Wheeler to Marcy, November 12, 1855, 487.

diplomatic relations were broken off in November.⁴² Pierce was consistent in viewing filibustering as undermining United States foreign policy and creating distrust among the other Central American states. More importantly, they heightened British suspicion of American intentions toward Central America—thus undercutting any diplomatic efforts that Pierce might attempt to pursue. The fact that Walker had closed the transit amplified administration concerns over the American position in Central America.

Another complication developed during the summer months of 1855 ending any possibility of Buchanan's successful negotiation of the Central America question. John Crampton, the British minister to the United States, was instructed to enlist volunteers to replenish the decimated ranks fighting in the Crimea. Administration resentment simmered throughout the fall and was further aggravated in November when the British sent a large fleet to the West Indies. The British argued that their purpose was to check any future filibustering from the United States. The administration viewed the British fleet as a threat to the American position in Central America and the Caribbean. However, the only naval action taken was the dispatching of the Potomac to the vicinity of Nicaragua. Pierce responded diplomatically by asking for Crampton's recall as the year came to an end.

While Pierce's attention focused on Central America and Anglo-American relations, his representative in Mexico continued to press for advantages. The Gadsden Treaty had not settled all of the outstanding disputes between these two neighbors. Memories of the Mexican War, filibustering expeditions into Lower California, and resentment over the Gadsden purchase, kept Mexicans on edge.⁴³ American expansionist fevers continued

⁴²Ibid., # 13 Marcy to Wheeler, November 18, 1855, 74-75.

⁴³Garber, 147.

to create distrust and antagonism in the Mexican government. Relations between the two countries had remained uneasy throughout 1854.

Gadsden, still American minister to Mexico, looked to the future with confidence in the naturalness of American expansion:

The Gulf of Mexico is destined to be the American Black Sea: The Sierra Madre Federation; the Danubian principalities seeking protection from an usurped and overshadowing absolutism: and Havannah another Sevastapol.⁴⁴

He hoped that these observations would awaken Washington to the need of increasing naval forces in the Gulf of Mexico. By establishing an American presence in the area, the United States would counteract the influence of Great Britain, France, and Spain. The real or imagined threat of European intervention in Mexico to prop-up the fading Santa Anna concerned Gadsden. He viewed European movements as attempts at "recollonizing" and argued for the "simple annunciation of the Protectorate" to guarantee "neighborhood Intercourse: Peace and border harmony."⁴⁵

During the summer of 1855 Mexican liberals removed Santa Anna from power and established a new government. The ensuing months signalled, in Gadsden's words, "a triumph of the U. States." Gadsden obtained from the liberals "freedom of intercourse, and of commercial interchange, with the removal of monopolies prohibitions and duties on exportation by Legislation always preferable to Treaty."⁴⁶ He argued once again that United States commercial expansion would break down barriers of differences between nations. The American minister believed the liberal government would permit further penetration for commercial purposes.

⁴⁴Manning, Mexico (IX), # 55 Gadsden to Marcy, February 5, 1855, 746-47.

⁴⁵Ibid., # 63 Gadsden to Marcy, May 18, 1855, 774-75.

⁴⁶Ibid., # 75 Gadsden to Marcy, November 15, 1855, 793.

Gadsden again proclaimed the need for an assertive American policy in Mexico that would establish de facto control over the area in commercial-financial terms. This involved financial support of the liberal government. The "clutches of European designs" toward Mexico could still be seen building-up in the West Indies. This was an obvious referral to the British fleet build-up of that autumn. Gadsden warned: "Take care that the U.S. are not caught napping."⁴⁷ As the year concluded, Gadsden remained adamant in his suspicions over "European interferences." Although the problems between the United States and Mexico were far from settlement, it was clear to Gadsden that the removal of Santa Anna was a progressive step for American interests.⁴⁸

The optimism expressed by Gadsden about expanding American commercial opportunities was shared by Wheeler who reported growing "stability and prosperity" in Nicaragua. He observed that "many capitalists, Merchant Farmers, Mechanics and Laborers" were arriving from New Orleans, San Francisco, and New York:

I am certain that the influences of Americans from the North will tend to purify [the Nicaragua peoples] principles and elevate their conduct. With this idea it will prove a blessing if the whole of Central America becomes Americanized by the industrious and enterprizing from the North.⁴⁹

But the tranquil scene described by Wheeler was disrupted in March as hostilities broke out over the Nicaragua-Costa Rica boundary. Costa Rica wanted to extend it to the San Juan River and thus share in the operation of

⁴⁷Ibid., (Private) Gadsden to Marcy, November 26, 1855, 799-800.

⁴⁸Ibid., # 78 Gadsden to Marcy, December 5, 1855, 803.

⁴⁹Manning, Central American States (IV), # 35 Wheeler to Marcy, December 24, 1855, 500; # 40 Wheeler to Marcy, January 25, 1856, 505; # 45 Wheeler to Marcy, March 17, 1856, 509; # 57 Wheeler to Marcy, June 15, 1856, 537.

the transit. In addition, Costa Rica greatly resented Walker's takeover of the Nicaraguan government.⁵⁰

Wheeler viewed the difficulties as a contest between "Despotism and Democracy". The "Continued strife for power" had brought neglect to "commerce, and agriculture and every peaceful art that form the true elements of national prosperity."⁵¹ The American influence would be one of establishing peace, prosperity, and progress:

Settlers for mining, agricultural and other purposes, are flocking to Nicaragua, locating lands, and erecting machinery: the hum of which and the noisy roll of the Yankee carts through the streets, advise the natives of Nicaragua, that indolence must yield to enterprize; ignorance to science; and anarchy and revolution to Law, and order.⁵²

This statement imparts much of the recurring theme of the Pierce administration: economic penetration by the United States would bring peace and security to an otherwise chaotic state.

These Nicaraguan developments moved Marcy to reverse his previous position. He instructed Wheeler to recognize the Walker government.⁵³ The decision resulted from several factors: a response to fears of growing British influence in the area and a catering to the Democratic party convention where Pierce hoped to gain support by this action. This was also partially in response to the disclosure by Walker that the British were backing Costa Rica against him. Marcy justified recognition to George Dallas, the new minister to Great Britain: "This Government could not remain entirely inactive and see Great Britain obtain complete ascendancy in

⁵⁰Scroggs, 177.

⁵¹Manning, Central American States (IV), # 66 Wheeler to Marcy, August 10, 1856, 564.

⁵²Ibid., # 67 Wheeler to Marcy, August 25, 1856, 570.

⁵³Ibid., # 24 Marcy to Wheeler, June 3, 1856, 86.

all the states of Central America."⁵⁴ In addition, the transit might be re-opened as a result of recognition.

As Walker's government gained recognition, disturbances in Panama came to the attention of the administration. During the early fifties this region had occupied a peripheral concern to the United States because it lacked a water or overland route for transit facilities. But the first transcontinental railroad was opened across the narrow isthmus in 1855 making it increasingly important. It became even more so after Walker had closed the transit in Nicaragua. The importance of the Panama railroad was exemplified in a letter written by Commander E. B. Boutwell of the United States Navy. These remarks give an indication of what course the United States was setting for itself in the Pacific and how Central America fit into these designs. Writing in March 1856 Boutwell stated:

The gold of Australia, the products of, and the supplies for, the Fejee, Marquesas, Society, Friendly, and all the other islands of Polynesia, should pass over the isthmus on the Panama railroad . . . the surest and most certain plan to civilize, Christianize, and develop the resources of the great and productive islands of Polynesia is to increase commercial intercourse with them, bring their products to your door by the isthmus route, supply them with wholesome laws, pure religion, and cultivate their minds Let them have an example of the enterprise and industry of our own people.⁵⁵

The traditional philosophy was present: trade would bring the blessings of civilization and expand United States influence.

The importance of the Panama route had been brought into sharp perspective in May 1856 when word reached Washington that a bloody riot against American rail passengers had occurred the previous month. The traditional response ensued: the naval vessels were sent to the isthmus to

⁵⁴Manning, Great Britain (VII), (Unofficial) Marcy to Dallas, June 16, 1856, 138.

⁵⁵Washington Union, March 29, 1856.

afford protection to American lives and property.

The riot at Panama and the continuing unrest in Central America made it clear that the situation demanded attention. American interests might be brushed aside if European concerns were threatened. Pierce responded by re-introducing the Central American question to the British in hopes that a settlement would insure American interests in the area.

Dallas feared the recognition of Walker's government might prevent discussions from taking place, but this turned out not to be the case. In June negotiations began. Clarendon and Dallas quickly got down to business and the initial agreement was arrived at in late August. After minor changes were made by Marcy the convention was signed in October. The agreement called for British withdrawal from

her Colony in the Bay of Honduras, [she] gives up her Protectorate of the Mosquitoes, admits Greytown to be a Free City under the sovereignty of Nicaragua, pens up her Indian king and his subjects within a narrow and precise reservation, and promises never to overleap the limits of the Belize as they were when the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was made.⁵⁶

The quick arrival at an agreement can be attributed to several factors: Crampton's recall in May 1856 smoothed relations between the two countries. Moreover, the negotiations conducted by Buchanan in 1853-54 had been complicated by the British pre-occupation in the Crimea and the bombardment of Greytown.

Also requiring the administration's attention during the summer was the growing disfavor the Mexican government held toward James Gadsden. This led to his recall and the appointment of John Forsyth to the post.⁵⁷ Forsyth agreed with Gadsden that Mexico needed direction from the United States. In

⁵⁶Julia Dallas, ed., Letters From London, Written From the Year 1856 to 1860, Vol. I (London, 1870) Dallas to Gilpin, October 17, 1856, 133-34.

⁵⁷Garber, 173-79.

his opinion, the Mexican government planned to encourage American immigration in developing their "great natural resources [and to] build railroads".

If these dreams could be translated into reality, Forsyth asked:

should we not enjoy all the fruits of annexation without its responsibilities and evils? Could we not secure for our countrymen the enjoyment of the rich resources of the Mexican country, without the danger of introducing, into our social and political system, the ignorant masses of the Mexican people?⁵⁸

Moreover, Forsyth argued that the time had arrived for the United States to exploit the weakness of Mexico.⁵⁹ Acting without instructions, he proceeded to do just that. In February 1857 he concluded a series of negotiations providing for reciprocal trade, postal agreements, adjustment of claims, and a loan to support the faltering finances of the national government.⁶⁰

Despite Central American negotiations and the replacement of Gadsden, problems remained with New Granada. While redress for the Panama riot remained unsettled, the New Granadian Congress passed high duties on goods and mails passing over the transit. Pierce responded by dispatching I. E. Morse to negotiate these outstanding problems. Morse was instructed to propose a treaty embracing the following points: American de facto control of the transit route, settlement of the claims from the Panama riot, and the purchase or control of the Island of Taboga in the Bay of Panama. Describing the island as a place "to make repairs, deposite goods, timber, coal," Marcy wrote that if Morse failed in securing this latter point the desire to enter into the other negotiations would be weakened.⁶¹

⁵⁸Manning, Mexico (IX), # 5 Forsyth to Marcy, November 8, 1856, 856.

⁵⁹Ibid., # 14 Forsyth to Marcy, December 19, 1856, 876.

⁶⁰Ibid., # 23 Forsyth to Marcy, February 2, 1857, 888.

⁶¹Manning, Chile-Colombia (V), Marcy to Morse & Bowlin, December 3,

Morse arrived at Aspinwall on December 16th and the succeeding months witnessed frustrating and fruitless negotiations. He viewed New Granada's policy as attempting to play the United States off against Great Britain for control of the transit.⁶² In March 1857 Morse left New Granada, failing in his mission and leaving the problem to the incoming administration.

