John Quincy Adams and the Treaty of Ghent

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JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AND THE TREATY OF GHENT

by

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JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AND THE TREATY OF GHENT
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CHAPTER I: A TIME OF TRAINING
"The weight of the trust committed, though but in part, to me, the difficulties, to all human appearance insuperable, which forbid the hope of success, the universal gloom of the prospect before me, would depress a mind of more sanguine complexion than mine."

Thus wrote the capable and confident John Quincy Adams on the 28th of April, 1814, as he prepared to depart from the capital city of Russia, St. Petersburg. Adams, who had served the United States since 1809 as Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of His Imperial Majesty Alexander, Czar and Autocrat of all the Russias, was bound for Gothenburg, Sweden. There he expected to enter into peace negotiations for the termination of the still-raging War of 1812 between his country and its mother, Great Britain. But negotiations would ultimately be transferred to the town of Ghent, in Dutch Flanders, then garrisoned by red-coated troops of the British armed forces. Wherever Adams's journey ended, he was sure to face the sternest task of his diplomatic career, and it would require all his knowledge and ability to emerge unscathed and successful. "The welfare of my family and country, with the interests of humanity, are staked upon the event," he concluded. And off he went, a noble personality, confident and optimistic, to

2. Ibid.
retrieve America from the misfortunes of war.

John Quincy Adams, forty-seven year old son of ex-President John Adams, had in his lifetime spanned the founding and building of the American nation. As a boy he had listened and watched at the battle of Bunker Hill, when the nation founded in part by his father began its struggle for recognition. By the time the Revolution was over, and John Adams was negotiating the Treaty of Peace, in 1783, the boy, John Quincy, had already experienced two extended stays in Europe. As a precocious fourteen year old, he accompanied Francis Dana to St. Petersburg—a city to which he would return twenty-seven years later—to serve as private secretary to Dana, the American Minister. The young Adams was quick to earn the friendships of influential men of law and letters like Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Jay. He studied and read vociferously, and in 1786 returned home to enter Harvard. After his graduation in high standing a year and a half later, he studied law, and opened a practice in Newburyport, Massachusetts, in 1789.

Politically alive and partisan, John Quincy Adams made effective use of a publishing device of the day, a Latin pseudonym, to pen political pamphlets supporting the policies of the American

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President. George Washington responded by appointing the twenty-six year old Adams Minister Resident to the Netherlands. On his way to the Hague, Adams was permitted in London to review, study and pass judgment on Jay's Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, thereby absorbing effective knowledge of his country's policies. Moreover, the young diplomat is purported to have contributed the basic ideas that found expression in Washington's Farewell Address.

Washington sent Adams on a futile trip to London in 1795, where the rising diplomatist engaged in verbal parries with English dignitaries. Still he was promoted, in 1796, to Minister Plenipotentiary to Portugal. Hardly had he completed preparations to journey to Lisbon when his father, John Adams, the new President, transferred the appointment to Prussia. There the young Adams negotiated a neutral-rights treaty with expert diplomatic aplomb. Whether he was instrumental in determining American foreign policy toward France is problematical. In any case, he was ordered home from Berlin by his father after the latter's Presidential defeat in the turn-of-the-century elections.

The energetic John Quincy Adams wasted no time before entering the domestic political scene. He served a term as state senator, 1792-1803, and after an election defeat in a race for a national House of Representatives seat, became, at thirty-five, a Federalist senator from Massachusetts. Here his dream of a continental union compelled him to compromise his constitutional

4. Ibid., 63-64.
5. Ibid., 100.
scruples and support the purchase of Louisiana. Senatorial duties kept him active, but whether he was the legitimate progenitor of the American System is probably debatable.

Scion of a patriot family and mindful of his nation's political and commercial integrity, John Quincy Adams began to support Republican President Thomas Jefferson's nationalistic stand against invasions of neutral rights by Great Britain. He opposed the moribund High Federalists of his native state who would permit British meddling with the United States economy before sacrificing their own interests.

Adams was unsuited by temperament and character to adhere to the strict dictates of any one party, and on foreign policy, the principal issue of the time, he followed the path blazed by the administration. In domestic affairs, too, he divided his support between the two opposing factions. The climax of Adams's political independence came when he voted for the President's Embargo Bill as a temporary expedient. Nothing could have served to provoke his New England colleagues more, and they demonstrated their resentment of his vacillation by prematurely electing Adams's Senate successor. Adams took the hint and resigned his post, planning to "retire," at forty, to a Harvard professorship. But the new President, James Madison, had other ideas. He offered, and Adams accepted, the post of Minister Plenipotentiary to Russia. In the space of a few short years, the uncompromising national and patriotic stand of John

6. Ibid., 127.
Quincy Adams on grave issues of foreign policy had placed him behind President Jefferson as an avowed supporter of the Republican administration, had turned the Essex Junto openly against him, resulting in his expulsion from the outraged Federalist Party of Massachusetts, and had reinstated him in the diplomatic service of the United States.

The new Minister and his entourage left Boston for St. Petersburg on August 5, 1809, and arrived in the Russian capital on October 23. In that distant outpost Adams became immediately involved in neutral rights questions prompted by Napoleon's Continental System, and in boundary and treaty arrangements concerning Russian North America, both of which were either concluded to the benefit of the United States or amicably postponed. But Minister Adams's main problems soon had to do with a more drastic problem of foreign policy—war. On June 22, 1812, Napoleon's Grande Armee rolled into Russia across the Niemen, and an atmosphere of militarism and secrecy descended on St. Petersburg. Just four days earlier, the United States had upheld its honor by declaring war upon one of the most powerful nations of the world, Great Britain. John Quincy Adams represented an attacking country in the capital of another under attack, and the combination of friends and foes could only pose some ticklish problems for the study of the urbane American Minister.

Forty-five years old in 1812, John Quincy Adams had lived

7. Ibid., 134.
through the two greatest liberating revolutions the world had yet experienced. He had served his country well in its diplomatic corps abroad, and in its national legislative chambers. His vigor and his profound honesty stood out prominently in the age of the nation's infancy. In his own time, Adams was described as "long... a publick man, and, for logical acuteness, and extent and accuracy of diplomatick knowledge, ... perhaps never surpassed by any statesman of any age."

Personally, Adams reflected his stout Puritan upbringing. Perfunctorily he kept early-to-bed and early-to-rise hours, and he disdained dinners and balls which disturbed them. He arose before dawn to perform his daily round of appointed tasks, among them the inveterate recording of lengthy diary entries. Lacking close friendships, he nevertheless was admired for his experience, intellect, force and courage. Adams needs a host of adjectives fully to describe his complex personality: "... all his peculiarities fully matured—a man of great ability, various knowledge, and large experience; of ardent patriotism, and high principles of honor and duty; brimful of courage, and a pugnacious spirit of contention; precise in his ways; stiff and cold in manners; tenacious of his opinions; irritable of temper; inclined to be suspicious, and harsh in his judgments of others, and, in the Puritan spirit, also severe with himself..." Adams was excessively opinionated, dogmatic,

9. Carl Schurz, Henry Clay (Boston, 1890), I. 102-103.
egocentric, cold, yet at the same time honest, conscientious, patriotic and determined. His independence made his career one of curious paradoxes. His character was as contradictory as his career. He was aloof and censorious in his relations with the world. Petty meannesses, malice towards associates, unctuous self-righteousness and constant imputation of the worst of motives clash with spotless probity, staunch patriotism and high statesmanship. The impersonal Adams was one of the most controversial characters to ever appear on the American scene.