As Pierce's term came to an end the Senate continued to debate the Dallas-Clarendon Convention. The Senate remained suspicious of British diplomacy, thus preventing Pierce from claiming any victory in settling the Central American question. They objected to the article which left the future of the Bay Islands pending the negotiations taking place between Great Britain and Honduras.⁶³

* * * *

Pierce's foreign policy emerges as one of complexity which forced him to plot a cautious course. Long-range goals of commercial-territorial expansion in the Caribbean and Central America were attempted through diplomatic means. However, this objective was undermined at home and abroad. As Southern pressures mounted for the acquisition of Cuba, Pierce responded with a diplomatic initiative while also countering the more aggressive elements in the South. Moreover, before diplomatic moves on Cuba were attempted, the British position had to be known. But this responsible policy was thwarted by over-zealous diplomats while the British and French intervention in Santo Domingo proved American moves for expansion would not

1856, 388-408.

⁶²Ibid., Morse to Marcy, February 20, 1857, 849.

⁶³Dowty, 227.

go unchecked. In addition, long-range goals of expansion would be sacrificed for the more immediate one of protecting and demanding respect for American persons and property overseas: this is evidenced by Pierce's approval of the bombardment of Greytown and its subsequent disruption of the Central American negotiations.

Throughout his administration, Pierce's objectives toward Central America and the Caribbean remained commerce, peace, and security. This philosophy, primarily economic but territorial if the opportunity arose, guided policy. The spread of trade would bring stability and progress to the area, binding the United States closer to its "sister republics". Reiterating this, John Guthrie, Pierce's Secretary of the Treasury, stated in his last annual message:

Mutual beneficial commerce is all that is required, to establish, with these nations, lasting relations of peace and friendship, and remove from their minds all apprehension, from our expansion.⁶⁴

⁶⁴34 Cong., 3 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 3, Report of the Secretary of the Treasury [874] 26-27.

CHAPTER II

BUCHANAN AND THE SETTLEMENT OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN IMBROGLIO

James Buchanan came to the Presidency confronted with increasing tension over slavery and continuing unrest in Central America. The controversy which erupted in Congress after the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska bill had grown. In foreign affairs, settlement of the Central American question continued to be a major objective. Complicating the question was Walker and the conflict in Nicaragua, continued disruption of the Panama railroad, and the question of what to do with the treaties negotiated by Forsyth with Mexico.

However, sectional and hemispheric turmoil did not alter the optimistic outlook which President Buchanan proclaimed in his inaugural address. While he stated the past history of the United States forbade acquisition of territory unless sanctioned "by laws of justice and honor", he reiterated belief in the positiveness of American expansion. He emphasized "peace, commerce, and friendship" and the benefits which came from the spread of American civilization:

Hitherto in all our acquisitions the people, under the protection of the American flag, have enjoyed civil and religious liberty, as well as equal and just laws, and have been contented, prosperous, and happy. Their trade with the rest of the world has rapidly increased, and thus every commercial nation has shared largely in their successful progress.¹

¹James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, Volume V (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1905) 435-36.

The high note of his inaugural remarks on foreign policy were soon replaced by diplomatic reality. The Dallas-Clarendon Treaty made its way through the Senate and on March 12th passed by one vote. Long debate and suspicious Senators had produced numerous changes of a minor nature; the major one called for immediate withdrawal of the British from the Bay Islands.² Although Buchanan had reservations about the treaty, he transmitted it to London. The instability of Central America required some agreement with Great Britain.

Ratification of the Dallas-Clarendon Treaty coincided with Secretary of State Lewis Cass instructing John Forsyth concerning the treaties he had concluded in February. Cass agreed with his predecessor's belief that these treaties represented "important changes in the international relations of the contracting parties."³ Moreover, Forsyth had negotiated these treaties without instructions from Washington.

While the fate of the treaty awaited British judgment, Buchanan moved to settle the outstanding dispute with New Granada over the Panama riot. Secretary of State Cass instructed John Bowlin, United States minister to New Granada, to break diplomatic relations if the New Granadians continued to refuse responsibility for the riot.⁴ After negotiating for

²George Ticknor Curtis, Life of James Buchanan (New York, 1883) 318. See also Philip S. Klein, President James Buchanan (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962) 317-27.

³William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs, Volume IX (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1937) # 11 Marcy to Forsyth, March 3, 1857, 219; # 12 Cass to Forsyth, March 11, 1857, 219-20. Hereafter cited as Manning, individual country and volume.

⁴Manning, Chile-Columbia (V), # 31 Cass to Bowlin, April 17, 1857, 416.

several months Bowlin decided a settlement could not be reached and in June he returned to the United States.⁵ However, negotiations were begun in Washington and agreement reached which complied with American demands.⁶ Diplomatic relations were resumed. This procedure of threatening or actually breaking diplomatic relations became a characteristic of Buchanan's administration. Such action would be used as a lever in bringing an obstinate country to the American point of view.

The hostilities between Costa Rica and Nicaragua also required attention in Buchanan's first months in office. In early 1857 Walker's position had been weakened by the war with Costa Rica. More importantly, news reached Washington in early May that the British had failed to ratify the amended Dallas-Clarendon Treaty. These two factors left the future of the transit and all of Central America even more questionable.

British rejection of the treaty and the continuing war in Central America brought an immediate response from Buchanan. On May 15th Buchanan dispatched William Jones to Central America as a special agent. Cass instructed him to aid in transferring any American elements fighting under Walker to the coast where they would be transported back to the United States. If the war had already concluded, attempts were to be made for the release of any captured Americans, including Walker. In addition, Jones was to establish friendly relations with the new Nicaraguan government and deny that the United States government had any part in the Walker enterprise. Cass concluded the dispatch by stating the United States desired "peace and prosperity" for Central America.⁷

⁵Ibid., Bowlin to Cass, June 29, 1857, 872.

⁶Ibid., Herran to Cass, September 11, 1857, 884-86

⁷Manning, Central America (IV), Cass to Jones, May 15, 1857, 91-95.

Jones's instructions had expressed the hope that the transit route would remain under Nicaraguan control. The United States wanted a stable government exercising control over the transit but one friendly to American interests. By the time Jones arrived in Nicaragua, Costa Rica had defeated Walker and had established its dominance in Central America. Jones reflected on Costa Rican control of the transit in an early report to Buchanan:

They [Costa Rica] have at this time possession of the entire transit route, and they declare their intention to maintain their claim to it The Costa Ricans are a much superior people to the Nicaraguans, and maintain the steadiest government and most prosperous condition of any in Central America. It is not possible that the United States may not have reason to object to the dominance on the transit, of the superior state, and especially if it shall show a disposition to encourage the Americanization of the Country?⁸

Jones realized the need for a stable government to control the transit, and it should be one friendly toward the United States. Summarizing Costa Rica's present attitude toward the United States as one of "jealousy, envy, and fear" he pondered:

the State of Costa Rica presents in contrast to Nicaragua and other states stability and order of government, and industry and thrift among its people Perhaps Nicaragua may be brought to the same condition.⁹

The Buchanan administration, continuing to act on its own to bring stability to Central America, recognized the new Nicaraguan government in October. At the same time negotiations were under way that resulted in the Cass-Yrissari Treaty. This agreement provided for an open and neutral transit through Nicaragua and granted the United States power to land troops

⁸Ibid., Private & Confidential Jones to Cass, June 7, 1857, 586-87.

⁹Ibid., Jones to Cass, August 3, 1857, 589-91.

to protect the transit.¹⁰ While the proposed treaty undercut Costa Rican attempts at assuming a dominant position in Central America, it also served notice to the British that the Buchanan administration was moving to circumvent the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. In other words, Buchanan meant to bring peace to Central America, with or without British assistance.

Meanwhile, traditional expansionistic aims and pressure from southern rail promoters resulted in administration initiatives to acquire territory from Mexico. In July 1857, Cass instructed Forsyth to pay Mexico twelve or fifteen million dollars for Lower California and a large portion of Sonora and Chihuahua, together with a perpetual right-of-way and privilege of transit under guaranty of the United States. This would insure the neutrality of the transit.¹¹

But Forsyth did not have an optimistic outlook for the project. Growing tensions between liberal and conservatives over the new constitution and old prejudices against Americans revived by the filibustering expedition of Henry A. Crabb in the spring of 1857 were not conducive to successful negotiations. Succeeding weeks proved the Mexican government unwilling to "alienate one foot of the national territory." Forsyth's efforts were further undercut by the inadequate sum offered and intrusion by agents of the Louisiana Tehuantepec Company who hoped to gain a private concession from Mexico.¹²

As the domestic turmoil continued, Forsyth argued that if a strong leader did not arise bringing order and tranquillity, then "that Master must

¹⁰Mary A. Williams, Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy: 1815-1915 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1916) 243.

¹¹Manning, Mexico (IX), # 28 Cass to Forsyth July 17, 1857, 235.

¹²Ibid., # 48 Forsyth to Cass, September 18, 1857, 929-30.

come from abroad." But he asked:

Where shall he come from? Do I do wrong in repeating the warning to my Gov't. that it is high time that the U.S. were taking present means to provide for her future stake in the destinies of this country?¹³

Forsyth's question fell on deaf ears in Washington. Buchanan was more concerned with a new British proposal for settlement of the Central American question.

After the British refusal to ratify the amended treaty the way had seemed open for Buchanan to ask Congress to abrogate the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. However, from a British viewpoint, some agreement needed to be reached in order to secure the future British position in Central America. Lord Napier, the new British minister to the United States, believed the situation required maintenance of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. In doing so, the British West Indies would be protected from encirclement by the United States and preserve for Great Britain her position as an American power.¹⁴

The British decided that a special envoy be sent to Central America to separately negotiate the outstanding problems. The envoy would be instructed to carry out the American interpretation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. Lord Napier introduced the plan to President Buchanan in October and that same month the British appointed Sir William Ousley as the special envoy. The President agreed to the proposal, expressing in his annual message that he would:

not refuse to contribute to any reasonable adjustment of the Central American question which is not practically inconsistent with the American interpretation of the treaty.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., # 51 Forsyth to Cass, September 26, 1857, 938.

¹⁴Richard W. Van Alstyne, "The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, 1850-1860", Journal of Modern History, 1939 (11), 178-83.

¹⁵Richardson, V, 444.

Buchanan's annual message also included a request of Congress to grant powers to the President which would enlarge the American role in protecting and dominating the isthmian routes. Buchanan asked for authority to use force in protecting American lives and property on the isthmian routes and to keep them open. The President argued that "It is our duty . . . to take care that they shall not be interrupted either by invasions from our own country or by wars between the independent States of Central America." Buchanan's proposal to use American force in maintaining order in Central America had been highlighted in November and early December when William Walker launched a second expedition against Nicaragua. However, an American naval officer landed in Nicaragua and arrested Walker before he could seize control of the government.¹⁶

Buchanan's acceptance of the Ousley mission and his statement on the transit routes are a clear indication of his policy in regards to Central America: accomodation with the British, maintenance of free and safe passage across the transit routes, and the belief in the eventual dominance of the United States in Central America and the Caribbean.

The President emphasized this latter point in a message transmitted to Congress in January 1858. The message concerned the recent arrest of William Walker. Buchanan criticized Walker's activities as creating resentment and distrust in the Caribbean and the world. Moreover, Walker's exploits kept tensions on edge between North and South over slavery and left the British suspicious of American intentions. Buchanan affirmed his belief in American expansion if only left to its "natural course":

The tide of emigrants will flow to the South, and nothing can eventually arrest its progress. If permitted to go there, peacefully,

¹⁶Ibid., 447; David I. Folkman, The Nicaragua Route (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1972), 94-97.