John Quincy Adams had many personal faults and failings. But he was first and foremost a nationalistic American, almost to the point of jingoism. The visions he held for the country whose birth pangs he had witnessed were farflung and limitless. From the outset he had supported the Constitution which created a strong, central government. Nothing was more disturbing to Adams than the attempts of foreign powers to gain hegemony in North America. A political creed which governed his actions centered upon two principles—union at home, and independence of foreign alliances or entanglements. He defended the first and propagated the second through the Monroe Doctrine. Adams, like Jefferson, envisioned an American Union stretching

 uninterrupted between the oceans. "The whole continent of North America," he once wrote his father, "appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation." To his mother he was equally optimistic: "... a nation, coextensive with the North American continent, destined by God and nature to be the most populous and most powerful people ever combined under one social compact...." And to himself: "When I reflect upon the capabilities of that people and that territory, I have no curb to enthusiastic hope...." Adams, therefore, epitomizes the self-assured nationalist, the imperialist who conceived of a farflung republican empire that would enfold the continent within its borders. The complex constitution of John Quincy Adams, the anachronistic combination of his New England provincialism and American continentalism, would provide the British with a tenacious, vigorous, and unyielding opponent when they faced the Massachusetts Yankee across the conference table.

12. JQA to John Adams, St. Petersburg, August 31, 1811, in Worthington C. Ford, Writings of John Quincy Adams (New York, 1913-1917), IV, 209.
13. JQA to Abigail Adams, St. Petersburg, June 20, 1811, in Ibid., 128.
CHAPTER II: A TIME OF TENSION
"We behold, in fine, on the side of Great Britain, a state of war against the United States." So spoke President James Madison in June of 1812, in a message to the War Hawk Twelfth Congress advocating hostilities against the former Mother Country. Madison listed the charges on which the House and the Senate were to vote to take up arms in the redress of grievances against Great Britain.

The causes of war elucidated by the President did not spring up suddenly during the tenure of his administration. Nor were they merely holdovers from Jeffersonian days, from Federalist policies of the 1790’s, or from the diplomacy of the Confederation. Rather, they arose from the tangled imbroglio of European politics, and dated from Revolutionary times. They reflected the struggles for dominance among the nations of the Old World, the nationalistic tendencies of the fledgling democracy in the New, and the fears and aspirations of a league of Indian tribes. The President’s reasons for advocating war constitute a history of the failure of diplomacy. A nation which could neither afford nor survive a losing war risked its very existence in an endeavor to justify its policies by force of arms. Towards the end of the conflict, John Quincy Adams would come to grips with the same issues at Ghent.

First and foremost on Madison's list was impressment: "violating the American flag on the great highway of nations, and seizing and carrying off persons sailing under it." It has been argued that had Madison been able to allude, not to "thousands" of impressed Americans, but only to one, he would have had, then and there, his casus belli. Impressment, the most corrosive issue ever existing between Great Britain and the United States, was the forcible removal by the British of sailors from American ships, on the charge that they were deserters from the British Navy. Many of those found on American ships were Irishmen, and it is said that the inspecting British officer required the sailors, as they passed him, to pronounce the word "peas." The response "paiz" betrayed the Irishman, and resulted in his capture and transfer to the British ship. Yet many times the men carried off were citizens of the United States, guilty only of a ruddy complexion or an English accent. Impressment was a direct repudiation of American sovereignty, a threat to the liberty of American citizens, an affront to national pride, and an aggravating, persistent, divisive issue that sent anti-British emotions to the boiling point. It began on a small scale after the British Orders-in-Council in 1793, and was viewed as a basic right in the British interpretation of Jay's Treaty. Britain, whose

2. Ibid., 142.
strength as a world power lay in its supremacy on the seas, could ill-afford the weakening effect of large-scale desertions. No British ministry could hope to retain office if it surrendered the claim to take seamen found under a neutral flag, and no American President could long enjoy popular support if he surrendered to the British claim. Impressment brought about the provocative Chesapeake affair in June, 1807, which alone could have been used to justify a United States declaration of war. Its continuation throughout the Napoleonic Wars was a constant reminder to Americans that they were regarded with contempt by a nation which considered them inferior. In truth one of the principal causes for which war was justified, impressment became the sole cause for which it was continued. Twenty years of diplomacy, conducted under twelve distinct negotiations, and carried on, at times, by the most broadminded statesmen of America and England, failed to bring about a satisfactory adjustment of this vexing question.

Impressment was a highly emotional source of conflict. But by far the most profound issue separating the United States and the European powers hinged on the question of neutral rights. This problem had also engaged the best efforts of American diplomacy since the outbreak of the Wars in the 1790's, and no solution with Great Britain, except to submit or to fight, could be found. The United States had emerged as a nation in 1783 with a full set of principles. As a weak sea power, but realizing that an import-export-commerce economy was

5. Frank A. Updyke, The Diplomacy of the War of 1812 (Baltimore, 1915), 60.
necessary, it put full emphasis on the so-called "rights" of the small naval powers. These "neutral rights," controversial even in international law, reflect a desire to trade in war as well as in peace. Based on the presumption that during a war most goods may be carried by neutral ships, Americans held narrow definitions of "blockade" and "contraband," and the doctrine that "free ships make free goods" (except contraband).

Any United States' hope to steer clear of the European conflict had been dashed early by the desire of the American economic world to carry on business as usual. British Orders-in-Council in 1793-1794 had made it clear that enemy property would be taken anywhere, even from neutral ships on the high seas. These executive orders were the first of a long series which would restrict and almost extinguish American commerce. To avert indignant Congressional action which might lead to war, Chief Justice John Jay was sent to London in April, 1794, to seek, among other things, indemnification for confiscated American vessels and goods. "Let these be the general objects," read Jay's instructions in part. "Free ships to make free goods. Proper security for the safety of neutral commerce in other respects; and particularly, by declaring provisions never to be contraband, except in the strongest possible case, as the blockade of a port; or, if attainable, by abolishing contraband altogether: (and)

6. In the absence of tribunals for arbitration or adjudication, international law became simply a matter of expediency. Usually, international law was what the strongest power said it was. In any case, it was a question open to various interpretations.
by defining a blockade. Free exports of arms and military stores.

In an unpopular treaty, Jay had yielded to Great Britain's shipping interests and, to gain agreements on other fronts, had conceded the United States neutralist principles he had been sent to uphold. The United States had allowed the taking of enemy goods from neutral ships, acquiesced in the British Rule of 1756 (trade which is closed in peacetime is closed in wartime), and given way on other maritime questions. The treaty did prevent war at the time, postponing it for eighteen years.

Even under British rules, American commerce thrived during the Peace of Amiens and for a few years after the outbreak of new hostilities in Europe. War meant increased trade, exports, and profits. To get around the Rule of 1756, American shippers put into effect the "breaking trade route" between the West Indies, America and France. Britain, angered by this war in disguise, invoked the doctrine of "Continuous voyage" in the Essex decision and declared American goods to be wartime materials. Strict British interpretations of seizure, blockade, and contraband were renewed to hamper neutral maritime commerce. In response, President Jefferson decided

8. American shippers were not allowed to trade directly between the West Indies and France, according to the British. To obtain this forbidden trade, United States bottoms brought goods from the Indies first to East coast ports. Then, after unloading and reloading, or a simple change of papers, the goods were dubbed "American" and carried to the Continent.
on a non-importation act in 1806, and sent Republican James Monroe and Federalist William Pinkney to London to negotiate a new treaty defining neutral rights. "The plan of a convention contemplated by the President is limited to the cases of impressments of our seamen, of blockades, of visiting and searching our vessels, of contraband of war, and of the trade with hostile colonies, with a few other cases affecting our maritime rights." In negotiations, the British granted some concessions on the broken-voyage principle, and privately agreed to halt the most outrageous impressments, but Jefferson refused to send the treaty with these provisions to the Senate. Monroe had violated his instructions; he was not to sign a treaty that omitted an article specifically disavowing impressment, and Jefferson would settle for no less. Perhaps if the President had accepted this Monroe-Pinkney Pact, containing as it did maritime provisions that were far more palatable to the United States than those of Jay's Treaty, which it was to replace, there would have been no war in 1812.