Central America will soon contain an American population which will confer blessings and benefits as well upon the natives as their respective Governments. Liberty under the restraint of law will preserve domestic peace, whilst the different transit routes across the Isthmus, in which we are so deeply interested, will have assured protection.¹⁷

Again the President's optimistic prophecy was replaced with reality as tensions grew between liberals and conservatives in Mexico. This brought a request for protection of American lives and property from the consul at Tampico.¹⁸ His dispatch was referred to the Secretary of the Navy and its contents transmitted to the commander of the Susquehanna.¹⁹

Forsyth believing the situation offered a chance to press American ambitions, opened negotiations with the conservative leader. Realizing that territorial acquisition would be difficult to negotiate, Forsyth focused attention on commercial privileges. Concluding a commercial agreement would "sustain Mexico, & keep her from falling to pieces, perhaps into the hands of Foreign Powers, until such time as we were ready to 'Americanize' her."²⁰

Forsyth believed he had taken measures to "master the situation" which "must result in making our country the undisputed arbiter of the destinies of Mexico." The question remained whether the United States would choose "to accept the office."²¹ But as the unrest continued and the government refused to make concessions, Forsyth declared the time

¹⁷John Bassett Moore, The Works of James Buchanan, Volume IX, (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960 reprint) 174-75. Hereafter cited as Buchanan, Works.

¹⁸35 Cong., 1 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 56 [929] # 3 Chase to Cass, January 25, 1858, 2.

¹⁹Ibid., Cass to Toucey, February 18, 1858, 5; Toucey to Cass, February 18, 1858, 8.

²⁰Manning, Mexico (IX), # 68 Forsyth to Cass, February 13, 1858, 968.

²¹Ibid., # 73 Forsyth to Cass, April 16, 1858, 983.

had arrived for the United States to demand its destiny:

the Government only lacks the moral courage to sell Territory. If it can be brought to that point--and nothing but stern financial necessity will do it--and the price is not an insurmountable barrier, the Treaty will be made. The favorable moment is the period intervening between the flash of success, and the incipency of new revolutionary movements.²²

As the civil strife threatened foreign life and property in May, Forsyth assumed the role of settling all claims against Mexico. He viewed his activities as that of "fighting the battle alone for the rights of Foreigners." He declared:

Having no misgivings about my being in the right, I have no objection to having the field left to me alone, because I see manifest advantages in it.²³

Reacting to the civil strife in Mexico, resolutions were introduced in the Senate to assume a protectorate over the northern parts of Mexico. However, they never came to a final vote.²⁴

The difficulties in Mexico coincided with increasing deterioration of the Caribbean scene. In May, British naval vessels began stopping American ships in the Caribbean and searching them for involvement in the illegal slave trade. Throughout the spring the increasing number of British searches caused further alarm in administration circles.²⁵ Responding to this, American naval units were dispatched to the area in order to show the flag and protect American shipping.

While these searches caused consternation to the administration, relations with Nicaragua remained far from normal. The point of contention

²²Ibid., # 71 Forsyth to Cass, March 18, 1858, 971

²³Ibid., # 78 Forsyth to Cass, June 17, 1858, 995.

²⁴Congressional Globe, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., 735-36, 1686, 2565, 2630.

²⁵35 Cong., 1 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 59 [930] Cass to Napier, May 4, 1858, 2; # 7 Blythe to Cass, May 8, 1858, 9-10.

centered around objections to the Cass-Yrissari Treaty by some members of the Nicaraguan national assembly. Moreover, the Nicaraguan President objected to the stipulation giving the United States the right to land troops to protect the transit. But it passed the assembly in late March and Mirabeau Lamar, United States minister to Nicaragua, expressed confidence that it would soon be in Washington for Buchanan's final consideration.²⁶

Unknown to Lamar, the Nicaraguan President did not send the treaty immediately. This move by President Martínez was connected with the arrival of Felix Belly, a French adventurer and canal promoter. Belly's arrival aroused concern in the United States. Rumors circulated in Washington that he hoped to unite the Central American states against the United States. The rumors took on credibility when Belly arranged for a settlement of the boundary dispute between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The agreement provided for joint control of the isthmian route by Nicaragua and Costa Rica. In addition, Belly was granted the rights to build an inter-oceanic canal. This article also provided the French government with a right to station troops on the transit. The conclusion of the Belly negotiations coincided with the announcement of the Rivas Manifesto. Issued as a joint proclamation by the Presidents of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, the Manifesto condemned the United States and its people for filibustering expeditions. The proclamation called on Great Britain, France, and Sardinia to protect the Central American countries from American expansion.²⁷

Minister Lamar took an increasingly alarmist attitude toward these developments. Belly's activities and the prejudices exhibited by the

²⁶Manning, Central America (IV), # 6 Lamar to Cass, March 27, 1858, 663-64.

²⁷Cyril Allen, "Felix Belly: Nicaraguan Canal Promoter", Hispanic American Historical Review, 1957, 46-51.

leaders of Nicaragua and Costa Rica against the United States required a response if American interests were to be maintained in Central America.

Lamar reported:

[Nicaragua] and Costa Rica--if not all of Central America--are acting under the hope of foreign interposition in their relations with the United States.²⁸

He believed that "reasonable relations" between Nicaragua and the United States would be impossible unless the former became convinced that Great Britain and France would not come to her defense. Lamar concluded that Nicaragua should be held "responsible for her own acts, and [made] to fight her own battles." He advocated the sending of American naval units to visit this "blind, infatuated people". The administration responded by alerting naval vessels in Central America to afford the necessary protection to American lives and property.²⁹

Outraged at these developments, the Buchanan administration viewed Belly's activities as threatening the American position in Central America. The precarious state of Central American affairs is reflected in a dispatch from Secretary of State Cass to Dallas. Stating that the situation in Mexico and Central America gave the administration "a good deal of uneasiness", Cass stated:

Mexico seems to be in a state of disintegration, and what measures it will be proper to adopt in the critical state of our relations with that country, it is difficult to tell. However, something must be done The Central American Imbrolio becomes worse and worse . . . I think we shall adopt a very decided course in relation to the dishonest Governments in that region.³⁰

²⁸Manning, Central America (IV), # 11 Lamar to Cass, June 24, 1858, 682-85.

²⁹Ibid., # 12 Lamar to Cass, June 26, 1858, 686.

³⁰Manning, Great Britain (VII), Private Cass to Dallas, July 1, 1858, 189.

Forsyth had already taken action in Mexico, breaking diplomatic relations after the government had imposed a tax on foreign interests. In Central America, Buchanan responded by placing naval units at San Juan del Norte, San Juan del Sur, and Realejo to provide protection for American's. This was followed in August with Nicaragua's repudiation of the Rivas Manifesto.³¹

In the summer of 1858 Belly sailed to the United States in hopes of interesting financiers to pledge funds for the proposed canal. He also conferred with Lord Napier on the possibility of British funding of the project. However, Napier advised him to curtail his activities as most Americans viewed his undertaking as a breach of the Monroe Doctrine. More importantly to the British, he represented a threat to agreement with the United States over Central America. Napier feared that Belly would set back any Anglo-American understanding. Rebuffed by American financiers and Lord Napier, Belly's efforts were officially disavowed by the French government. In late summer he sailed back to France.

The conciliatory mood of the British as evidenced by Napier's advice to Belly had been enlarged upon in a dispatch from Minister Dallas in London. He had been assured by a British statesman that:

all the Southern part of North America must ultimately come under the Government of the United States: that he had no objection to what seemed the inevitable course of things: that on the contrary, he thought it would be beneficial as well to the population occupying the countries referred to as to the United States, and the rest of the world.³²

However, Belly's return to France and Nicaragua's repudiation of the Rivas Manifesto did not bring quiet to Central America. In October and November rumors circulated in the United States that William Walker would

³¹Manning, Mexico (IX), # 49 Cass to Forsyth, July 15, 1858, 253-54. Manning, Central America (IV), # 9 Cass to Lamar, July 25, 1858, 116-27; Jerez to Cass, October 4, 1858, 716-17.

³²Manning, Great Britain (VII), # 99 Dallas to Cass, April 13, 1858, 745.

launch another expedition to Nicaragua. In response to this and also to aid Ousley's negotiations, the British increased their fleet in the Caribbean. Hoping to maintain the positive atmosphere established with the British, Buchanan ordered American naval units in the Caribbean to stop any illegal expedition and issued a proclamation against filibusters. He reiterated that these adventurers retarded the realization of American goals in Central America.³³ The Washington Union applauded the President's proclamation and echoed its sentiments:

The only practicable process of establishing American influence permanently and effectually in Central America is by the emigration thither of our enterprising and industrious citizens, for the purpose of engaging in commercial and industrial pursuits and aiding in the development of those regions.³⁴

Developments in Mexico also demanded Buchanan's attention in the closing weeks of 1858. President Comonfort resigned in December and Felix Zuloaga, backed by the army and the Church, assumed power. The Liberals reacted by establishing a rump Congress and declaring Benito Juarez president of the nation. Mexico now had two presidents and a civil war. As the battle lines were drawn, Miguel Miramon replaced Zuloaga as leader of the conservatives.

Hoping to ascertain the strength of the conservatives and liberals, Buchanan dispatched William Churchwell to Mexico. Churchwell arrived in Mexico on January 19th and in his first dispatch to Washington reported that the liberal party was favored by a vast majority of Mexican states. More importantly, this group favored cordial relations with the United States. Churchwell counselled the need for action on the part of the United States:

³³Buchanan, Works, IX, October 30, 1858, 230-32; William O. Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers (New York: MacMillan Co., 1916), 370-71; 35 Cong., 2 Sess., H. Ex. Doc. No. 24 [1004].

³⁴Washington Union, November 4, 1858.

The maintenance of the Liberalists in power is an object worthy of the ardent moral co-operation of our Government A new phase in Mexican nationality is now a positive necessity, and that phase, if we are not utterly deaf to the dictates of common sense, must be of our own creation and of great moment.³⁵

The succeeding weeks witnessed the further consolidation of the liberals' control in the countryside, and although the fighting continued Churchwell recommended the immediate recognition of the Juárez government. He believed by exercising "advise and moral aid through their officials" the United States could establish an "effective but indirect Protectorate" over Mexico.³⁶

While Churchwell continued his mission in Mexico, disturbing reports reached Washington from Lamar in Nicaragua. Although not certain of the stipulations concluded between Ousley and Nicaragua, Lamar believed they superceded the yet unratified Cass-Yrissari Treaty.³⁷ In the ensuing weeks he ascertained that the treaty contained a British guarantee to aid Nicaragua against filibustering expeditions. Buchanan objected to this stipulation as an insult to American intentions. Moreover, it implied that the United States sanctioned filibustering activities by not enforcing their neutrality laws.

Felix Belly returned to Nicaragua in late March after concluding a contract with Costa Rica which granted him further rights for building an interoceanic canal. He now proposed to draw up a similar contract with Nicaragua.³⁸ Lamar viewed Belly's project as an attempt to "plant a French

³⁵Manning, Mexico (IX), # 2 Churchwell to Cass, February 8, 1859, 1027.

³⁶Ibid., Confidential Churchwell to Cass, February 22, 1859, 1034.

³⁷Manning, Central America (IV), # 39 Lamar to Cass, January 29, 1859, 727-30; Williams, 256-57.

³⁸Ibid., 254.

colony in Nicaragua under the protection of Louis Napoleon."³⁹ He warned:

My own conviction is that the time is near at hand when the United States will have to make a practical assertion of the Monroe Doctrine, or abandon this country to European domination.⁴⁰

The situation was further aggravated when the Nicaraguan government seized several steamers belonging to the American owned transit company.