A new crisis for neutral powers occurred in 1807. The European conflict was at a stalemate—Britain supreme on the sea, and France on the land. Napoleon decided to attempt a conclusion to the war by non-military methods. His Berlin Decree (November 21, 1806) was a self-denying ordinance designed to crush Britain by closing the continent to British exports. The British retaliated with Orders-in-Council (January 7 and November 11, 1807) blockading France to neutral

vessels under threat of capture as lawful prize cargo, and subjecting neutral trade with France to British controls, licenses and tolls. Napoleon's Milan Decree (December 17, 1807) countered by declaring that all ships that had submitted to English rules were denationalized, and subject to seizure by France. The neutrals were left in a precarious position—forced to submit to the payment of high English taxes or be open to exaction by France, or both. President Jefferson was faced with what seemed to be only two alternatives: submit or fight. He chose a third solution: economic coercion. He succeeded in adding to the newly-effective non-importation act against the European powers an Embargo Act (December 22, 1807). By impartially shutting off the commerce of the United States he hoped to revoke the actionable Decrees and Orders, stop impressment, and gain recognition of neutral rights. For a variety of reasons the Embargo failed. Prime among the causes of its defeat were the politically and economically devastating effects at home, and the grim British determination not to renounce impressment and seizure. A few days before Jefferson left office in 1809, Embargo was repealed for all countries except Great Britain and France, and the Non-Intercourse Act substituted. The purpose of this was to play one belligerent off against the other. President Madison thought it had worked when David Erskine, representing British Foreign Secretary George Canning in Washington, signed an agreement withdrawing the Orders-in-Council, and repealing the Non-Intercourse Act. However he failed to stipulate that the Rule of 1756 would be in effect, and that the British Navy would enforce
non-intercourse against France. Canning renounced the Erskine Agree-
ment, and Madison, who had let 600 vessels depart for England, had to
admit he was duped. Non-intercourse went back into effect against
France and Great Britain. At no time subsequent to this agreement,
rejected by Canning because it did not give Britain the right to
seize American ships violating non-intercourse with France, was the
American government willing to concede so much.

Macon's Bill No. 2 (May 1, 1810), was another attempt by the
United States to solve its pressing economic problems. It repealed
non-intercourse, but promised to reinstate it against either power if
the other would rescind its decrees. Napoleon saw his chance, and
through his Foreign Minister, the Duc de Cadore, sent a cleverly-
worded note to Madison, ambiguously stating that the Decrees of
Berlin and Milan were revoked. This was an outright lie, but Madison
was "hoodwinked" and reinstated the non-intercourse act against Great
Britain. The British were now in a complicated position. Eager to
remove American restrictive measures, aware that Napoleon was a
legerdemainist, hopeful of regaining their European market, and
fearful of impending economic collapse, they revoked the Orders-in-
Council on June 23, 1812, so far as they applied to American commerce.
Unbeknown to them, the American government had declared war against
Great Britain five days earlier, basing its decision in part on
Madison's charges of violating the rights and peace of our coasts,
hovering over and harassing our entering and departing commerce,
plundering our trade in every sea, and resorting to the sweeping
system of blockades.

The President's last provocation was one which had long
haunted frontiersmen: "The warfare just renewed by the savages, on
one of our extensive frontiers, a warfare which is known to spare
neither age nor sex, and to be distinguished by features peculiarly
shocking to humanity." Madison alleged British influence in the
area in the years since the Treaty of Peace of 1783. Article Seven
of that document had bound His Britannic Majesty to "withdraw all his
Armies, Garrisons & Fleets from the said United States." But the
British government had secretly ordered its troops to remain on
American soil south of the Great Lakes. The British had sought to
retain control over the fur trade, to maintain alliances with Indian
tribes who would serve as buffers, to prevent possible Indian attacks
on Canada, and to be in position to take over the Old Northwest
should the young United States falter. By 1786, Great Britain had
realized that the United States was not living up to the spirit of
Article Four, regarding the payment of debts to British creditors.
The British government had used this as an excuse to retain its troops
in the northwest posts until the United States had fulfilled its
obligations. This had still been the British position in 1791, when
Thomas Jefferson pointed out that the British garrisons were not yet