Lamar believed the Ousley treaty to be proof of Nicaragua's "colonial dependence" upon Great Britain and France and aimed against "the absorbing policy of the United States."⁴¹ However in the succeeding weeks Lamar was able to conclude a convention similar to Ousley's. But this treaty included an article guaranteeing the enforcement of American anti-filibustering laws.⁴²

Word of Ousley's treaty and seizure of the steamers reached Washington on March 30th. New instructions were written and dispatched to Lamar on April 1st. Secretary of State Cass wrote that the seizure of the steamers was "a serious aggression" and their immediate return would be expected. Naval units were also ordered to the vicinity with orders to render necessary protection to American citizens and property. Lamar was also instructed that if the Cass-Yrissari treaty was not ratified minus the offending article on filibustering⁷ within two weeks after receiving this dispatch, diplomatic relations were to be broken.⁴³

A crisis did not develop over Ousley's actions because the

³⁹Manning, Central America (IV), # 50 Lamar to Cass, April 28, 1859, 744.

⁴⁰Ibid., # 49 Lamar to Cass, April 25, 1859, 744.

⁴¹Ibid., # 41 Lamar to Cass, February 29, 1859, 732.

⁴²Ibid., # 43 Lamar to Cass, March 20, 1859, 740-41.

⁴³Ibid., # 22 Cass to Lamar, April 1, 1859, 136-39.

administration, while upset, believed him acting outside instructions. The administration was more upset with Nicaragua. Cass, writing to Dallas on April 7th, stated that relations with Nicaragua were in "a very critical condition." He believed the leaders of "that little State seem to be utterly ignorant of their own duties and of our rights." Cass also stated that he did not believe Ousley's actions a result of his instructions.⁴⁴

Further highlighting the seriousness of the situation, President Buchanan expressed in a letter to Lord Clarendon his bitterness at Ousley's actions. Stating that Ousley had succeeded in "raising the very D--l", Buchanan chastised him for attempting to "get ahead of us & have our Treaty rejected & his own ratified." In regards to Ousley and Belly the President remarked:

Sir William & Monsieur Belly are now the great actors in Central America . . . the little Frenchman, although repudiated by his Government, has made these silly people believe that he is going to dig a Ship Canal for them His plan is a subject of ridicule among capitalists both in England & this country; but the Nicaraguans venerate him as a perfect prodigy. I am writing currente calamo, upon a matter in which of course I feel a much greater interest than you do.⁴⁵

In May, complying with the April 1st dispatch, Lamar terminated relations with Nicaragua.⁴⁶ But during the summer news from Nicaragua and Great Britain encouraged Buchanan. In June a report from Nicaragua indicated that Belly's surveying operations had run into difficulties owing to climatic conditions. The report surmised that Belly might be forced to return to

⁴⁴Manning, Great Britain (VII), Confidential Cass to Dallas, April 7, 1859, 203-07; Unofficial and Confidential Cass to Dallas, August 11, 1859, 216.

⁴⁵Buchanan, Works, Confidential Buchanan to Lord Clarendon, April 8, 1859, 316-17.

⁴⁶Manning, Central America (IV), # 6 Lamar to Zeledon, May 5, 1859, 745.

France.⁴⁷ News also reached Washington in late August that Nicaragua had ratified the Cass-Yrissari Treaty minus the clause offensive to the United States. The administration responded by appointing Alexander Dimitry as the new minister to Nicaragua.⁴⁸ From Great Britain, Dallas wrote that the British ministry was dissatisfied with Ousley and Charles Wyke would be sent to carry on the negotiations.⁴⁹ Furthermore, when Dimitry reached his post he informed Washington that Belly's staunchest backer, President Mora of Costa Rica had been overthrown.⁵⁰

These developments and Churchwell's mission resulted in the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico. Robert McLane was named the new minister and received the standard instructions for an American minister to that country: negotiate a treaty of commerce, gain "A right of way across the northern parts of Mexico, and across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, with power in the United States to land troops, if necessary, in order to make these transits secure", and attempt to purchase a portion of Lower California.⁵¹

McLane arrived in early April 1859 and after surveying the political situation presented his credentials to the Juárez government.⁵² He soon entered into negotiations for a treaty of commerce and complied with the

⁴⁷New York Daily Times, June 14, 1859.

⁴⁸Manning, Central America (IV), Luis Molina to Cass, August 30, 1859, 760-61; # 2 Cass to Dimitry, August 31, 1859, 143-53.

⁴⁹Manning, Great Britain (VII), # 203 Dallas to Cass, August 15, 1859; # 205 Dallas to Cass, August 23, 1859, 763-64.

⁵⁰Manning, Central America (IV), # 1 Dimitry to Cass, September 19, 1859, 762-63.

⁵¹Manning, Mexico (IX), # 2 Cass to McLane, March 7, 1859, 258.

⁵²Ibid., # 1 McLane to Cass, April 7, 1859, 1037-44.

other stipulations of his instructions. But while Juárez favored selling Lower California to the United States, it was questionable whether such an agreement would pass the national assembly. Throughout the rest of the spring and into the summer negotiations continued with emphasis on securing transit rights and a commercial agreement.⁵³

McLane briefly visited the United States during September and October but in November he returned to Mexico and resumed negotiations. This resulted in the McLane-Ocampo Treaty in December. The proposed treaty gave the United States free passage of goods, merchandise and mails, troops and munitions across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec; it also provided for perfect reciprocity with reference to certain natural and manufactured products.

McLane argued the importance of the treaty in the following terms:

if the United States declines the responsibility imposed upon them, by the adoption and ratification of this convention, further anarchy will prevail in Mexico until it will be terminated by direct intervention from some other quarter in the federal policies of Mexico, or by an intervention of our own . . . exposing us to the responsibilities of a general war and a conquest that few would desire to undertake.⁵⁴

McLane hoped for quick ratification of the treaty as it would, in his judgment, bring the existing civil war to a prompt conclusion and "insure security for the future."⁵⁵

In the early months of 1860 Miramón moved to blockade the port of Vera Cruz which served as the liberals' capital. McLane, in reporting this, argued that intervention by a foreign power would bring peace. However, he feared European intervention would be detrimental to United States interests

⁵³Ibid., # 5 McLane to Cass, April 21, 1859, 1049-56.

⁵⁴Ibid., # 57 McLane to Cass, December 14, 1859, 1137-45.

⁵⁵Ibid., # 66 McLane to Cass, January 7, 1860, 1154-55.

in Mexico and possibly in Central America.⁵⁶ McLane interpreted British and French moves to mediate a settlement as an attempt at destroying Juárez's power. He argued that failure to support Juárez would invite European influence into the area.⁵⁷

Buchanan refused to recognize the blockade and thus turned the situation into a traditional point of American diplomacy: the protection of lives and property abroad. He moved to place a ship at Vera Cruz that would offer "the protection due our citizens . . . should a hostile force approach that place."⁵⁸

As the Miramón forces prepared their seige of Vera Cruz, Spanish vessels sailed from Cuba flying the Mexican flag. These ships had reinforcements and supplies for the conservatives. But upon their arrival, the U.S.S. Saratoga, under the command of Commander Turner, seized the two ships as pirateers.⁵⁹ This action, coupled with American shipments of munitions to the liberals maintained the Juárez government.⁶⁰

But if the administration hoped to use this as a pretext to involve the United States in Mexican difficulties, the Senate laid such hopes to rest. Moreover, Buchanan would not act unless Congress gave him specific sanction to do so and this possibility appeared slim owing to the difficulty the McLane treaty had run into. In June Congress adjourned without acting

⁵⁶Ibid., # 72 McLane to Cass, March 30, 1860, 1172.

⁵⁷Ibid., # 80 McLane to Cass, April 26, 1860, 1185-86.

⁵⁸Ibid., # 29 Cass to McLane, March 10, 1860, 283; 36 Cong., 1 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 29 [1031] Toucey to Jarvis, March 13, 1860, 2-3.

⁵⁹Ibid., Commander Turner's Report, March 8, 1860, 5-11.

⁶⁰Henry B. Parkes, A History of Mexico (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1938) 248.

on the treaty. Failure by the Senate to advise ratification of the McLane treaty and give the President power to protect American interests in Mexico led to McLane's subsequent resignation.

While the Mexican difficulties occupied most of the administration's attention in the early months of 1860, Charles Wyke carried out his instructions in Central America. In late 1859 and early 1860 he negotiated the return of the Bay Islands to Honduras and British abandonment of the Mosquito Protectorate in Nicaragua.⁶¹ The Central American question was at an end.

Buchanan formulated his policy in order to bring stability and order to Central America, but along American lines of thinking. The proposal of the Ousley mission made Buchanan realize the need for patience and co-operation with the British in order to realize long-term goals.

The only effort at concrete territorial expansion came in Mexico. This resulted from a variety of factors. The unrest in Mexico and throughout Central America made negotiations difficult. In addition, the meddling of Walker, Belly, and Ousley created further tension and obstacles for American policy. On the domestic front, the splintering of the Democratic party and the nation over the issue of slavery handicapped Buchanan. The hostility of Congress toward Buchanan's diplomatic proposals also encumbered policy.

Solving the Central American "imbroglio" marked an empty victory for the ante-bellum expansionists. The unresolved divisions within the country demanded solution. As the nation moved toward civil conflict, Buchanan pleaded "The Union has already made us the most prosperous, and ere long

⁶¹Manning, Great Britain (VII), William Irvine to Cass, August 27, 1860, 767-68.

will, if preserved, render us the most powerful, nation on the face of the earth."⁶² But such rhetoric fell upon a people determined to war upon one another. It would take a later generation, tempered by the internecine conflict of the 1860's and drawing upon the dreams of the 1850's, to again rally to the nation's "manifest destiny".

* * * *

In contrast with Central America, where sharp differences characterized Anglo-American relations, China represented a common concern to both powers as an area for expanding commerce. To this end the United States followed a limited course of cooperation with the British while at the same time remaining their chief rival for that trade. Pierce and Buchanan understood the factors limiting American involvement in the Far East and acted accordingly. But the commercial beliefs and motives which characterized American policy in the Caribbean and Central America, including the positive and civilizing effects of commerce, were also evident in China. The following chapter will examine the development of that policy.

⁶²Richardson, V, 637.

CHAPTER III

EXTENSION OF AMERICA'S INTEREST IN THE FAR EAST:

PIERCE'S AND BUCHANAN'S POLICY TOWARD CHINA

As the 1850's began western diplomacy had failed to fully open China to their trade. After three quarters of a century the Western nations had only penetrated five coastal ports. The treaty forced on China by the British in the early 1840's was vaguely written and poorly executed. Complicating the situation, internal fighting had broken out in the late 1840's between the Manchu dynasty and a religious and political movement called T'ai P'ing (Taiping) or "Great Peace". This conflict intensified in the early 1850's, further threatening foreign interests and commerce. In early 1853 the rebels moved northward and established Nanking as their capital. Against a background of internal strife and Chinese contempt for the "barbarians" from the West, the British moved to revise their treaties.

In June 1853 Secretary of State William L. Marcy informed Humphrey Marshall, American Commissioner to China, that Great Britain intended to further open "the Chinese Empire generally to the commercial enterprise of all the civilized nations of the world." Such a policy would be heartily agreed to by the Pierce administration. However, Marcy defined American policy in the following terms:

Without knowing what course the British authorities may deem it expedient to take in furtherance of the object in view the President does not enjoin upon you co-operation but only cordial relations and free conference with them.¹

¹National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Diplomatic

These instructions outlined Pierce's policy towards China and the European powers. Advocating peace and commerce, Pierce pressed for enlargement of American commercial advantages. Lacking the resources to maintain a sufficient naval force along the China coast, the United States identified its commercial interests to a limited degree with those of Great Britain. Moreover, Pierce and Marcy realized the importance and desirability of obtaining the same treaty revision as the British but believed American policy toward China should not be subservient and dependent upon Great Britain.

Coinciding with the change of administrations in Washington, Humphrey Marshall arrived at Shanghai and began vigorously executing his duties. Marshall, a native of Kentucky and a graduate of West Point, was a member of Congress when President Fillmore had appointed him Commissioner to China. He initially established the legation at Shanghai in an attempt to better report on the Taipings' movements. Marshall viewed Shanghai as "destined to become the greatest city of Eastern Asia, and most intimately of all connected with America."

In Marshall's opinion, the British were America's chief rival for the China trade. He counselled that the United States should "be prepared for that struggle which they must make hereafter with Great Britain for the commerce of eastern Asia." Defining the struggle in diplomatic terms he argued for reorganization of the consulate system to aid American commerce at the treaty ports.² He argued that the United States should establish a

Instructions, China, # 8 Marcy to Marshall, June 7, 1853, 84-85. My own emphasis added. Hereafter cited as Diplomatic Instructions, China.

²33 Cong., 1 Sess., H. Ex. Doc. No. 123 [734] # 9 Marshall to the Secretary of State, March 8, 1853, 81; # 23 Marshall to the Secretary of State, July 26, 1853, 210. Hereafter cited as Marshall Correspondence.

separate sphere in China from which to carry on trade:

in establishing the foundations of international intercourse with China, the United States will select such a position for the chief mart in their trade as shall be nearest to them and furthest from their chief rival; as shall be easiest of defence; as shall be least liable to be closed by that rival in time of war; and as shall manifest, on the part of its population, a desire for commerce and intercourse.³

As Perry prepared his expedition to Japan, Marshall complained that removing all the ships from the China station would eliminate all protection of American interests. Perry, a diplomat in his own right and thinking, countered by advising Marshall to "regulate" his diplomacy with that of the other European nations.⁴ These cool exchanges with Perry contributed to Marshall's subsequent recall.

In June Marshall visited the rebels capital and came away unimpressed. He criticized both the Imperial government and the rebels as "impotent, ignorant, conceited" and having "no idea of the true functions of government". Marshall again argued that the United States should keep a watchful eye on British and Russian ambitions in China. He described China as:

a lamb before the shearers, as easy a conquest as were the provinces of India. Whenever the avarice or the ambition of Russia or Great Britain shall tempt them to make the prizes, the fate of Asia will be sealed, and the future Chinese relations with the United States of America may be considered as closed for ages It is my opinion that the highest interests of the United States are involved in sustaining China--maintaining order here, and gradually engrafting on this worn-out stock the healthy principles which give life and health to governments, rather than see China become the theatre of a widespread anarchy, and ultimately the prey of European ambition.⁵

In September Marshall's suspicions of the British were amplified

³Marshall Correspondence, # 13 Marshall to the Secretary of State, April 28, 1853, 102.

⁴Ibid., # 15 Marshall to the Secretary of State, May 20, 1853, 123, 126, 128.

⁵Ibid., Confidential Marshall to Marcy, July 10, 1853, 204.

when the Triads, an underground revolutionary society, seized control of Shanghai. They assured the Western envoys that they would cooperate with foreign interests. However, the day after the Triad's seizure of Shanghai the customs-house was demolished. In the absence of Chinese officials the British proposed foreign collection of port dues. Marshall, an eye-witness to the whole affair, laid blame on the British for initiating the destruction of the customs-house. He viewed their destruction and the subsequent proposal as an attempt by the British to gain further ascendancy in China.⁶

Marshall's cool relations with the British and Commodore Perry resulted in the appointment of Robert McLane in October. McLane, son of former Secretary of State Louis McLane, had graduated from West Point, practiced law, and served two terms as a congressman from Maryland. Marcy instructed McLane to direct his efforts at establishing the "most unrestricted commercial intercourse between that Empire and the United States." In addition, Marcy hoped a reciprocal trade agreement and fishing rights along the China coast could be obtained. McLane was empowered to make similar treaties with "Corea, Cochin China, or any other independent Asiatic Power" with whom the United States did not have relations. If the turmoil in China led to the establishment of several governments, Marcy instructed him to "enter into such treaties with them respectively as he may deem advisable."⁷ Expressing confidence in McLane's mission, Pierce

⁶Te-kong Tong, United States Diplomacy in China, 1844-1860 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964) 135-40.

⁷Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 2 Marcy to McLane, November 9, 1853, 91-93. Tong attributes Marshall's recall to his anti-British attitude. However, several weeks after the June 7th dispatch to Marshall, reports appeared in the Washington Union that Robert Walker would soon be appointed to the China post. However, Walker declined the post and the Pierce

stated in his first annual message to Congress:

The conditions at this time render it probable that some important changes will occur in that vast Empire which will lead to a more unrestricted intercourse with it.⁸

McLane arrived at Hong Kong in March 1854, Marshall having left his post in January after receiving word of his recall. After conferring with Peter Parker, secretary of the legation, McLane reported that "an exhibition of naval force" was important if respect were to be shown the United States.⁹ Therefore, the new Commissioner awaited Commodore Perry's return from Japan before presenting his credentials. In a later dispatch McLane wrote the European powers had determined diplomatic intercourse could only be carried on with the Chinese "at the cannon's mouth".¹⁰ McLane apparently believed the United States should follow the same course of action.

A few weeks after his arrival McLane received an informal note from the newly appointed British minister, Sir John Bowring. It strongly asserted a desire for Anglo-American cooperation in dealing with China and Bowring proposed they meet to discuss the matter. The meeting took place in mid-April with the British minister expressing his government's desire for the British, French, and Americans to force the Chinese to comply with the existing treaty stipulations through "combined action". Bowring also hoped such action would open the interior to trade and force the Chinese to permit

administration did not find a replacement for Marshall until October. See the Washington Union, June 23, 1853.

⁸James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, Volume V (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1905) 210.

⁹35 Cong., 2 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 22, pt. 1, Correspondence of the Late Commissioners in China 1852 # 1 McLane to Marcy, March 20, 1854, 2. Hereafter cited as McLane Correspondence.

¹⁰McLane Correspondence, # 3 McLane to Marcy, April 20, 1854, 22.

foreign diplomats to reside at Peking. However, McLane refuted such plans as being "incomplete, imperfect, and inconclusive in their design and effect". He termed the interview as "protracted and not altogether satisfactory".¹¹ McLane wanted to familiarize himself with the situation in China before taking any action.

The next month McLane sailed up the Yangtze River to ascertain the effects of the Taiping rebellion on the countryside. The trip also resulted in McLane writing of the commercial and strategic value of the interior. Comparing the Yangtze to the Mississippi and Amazon rivers, McLane considered the former more important:

[the Mississippi and Amazon rivers] are nothing in value when compared with the millions of people that have their habitations on and along the banks of the Yangtze-Kiang. In this respect the valley of the Mississippi is almost a howling wilderness, and that of the Amazon little better than a desert.¹²

According to McLane's report, the Yangtze and its branches were analogous with the workings of the circulatory system of the human body:

like the main artery and its branches in the human system [the Yangtze-Kiang and its confluents] are essential to the life and vigor of the Empire, the vital conduits that supply every part with the means of support.¹³

McLane also stressed the strategic importance of the Chusan archipelago, a group of some one hundred islands to the south of the mouth of the Yangtze. He described them as "admirably adapted for a United States naval depot".¹⁴ In addition, an island in the Chusan archipelago could provide a base from which a nation with sufficient naval forces could block the

¹¹Ibid., 23.

¹²Ibid., # 6 McLane to Marcy, June 14, 1854, 98.

¹³Ibid., 94.

¹⁴Ibid., # 5 McLane to Marcy, May 21, 1854, 43.

mouth of the Yangtze, thus controlling access to the interior of China. Furthermore, a high quality of bituminous coal had been found in the Liang-Kiang provinces. This would be important as European and American navies switched from sails to steam.¹⁵

McLane's trip up the Yangtze "matured" his outlook on the internal disorder in China. In creating a situation conducive for expansion of commerce and diplomatic intercourse McLane believed it might become necessary for the Western powers to "interfere and give a really Christian direction" to the situation.¹⁶ Upon his return from the interior, McLane scheduled an interview with the Manchu authorities at Shanghai to discuss treaty privileges and other problems. The meeting took place on June 21st but failed to produce any results. McLane reacted to the Chinese refusal to negotiate by meeting with the British minister. The two envoys entered into "cordial cooperation" and decided that a joint expedition to the mouth of the Peiho River should be undertaken. They hoped this would force the Imperial government at Peking to satisfy foreign grievances and open negotiations for revision of the British treaty.¹⁷

The growing cordiality between McLane and the British resulted, in part, from the latter's agreement to settle the question of the custom-houses. As already noted, collection of the port dues had been assumed by the British after the Triad rebellion of the previous September. Now the British proposed an Inspectorate System whereby representatives of Great Britain, France, and the United States would collect the customs. This satisfied McLane who viewed the arrangement as making it:

¹⁵Ibid., # 6 McLane to Marcy, June 14, 1854, 97.

¹⁶Ibid., 69.

¹⁷Ibid., # 13 McLane to Marcy, September 19, 1854, 201.

impossible that any one nation, whether Great Britain or Russia, should exercise any jurisdiction whatever at this port without the concurrence of the authorities of the United States; and thus the apprehension that some have entertained of a design on the part of England to assume exclusive dominion or ascendancy here is effectually disposed of.¹⁸

But in fact, the British still retained the upper hand at the port. More importantly, the British move brought McLane to a closer understanding with them. He now accepted their predominance in order to have stability for trading and negotiating purposes.

Receiving a dispatch from Washington during preparations for the expedition, McLane believed he had anticipated the President's wishes by cooperating with the British. Marcy's dispatch emphasized the common interests that the United States and Great Britain had in securing increased trading opportunities in China. Marcy informed McLane:

You will of course aid in a proper way to get liberal concessions to commerce. [F]or whatever Great Britain may obtain on the renewal of her Treaty this year, we cannot fail to get in the renewal of ours two years hence.¹⁹

Administration policy remained one of cooperating with the British in order to bring about trade and treaty concessions.

The expedition to the Peiho in October proved unsuccessful in obtaining treaty revision. The failure of the expedition resulted in McLane advocating "a new line of policy". The reservations which he held in the spring toward Anglo-American cooperation had been displaced by the settlement of the customs question and the continuing Chinese refusal to negotiate with the Western powers. He advocated that:

the Peiho and Yangtze-Kiang as well as the river Min and the

¹⁸Ibid., # 7 McLane to Marcy, July 7, 1854, 113. See also Tong, 152-60.

¹⁹Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 7 Marcy to McLane, May 8, 1854, 99.

Whampoa be placed under blockade by the united forces of the three treaty powers--Great Britain, France, and the United States--and so held until the commercial privileges of buying from and selling to all persons in China, without limitation or restraint, is respected.²⁰

He concluded that a less decisive policy would have no effect on the Imperial government. But McLane left his post in December due to illness, leaving the legation in the hands of its secretary, Peter Parker.