10. Quoted in "The War Message of President Madison," Bartlett, 142-
143.
11. Ibid., 143.
12. Quoted in "Treaty of Peace between the United States and Great
Britain: September 3, 1783," Bartlett, 39.
nor had ever yet been withdrawn, and the British officers had undertaken "to exercise a jurisdiction over the country and inhabitants in the vicinities of those forts," and were even "excluding the citizens of the United States from navigating, even on the side of the middle line of the rivers and lakes established as a boundary between the two nations." George Hammond, British Foreign Minister in Philadelphia, had presented a lengthy and detailed account of the British grievances, again refusing to execute Article Seven without American fulfillment of Article Four. The Jeffersonian reply to this was so complete in its analysis of the American position that Hammond had been at a loss for an answer. In 1794, told that British agents were "guilty of stirring up, and assisting with arms, ammunition, and warlike implements, the different tribes of Indians against us," John Jay had been sent to London to negotiate for the withdrawal of the troops and the restraint of the agents. This was the only immediate concession of any real value that Jay had won. His Majesty had agreed to "withdraw all His Troops and Garrisons from all Posts and Places within the Boundary Lines assigned by the Treaty of Peace to the United States." This time the troops did get out. But the agents remained. It was a time-honored dream of Britain to create a huge Indian nation of territory which is now the Old Northwest.

British agents, traders and officials remained to intrigue with the Indians from military posts across the river-and-lake frontier opposite to those evacuated in 1796. As affairs between the United States and Great Britain had become more and more embroiled over the question of neutral rights and impressment, British leaders in Canada, anticipating possible war, had developed more eagerly their contacts with Indian tribes in the northwest. By encouraging the Indian's natural opposition to the pioneers who deprived him of his land, Britain hoped to fix bounds beyond which American settlement and power should not expand. The Indian agents of the British were Tecumseh and his brother the Prophet, who by a system of alliances attempted to create a united front of all the tribes along the frontier. But while Tecumseh was off enlisting southern tribes for his confederacy in 1811, the Governor of Indiana Territory, William Henry Harrison, invaded his realm and wiped out his stronghold of Tippecanoe. This move excited the War Hawk party in Congress and the western frontiersmen, who, because of the belief that the British were supporting the Indian alliance, responded with a desire to march on to Canada. A fervid but diplomatically disallowed expansionist fever was rising in the West.

These then were Madison's main reasons—impressment, neutral rights, and Indian warfare—why the United States "committed a just

cause into the hands of the Almighty." A more powerful interpretation, unmentioned by the President, advanced causes other than the protection of national honor and neutral and maritime rights. The interpretation arises from the strongly sectional voting that passed the war resolutions in the House and Senate. In the House, New York, New Jersey and New England contributed only seventeen votes for war and thirty-five for peace, while the rest of the country added only fourteen for peace and sixty-two for war. The explanations for this sectional voting are several. They arise from the war spirit that emanated from the frontier. Although the term "Manifest Destiny" had not yet been coined, frontiersmen exhibited all the characteristics of those imbued with that desire. The West believed that the Indian problem could be solved only by ousting the British from North America, and was apprehensive of a general Indian uprising coupled with British connivance from Canada. Intrigues and filibustering expeditions revealed the imperialistic desire of the Southwest to conquer the Floridas from England's ally, Spain. Great reserves of agricultural lands would be opened by territorial expansion north and south. Henry Clay was the Congressional spokesman for militaristic desires and territorial extension; John Quincy Adams, a seemingly-removed New Englander, would justify the same tendencies at Ghent. Adams was as much an advocate of westward movement as any frontiersman.

Other factors contributing to war were Anglophobia, the

desire to end Spanish interference with the export trade of Mississippi and Alabama, the West's desire to improve its economic position by forcing the repeal of the British Orders-in-Council, and the competition between Americans and Canadians for the fur trade of the Northwest. In a great frontier span from Vermont to Georgia came highly nationalistic, patriotic, expansionist, bellicose "buckskin statesmen," men who hated Great Britain and advocated war. It was their zeal, desire for "elbow-room," and dominance in Congress that resulted in the passing of the declarations for immediate and unrestricted war. It may seem strange that the men who would suffer most, the maritime traders who preferred a commerce controlled by Great Britain to no commerce at all, were pushed into war by others who had no real interests to lose.