Meanwhile, McLane's dispatch calling for "a new line of policy" reached Washington in February 1855 as the debate in Congress continued over Pierce's policy in Central America and the Caribbean. In replying to McLane's recommendations, Marcy believed the President would have serious objections to united armed intervention for treaty revision. He concluded that such an association would not suit the present feelings of the country or Congress. Marcy wrote:

It would be hardly worth while to send out the Naval forces for the purpose you suggest without authority to use it in case the mere exhibition of it did not answer the purpose of intimidation, and it could not properly be used . . . without the authority of Congress. It is quite certain that a case could not have been presented to Congress which would afford any hope that such authority could be obtained from it.²¹

During the spring Parker returned to the United States for reasons of health. But in September Pierce appointed him the new Commissioner to China. Parker, an active missionary in China for twenty years, had opened the famous Ophtalmic Hospital at Canton in 1835. He had served six different times as charge d' affairs to the American legation in China and had married a cousin of Daniel Webster's. The first United States diplomat in the Far East who had been trained in the field, Parker could speak and

²⁰McLane Correspondence, # 20 McLane to Marcy, November 19, 1854, 285, 290.

²¹Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 14 Marcy to McLane, February 26, 1855, 105-06.

read the Cantonese dialect. Above all else, Parker was pro-British and appeared the best qualified and most willing for the position.

Marcy instructed Parker to revise the Treaty of Whampoa so that an unrestricted state of commercial intercourse between the United States and China could be obtained. Similar to McLane's instructions, Parker was "to avail himself of any aid . . . and assist in any way which may be deemed proper, the efforts of France and Great Britain in their attempts to extend commercial privileges with China".²² However, in a subsequent dispatch, Marcy informed Parker "not to be controlled by English and French views".²³ Pierce's policy remained one of cooperating with the European powers for treaty revision. But he also continued his reservations on the joint use of force.

Parker left for his new post on October 10th. The day before he embarked a letter appeared in the New York Daily Times from Parker to William Sturgis and other merchants of Boston. In the letter, Parker expressed the hope that a new day of commercial expansion was dawning for American merchants in China:

Western diplomacy (i.e. of England, France, and the United States) is called to task itself to prevail on China to modify its ancient policy, so as to afford a government that shall meet the popular demand, and correspond to the progress of the nineteenth century. You may thus look forward to a termination, at no distant day, of the state of revolution and anarchy, and the inauguration of more extended social, commercial, political and friendly foreign intercourse with that empire, immense in extent of territory and population, and inexhaustible in commercial resources.²⁴

Upon his arrival at Hong Kong in late December 1855 Parker was

²²Ibid., # 2 Marcy to Parker, September 27, 1855, 126.

²³Ibid., # 3 Marcy to Parker, October 5, 1855, 131.

²⁴New York Daily Times, October 9, 1855.

warmly greeted by the British minister. They discussed their respective governments' attitudes towards China and Parker came away with the idea of formulating a combined naval expedition to the north of China to force the Emperor to renegotiate the treaties.²⁵ But Parker's attempts at working out a unified plan of action were thwarted from the beginning. The British and French were ill-prepared for such action as their forces were still concentrated in Europe where the Crimean War had just concluded. In addition, Pierce had followed up Perry's expedition by sending American naval units on another visit to Japan. In October, when Commander Armstrong returned from Japan, Parker had given up all hope of going north with a combined force.²⁶ The fact that Marcy failed to reprimand Parker's plans can probably be attributed to the administration's attention with negotiations over the Central American question.

While Parker's attempts at a joint expedition to the North failed to materialize, events at Canton were taking shape which led to further deterioration of the situation in China. On October 8th the Chinese raided a small craft, the Arrow, which belonged to the British. During the raid the British flag was hauled down. The British turned the incident into an excuse to press for treaty revision and armed action against the Chinese. Seizing control of the forts on the outside of the city, the British stormed Canton in late October.

In early November, Commander Armstrong stationed himself near the port of Canton in the event any attacks were attempted by the Chinese upon Americans. On November 15th the Chinese fired upon an American warship

²⁵Tong, 176-79.

²⁶³⁵ Cong., 2 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 22, pt. 2, Correspondence of the Late Commissioners in China [983] # 25 Parker to Marcy, October 6, 1856, 942-43. Hereafter cited as Parker Correspondence.

sailing from Macao to Canton. Calling the incident "a wanton and hostile attack . . . upon the flag of the United States", Armstrong ordered a boat from the San Jacinto to sound the river in the vicinity of the Chinese forts. The Chinese fired upon the boat killing one man. Armstrong responded by landing 160 officers and men who put the Chinese guns out of action. Late on the afternoon of the 17th Commander Armstrong, limiting the time for reply to 24 hours, demanded an explanation and satisfaction for the outrage committed upon the two "surveying parties". When Armstrong saw that the Chinese were repairing the forts on the morning of the 18th he resumed his attack with the forts surrendering on the 20th.²⁷

Parker wrote a glowing report of the Navy's performance in the whole engagement:

This is the first blow that has ever been struck by our navy in China--and it has been done in a manner calculated to secure for it an important prestige in the mind of this haughty Government. Our gallant officers and men have not forgotten the bearing of this first demonstration of our force upon the future.²⁸

Parker urged, and continued to do so, that American naval forces in China be increased. He argued that "the urgency is great that our force should be increased from home with as little delay as possible and that authority be granted to charter here temporarily such steamers as may be indispensable and available".²⁹

Civil disorder and outrages committed against foreigners continued at Canton, and on December 14th the foreign factories at Canton were

²⁷Parker Correspondence, # 31 Parker to Marcy, November 22, 1856, 1020.

²⁸Ibid., 1021.

²⁹Ibid.

completely destroyed by fire.³⁰ This led Parker to advocate a "firm, forcible, and determined policy" entailing the forceful intervention by the Treaty powers. Parker believed this course could be implemented by the French taking Korea, the British seizing Chusan, and the United States claiming Formosa. These territories would be held until the Chinese satisfied the treaty wishes of the three powers. Parker argued for an increased American naval presence "not less efficient and imposing than the Japan Expedition" which would bring peace and prosperity to China. While he called this a "last resort", he believed it more "legitimate, effectual, and humane" and far "preferable to the destruction of forts, the bombardment of cities and the destruction of life and property".³¹

Parker's advocacy of a new policy was based on his plans of the spring and summer. But his desire to seize Formosa grew out of a report from the American consul at Amoy who reported the island possessed a good supply of coal.³² In the early months of 1857 Parker further developed his ideas on seizing Formosa. He viewed the island as a strategic point that would serve as a base from which the United States could expand its commerce with Asia.

Enterprising American businessmen also exhibited interest in the island. Gideon Nye, an American adventurer in Asia, submitted a report to Parker in February 1857 on the importance of Formosa. In the letter Nye expressed the hope that the island would be settled in the interest of "humanity and commerce":

³⁰Tong, 189-92.

³¹Parker Correspondence, # 34 Parker to Marcy, December 12, 1856, 1083.

³²Ibid., # 27 Parker to Marcy, October 7, 1856, 965-67.

Formosa's eastern shore and southern point [is] in the direct route of commerce between China and California and Japan, and between Shanghai and Canton, [and] should be protected by the United States of America; and I will willingly assist in its colonization if I receive the assurances of the Government of the United States that I shall therein be recognized and protected.³³

Parker reiterated such thinking in arguing that the British could not object to American seizure of Formosa:

Great Britain has her St. Helena in the Atlantic, her Gibraltar and Malta in the Mediterranean, her Aden in the Red Sea, Ceylon, Maurities, Penang and Singapore in the Indian Ocean, and Hong Kong in the China Sea. If the United States is so disposed and can arrange for the possession of Formosa, England certainly cannot object.³⁴

But the problem of implementing such a policy continued to be the lack of an American naval presence in Asian waters. Both Parker and Armstrong agreed it would be impracticable with the present force to execute a plan in regard to Formosa if the Chinese decided to retaliate in the treaty ports against Americans.³⁵

Coinciding with Parker's growing interest in Formosa, his account of Armstrong's action at Canton reached Washington in February 1857. The lame-duck Pierce administration quickly responded. Marcy wrote that the President regretted the lack of "caution" and "forbearance" exhibited on Armstrong's part. Marcy counselled:

The British Government evidently have objects beyond those contemplated by the United States and we ought not to be drawn along with it however anxious it may be for our cooperation.³⁶

A week before Pierce left office, Parker's dispatch calling for the

³³Ibid., Parker to the Secretary of State, February 12, 1857, 1204.

³⁴Ibid., # 6 Parker to the Secretary of State, March 10, 1857, 1208.

³⁵Ibid., # 36 Parker to Marcy, December 27, 1856, 1087.

³⁶Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 9 Marcy to Parker, February 2, 1857, 147.

"last resort" policy reached Washington. In more stringent terms than ever, Secretary of State Marcy expressed the belief that Sino-American relations were not yet at the breaking point. He concluded:

even if they [were] the military or naval forces of the United States could only be used by the authority of Congress. The "last resort" means war; and the Executive branch of this Government is not the war-making power For the protection and security of Americans in China, and the protection of their property it may be expedient to increase our naval forces on the China station, but the President will not do it for aggressive purposes.³⁷

James Buchanan continued Pierce's policy towards China. However, he was more explicit in defining what course American Commissioners were to follow. Rejecting Parker's plan of collaboration with the British and French, Buchanan moved quickly to replace him. While some speculated that the post would go to Commodore Perry, the President appointed William Reed of Philadelphia.³⁸

In May 1857 Secretary of State Lewis Cass instructed Reed to "communicate frankly with the British and French Ministers upon all points of common interests". However, this "peaceful cooperation" did not include the sanction of armed cooperation with the European powers. Cass informed Reed that if efforts at treaty revision failed, the President would determine the policy to be adopted. Describing commerce as "the most powerful means of civilization and national improvement", Cass reiterated the themes of Pierce's policy:

By coming into peaceful contact with men of other regions and other races with different habits and greater knowledge, the

³⁷Ibid., # 10 Marcy to Parker, February 27, 1857, 152-53.

³⁸Samuel Eliot Morison, "Old Bruin": Commodore Matthew C. Perry 1794-1858 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967). Morison points out in his biography of Commodore Perry that Reed was appointed "to succeed the ineffective McLane." However, Professor Morison overlooks the fact that Peter Parker was the man replaced and not McLane.

jealous system of seclusion which has so long separated China from the rest of the world, will gradually give way, and with increased intercourse will come those meliorations in the moral and physical condition of its people which the Christian and the philanthropist have so long and so ardently desired.³⁹

Reed, in a letter to Cass, expressed his opinion on what course the United States should follow in China. Arguing that Parker's plans were a breach of the constitutional separation of powers, Reed urged the United States to assume the role of mediator between the European powers and China. He favored friendly cooperation between the United States and Russia because of the "peculiar geographical relation of the United States and Russia to the Chinese Empire".⁴⁰

Before Reed left for his post he made a speech on his hopes for the future of Sino-American relations. Reed outlined what he believed to be America's future in the Pacific:

no civilized nation has more direct and important relations to China than the United States Across the waters of the Pacific ocean, in the extreme northeast, is a growing commerce of vast amount, or the beginning of it, with the Russia ports and great rivers, and in the south, from Australia and China, come to us the familiar sounds of the English language . . . the true course of the world's commerce from the East must be across the Pacific--narrowing every day by the power of steam, and over our own territory.⁴¹

Reed left the United States in June and arrived at Hong Kong in early November. He found affairs in the same degenerated condition they had been in for months. In addition, the British minister gave him a cool reception. The British and French minister's had expected Reed to be endowed with

³⁹Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 2 Cass to Reed, May 30, 1857, 161-62.

⁴⁰National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Dispatches from U.S. Ministers to China, Roll 16, Reed to Cass, May 16, 1857.

⁴¹Washington Union, June 24, 1857.

powers encompassing armed cooperation. Disappointed with Reed's instructions, they nevertheless continued their plans to attack Canton. Reed informed the State Department that the United States should not become involved in such an "unworthy quarrel".⁴²

On December 15th the British and French began their attack on Canton. After several weeks of brutal fighting by both sides, the city fell on January 6th. But its capture did nothing to change the minds of the Chinese in regards to treaty revision. The Chinese refusal to negotiate led Reed to argue that

a new policy towards China ought to be and . . . will be initiated and that the powers of Western Civilization must insist on what they know to be their rights and give up the dream of dealing with China as a power to which any ordinary rules apply.⁴³

In regards to American claims against the Chinese, Reed proposed that naval units blockade "some or all the ports of China". Such action did not violate neutral rights as the precedent of not declaring war and establishing a blockade had been set by the British and French in their actions at Canton.⁴⁴ Referring to the President's annual message to Congress, Reed stated:

I hope the Government will permit me without entanglement with others to vigorously assert our own rights . . . with regard to this Empire, he uses the emphatic and most appropriate language "that China cannot be permitted to withhold the just concessions which the nations of the world have a right to expect" . . . the power to exercise coercion, far short of war, which is the only intelligible appeal to such a people as this, I do most earnestly

⁴²36 Cong., 1 Sess., S. Ex. Doc. No. 30 Correspondence of the Late Commissioners in China [1032] # 35 Reed to Cass, November 25, 1857, 19. Hereafter cited as Reed-Ward Correspondence.

⁴³Reed-Ward Correspondence, # 3 Reed to Cass, January 14, 1858, 87-88.

⁴⁴Ibid., # 7 Reed to Cass, February 1, 1858, 104.

asked to be invested with.⁴⁵

In an undated private reply to Reed's proposal, Cass stated there was "little probability that such a proposition would be favorably received by Congress". Cass described the administration's difficulty in obtaining Congressional approval of using force against Paraguay as illustrating "the temper of Congress". Moreover, he expressed the administration's difficulty in gaining Congressional support of foreign policy:

I have made every possible enquiry and became satisfied that if the effort were made to procure the assent of Congress, for the employment of force, it would fail and then our position would be worse than ever. When the events of the season are over (meaning the summer months) and the results known, then if the Chinese Government persists in its course of injustice towards us, this question will be met and determined.⁴⁶

Cass also instructed Reed to check into the possibility of obtaining a lease for an island near Canton which had "excellent anchorage".⁴⁷ But upon receiving this request, Reed expressed doubt as to the wisdom of acquiring "property of this kind in the East". Moreover, he viewed the

⁴⁵Ibid., # 9 Reed to Cass, February 13, 1858, 127.

⁴⁶Diplomatic Instructions, China, Private Cass to Reed, undated, 186. At this time Congress was in heated debate over whether to give the President authority to send an armed expedition against Paraguay, who had insulted the American flag and refused to accept a treaty of amity and commerce--three years before. It was felt that if the resolution was passed it would give the President the power to make war at his discretion. The measure finally passed both Houses, but not until three months of debate had taken place. The final vote was largely on sectional lines. The expedition was outfitted in the summer of 1858 and left for Paraguay in October. It consisted of 19 vessels, carrying 200 guns, and 2,500 men. It arrived in late January 1859 and cordial relations were established without resorting to hostilities. For Congressional debates see Congressional Globe, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., pt. 1, 624, 1704, 1727, 1782, 1929, 1946, 1961, 1963, 1999, 2525, 2546, 2578, 2591; also 36 Cong., 1 Sess., S. Ex. Doc., No. 2, Report of the Secretary of the Navy [1025] 1137-38. For a partial account of the expedition see P. M. Ynsfran, "Sam Ward's Bargain with President Lopez of Paraguay", Hispanic American Historical Review 34 (1954) 313-331.

⁴⁷Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 12, Cass to Reed, June 25, 1858, 183.

future course of American commerce as being tied closely to the opening of the Yangtze River. He believed the island should be "at or near the mouth of the great central river of China . . . the seat of commerce", if at all.⁴⁸

The continuance of the Chinese refusal to negotiate with the Treaty powers led Reed to agree to meet with the British and French ministers to decide what course to follow. The British, French, American and Russian ministers met on February 6th and decided that a joint expedition should sail north and attempt to resume negotiations. Reed later described this policy as one of "combined moderation and firmness".⁴⁹

After several months of preparation the ministers sailed for the mouth of the Peiho in April. In writing of the expedition, Reed stated that he would support the British and French "thoroughly and completely" if their actions were peaceful. But in the event hostilities occurred he would remove himself and maintain American neutrality. Reed expressed the hope that hostile action would not be necessary "in extending the area of Christian civilisation and multiplying those commercial ties which are destined to bind the East and West together in the bonds of mutual advantage".⁵⁰

The British reached the Peiho on April 15th with their fleet. They were soon followed by the Russians, Americans, and French. The naval force consisted of over thirty Western warships. On April 28th, 29th, and May 1st, the British attempted to take the Taku forts which guarded the mouth of the

⁴⁸Reed-Ward Correspondence, # 32 Reed to Cass, September 15, 1858, 436-37.

⁴⁹Ibid., # 11 Reed to Cass, April 3, 1858, 224.

⁵⁰Ibid., 220-24.

river but they were unsuccessful. Awaiting reinforcements the British permitted Reed to negotiate with the Chinese. Between May 3rd and the 19th Reed held three meetings with the Chinese with agreement being reached on many of the American demands. However, on the morning of the 20th the reinforced British began their bombardment of the forts once again. This time their efforts were successful and the ministers proceeded to Tientsin encountering little resistance. Tientsin fell by the end of the month and negotiations followed between the Chinese and the Western powers. On June 18th Reed signed the Treaty of Tientsin.⁵¹

The more important points of the treaty consisted of an increase in coastal and interior trading ports. The treaty also provided that direct correspondence be established between the Chinese court and Western envoys. In addition, the treaty forced the Chinese to recognize the "most-favored nation" clause. Moreover, the treaties signed at Tientsin in June 1858 opened the Chinese Empire to the outside world. President Buchanan in describing the negotiations of the treaty reiterated the theme of commercial expansion:

Our recent treaties with China [and Japan] will open these rich and populous Empires to our commerce; and the history of the world proves that the nation which has gained possession of the trade with eastern Asia has always become wealthy and powerful. The peculiar geographical position of California and our Pacific possessions invites American capital and enterprise into this fruitful field.⁵²

During the fall Reed and the European powers negotiated tariff revision and claims with the Chinese at Shanghai. As these negotiations concluded in early November, Reed expressed his belief that American interests were further advanced by the British:

⁵¹Tong, 223-27.

⁵²Richardson, V, 527.

I am more and more impressed every hour, by the identity or rather community of the commercial interests of the West, and that nothing is more likely to defeat the true aims of American statesmanship here than a distempered jealousy of English or French progress seeing as I do in the ports and markets of China wherever English enterprise goes ours is quickly alongside it--that every dollar Great Britain spends on its postal service or in maintaining its naval force is for our benefit.⁵³

He soon left for Hong Kong and a month later sailed for the United States. His initial anti-British tone had been replaced with one of "combined moderation". In cooperating with the British and following in their footsteps, Reed had successfully negotiated a new trade treaty. Moreover, he pursued such a course because the enlargement of commercial opportunity in China was a common concern to Western powers.

John E. Ward was named Reed's successor in January 1859. A southerner by birth and educated in the north, Ward had compiled a brilliant record of public service. Active in the Democratic party, he presided over the party's convention in 1856.⁵⁴ Ward's primary mission was to exchange the ratified treaty at Peking. He arrived at Shanghai in June as the Treaty powers prepared to go to Peking for exchange of the treaties.

Upon reaching the mouth of the Peiho River, the Western powers discovered barriers blocking its entrance and the Chinese had again erected forts. After several days of bad weather and consultation, the British began to attack the forts. However, the Chinese had better fortified them than the year before and the British began to suffer heavy losses.⁵⁵ Ward and Commodore Tattnall debated what course they should follow. With Ward's

⁵³Reed-Ward Correspondence, # 36 Reed to Cass, November 9, 1858, 495.

⁵⁴Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 1 Cass to Ward, January 18, 1859, 193-96.

⁵⁵Reed-Ward Correspondence, # 15 Ward to Cass, July 4, 1859, 585-89.

approval Tattnall threw diplomacy overboard. He sailed into the thick of battle looking for his English counterpart; Americans helped the English in loading guns; and Tattnall towed a flotilla of launches containing a storming party of 500 men into place, exclaiming "blood is thicker than water".

However, these efforts did not save the British and they withdrew to Shanghai. But the Chinese feared European reprisals and thus the Emperor assumed a conciliatory tone.⁵⁶ Ward, who had remained at the Peiho took advantage of these fears and proceeded to Peking. On July 28th he exchanged the treaty and in August he returned to Shanghai.⁵⁷

Upon his return he faced increasing British dominance of Canton and Shanghai. Coinciding with this development, Ward received a dispatch from Cass instructing him to "frustrate" any design on the part of the British to monopolize the site of the foreign factories in Canton. Buchanan's policy was one of cooperating with the British to gain trade concessions from China while also challenging them for the China trade. In addition, Ward was determined to thwart British dominance of the Inspectorate system established at Shanghai after the Triad Rebellion in 1853. These differences were quickly settled.⁵⁸

As the British and French prepared to resume military operations in the spring of 1860, Ward received instructions from Cass to accompany them on their operation "as your presence may be useful towards asserting the rights of your countrymen". Cass stressed, "Your position is a delicate

⁵⁶Tong, 265-67

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 6 Cass to Ward, May 5, 1859, 205-06; Tong, 275-79.

one, and will require the exercise of your best discretion."⁵⁹

In the spring the British and French headed north to force their way to Peking and Ward followed in July. Believing hostilities and Chinese defeat inevitable, Ward removed himself from the scene calling British policy "a triumph of arms and not of diplomacy". Moreover, Ward expressed concern that the new hostilities pursued by the British and French would only disrupt trade and commerce. Undaunted, they fought their way past the forts on the Peiho, seized Tientsin and burned the summer palace of the Emperor. In October a truce was arranged and the British proceeded to dictate terms for a new treaty. But Ward did not believe the Chinese would observe it.⁶⁰ Ward's concern with China was quickly replaced by political happenings in the United States and in December 1860 he left China.

* * * *

China had long been a focal point of American economic expansion but not until the 1850's did American policy begin to take definite shape. Drawing upon the geographic advantages and political initiatives secured by the Mexican War and Perry's expedition to Japan, Pierce and Buchanan established a course of cooperation with the British in opening China to trade. American envoys were consistently provided with instructions stressing the need for "cordial cooperation and conference" with the British. But while realizing their mutual commercial interests, the United States remained the chief rival to Great Britain for the China trade.

⁵⁹Diplomatic Instructions, China, # 14 Cass to Ward, February 23, 1860, 222.

⁶⁰Tong, 280-81.

Moreover, the United States held a dominant position along the West coast of North America from which to launch future efforts at securing a share of the China trade. However, sectional tensions remained unsettled and so did the western half of the American continent. In addition, the lack of transportation and communication lines and the growth and surplus of industry retarded a more vigorous American policy in the Pacific. Pierce and Buchanan understood these barriers and limitations and awaited the "natural" course of history to fulfill America's destiny. Their efforts and policies served as a basis from which the next generation would thrust the American Empire into the Pacific.

CONCLUSION

During the 1850's the United States formulated and pursued a vigorous foreign policy towards Central America and China. American governmental and business interest in control of the Central American transit routes and the general economic opportunities of the Caribbean resulted in a continuation of the "manifest destiny" of Polk's administration. This policy had created tensions with Great Britain which the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty failed to resolve. The continuing presence and restraining influence of Great Britain required caution in undertaking diplomatic moves. Reacting to the British presence, Pierce formulated a careful but vigorous policy of expanding American influence. But filibustering activities, growing unrest in Central America, and domestic pressures for slave expansion continually kept Pierce off balance in formulating policy. Buchanan continued this thrust outward but was hindered by the same domestic and hemispheric problems as his predecessor. However, a changing British perception of their role in Central America aided Buchanan's policy. This partial retreat by the British facilitated a final settlement of the Central American question. But internal divisions prevented the United States from securing further advantages.

In contrast with the Anglo-American differences in Central America, China represented a common interest to the two Western nations. Continuing Chinese aloofness in dealing with Western powers and internal disorders resulted in moves to further open China to commerce. In addition, the Mexican Cession provided the United States a base from which to enlarge

trade with China. But the insufficient American naval presence in Asian waters produced an identification of American commercial interests with those of Great Britain. A further limitation of American policy in the Pacific was that the United States had yet to settle and exhaust its western frontier and markets. Paradoxically, while the United States and Great Britain shared the common goal of opening the China market to western economic interests, each remained the other's major rival for predominance within that market.

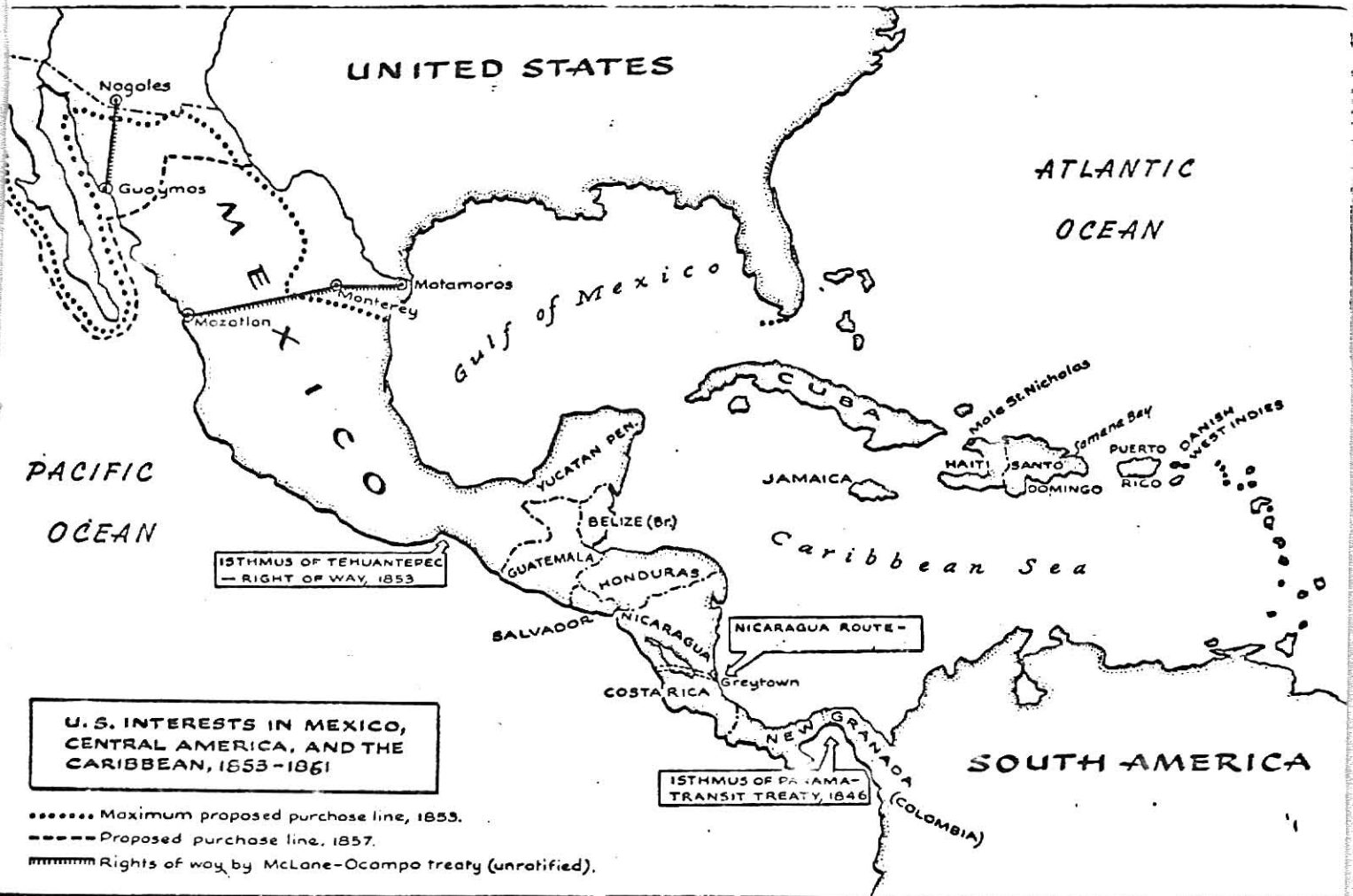
Influenced by its past and reacting to a belief in its future, the United States followed a course of commercial expansion in Central America and China. An analysis of these factors in the decade before the Civil War results in a clearer understanding of what came afterwards. The next generation inherited and expanded these dreams. In other words, American expansion in the late nineteenth century was a realization of the dreams and motives of the 1850's.

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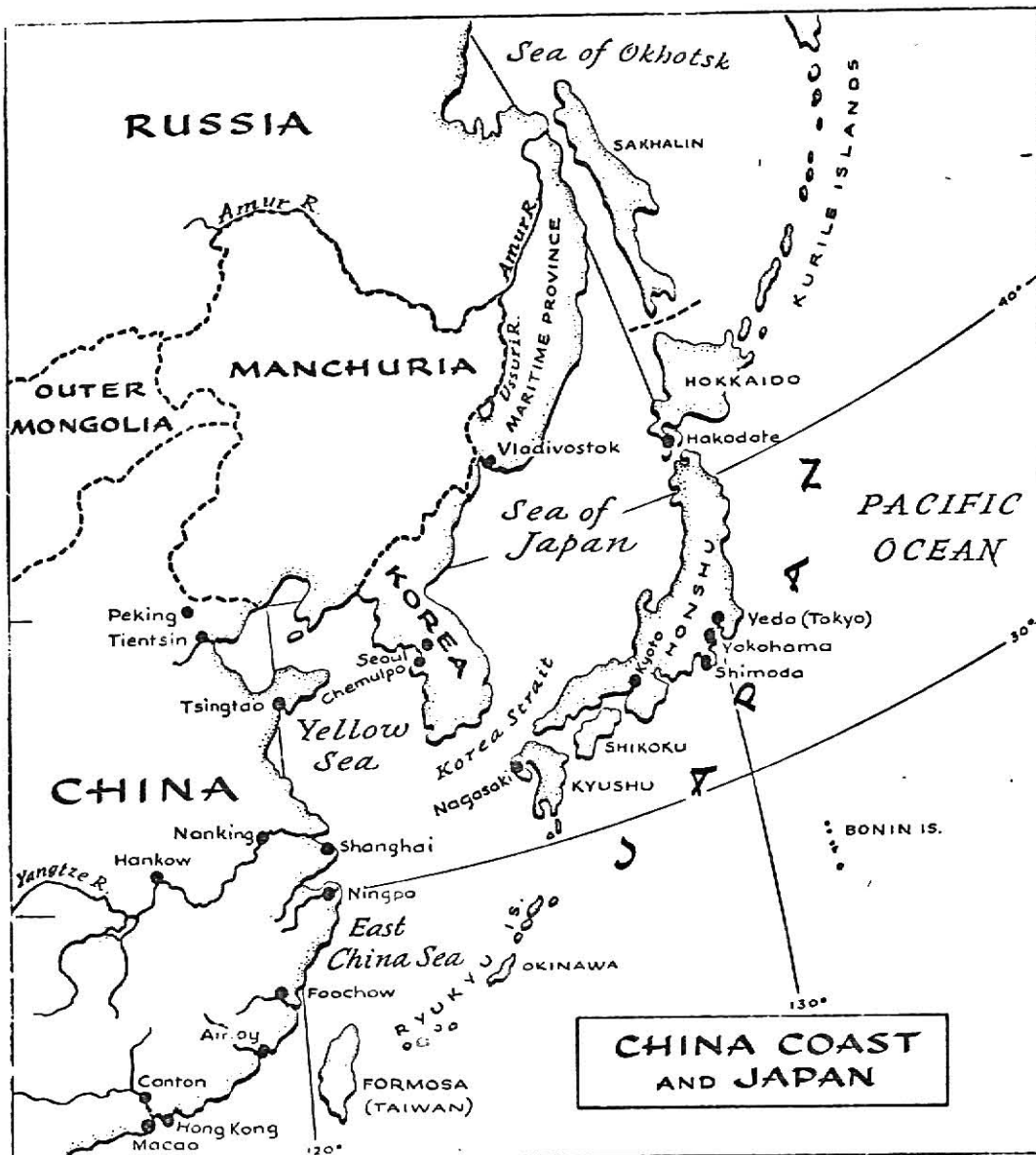
APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C



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THE MOTIVES OF AMERICAN EXPANSION IN THE 1850's:
CENTRAL AMERICA AND CHINA AS CASE STUDIES

by

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ABSTRACT

Central America and China were chosen by the author as case studies of American foreign policy in the 1850's because they have been traditional points of American interest. Moreover, the "manifest destiny" of the 1840's and the emergence of the United States as a world power at the turn of the century have too long been treated as separate and distinct incidents of American expansion. The following thesis is an attempt to show that many of the motives of the Pierce and Buchanan years drew upon the expansionistic philosophy which resulted from the Mexican War. Furthermore, these motives provide a link with the expansionists of the 1890's.

American governmental and business interest in control of the Central American transit routes and the general economic opportunities offered in the Caribbean resulted in a continuation of the "manifest destiny" of Polk's administration. Such a policy created tensions with Great Britain, and the subsequent Clayton-Bulwer Treaty failed to solve this problem. The continuing presence and restraining influence of Great Britain required caution in undertaking diplomatic moves. Reacting to the British presence, Pierce formulated a careful but vigorous policy of expanding American influence. But filibustering activities, growing unrest in Central America, and domestic pressures for slave expansion continually kept Pierce off balance in formulating policy. Buchanan continued this thrust outward but was hindered by the same domestic and hemispheric problems as was Pierce. However, a changing British perception of their role in Central America aided Buchanan's policy. This partial retreat by the British provided ground for final settlement of

the Central American question. But internal divisions within the United States prevented it from securing further advantages.

Contrasting the Anglo-American differences in Central America, China represented a common interest to Western nations. Continuing Chinese aloofness in dealing with the Western powers and internal disorders resulted in moves to further open China to commerce. In addition, the Mexican Cession provided the United States a base from which to enlarge trade with China. But the lack of and difficulty in maintaining a sufficient American naval presence in Asian waters produced an identification of American commercial interests with those of Great Britain. A further limitation of American policy in the Pacific was the fact that the United States had yet to settle and exhaust its western frontier and markets. Paradoxically, the United States remained the chief rival of Great Britain for the China trade.

Influenced by its past and reacting to a belief in its future, the United States followed a course of commercial expansion in Central America and China. An analysis of these factors in the decade before the Civil War results in a clearer understanding of what came afterwards. The next generation inherited and expanded these dreams. In other words, American expansion in the late nineteenth century was a realization of the dreams and motives of the 1850's.