Such was the communications system at the time that the United States had no way of knowing that one day before the American declaration of war, Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh had ordered the Orders-in-Council suspended in favor of the United States, a fact which would, in Madison's opinion, have prevented war.

War was declared against Great Britain, but war against France was equally justifiable; Madison said the same at the end of his message. French confiscation and burning of American ships was increasing and the imprisonment of American sailors, the obnoxious

Decrees, the perfidious phraseology, spoliation claims and even impressment gave the United States just cause for hostile measures. Yet Britain was the natural foe, France the old ally. Britain was in Canada inciting the Indians, France far away in Europe. Britain's commerce provided an immediate battleground, France did not enter American waters to plunder and kill. A motion in the Senate to fight France failed, 18-14, and Great Britain became the sole foe.

Militarily, the war was poorly fought. The West found it could not take Canada by "mere marching," and indeed the British captured Forts Michilimackinac and Dearborn (Chicago) with ease, marching westward from Niagara to Detroit and forcing General Hull to surrender there. Mutiny and rebellion among the militia hampered any attempt at offensive action. The situation improved in 1813 when Captain Perry defeated the British in a fresh-water naval battle, and General Harrison recaptured Detroit. But the British took Niagara on the American side, easily defeated a plan to capture Montreal, and were mounting a force to invade the United States through New York. Another force prepared for invasion through New Orleans, and British raiders sailed with impunity up the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay to shell Washington and Fort McHenry. General Jackson's movements against the Indians in the South, the military insignificance of the East Coast operations, and Commodore MacDonough's victory at Lake Champlain ended the war on a happy note for Americans. But it was obvious that, were it not for Wellington's decision to deal with Napoleon in Europe, the British had the power to impose their will on
At the outbreak of the War of 1812, John Quincy Adams was serving as American Minister to Russia. It was not long before he received the first notices of peace maneuvers. Adams had played a prominent role in the affairs of the United States throughout the tangled decades of its involvement in European matters. His problem in forthcoming peace negotiations would be to resolve the long-standing difficulties that had as yet proved insoluble. Burdened, perhaps, with the liability of a losing war effort, yet enjoying an unusually sanguine frame of mind, Adams set out from Russia to confront the Anglo-American differences which had suddenly fallen in his diplomatic lap.
CHAPTER III: A TIME OF TESTING
The United States and Russia, two nations to rise to eventual world leadership, represented a curious contrast. The one was a New World republic based on an enlightened theory of the natural rights of man. The other was an Old World authoritarian regime headed by an absolute emperor. Their starting points were different, and their courses would not be the same, yet each seemed marked out by its limitless path of growth to sway the destinies of half the globe.

In 1812, the two struggling countries were already prominent in world affairs. Though Russia and France had been allies, the former switched sides and joined with Britain immediately after being attacked by the latter. Thus the United States, at war with Russia's ally, would seem to represent a hostile threat in St. Petersburg. Indeed, America detracted from England's main war effort, and its hasty action stifled the growing commercial relations between Russia and the United States. But instead of receiving cold and contemptuous treatment, only warmth and friendship had been accorded the American Minister to Russia, John Quincy Adams. Adams had long been assiduously cultivating the friendships of the youthful Czar Alexander, whom he often met while strolling along the banks of the Neva, and of the Czar's Chancellor, Count Rumiantsev. The Russian leaders were greatly interested in the establishment of a system which would lend security.

to the wartime commerce of nations. The Russians were anxious to build up a rival trading power to play off against Great Britain; the United States, due to its relative position, received their support and favor. "Our attachment to the United States," the Count once said, "is obstinate--more obstinate than you are aware of." Adams could not refuse an offer to insure the maritime freedom of his country, and relations between the diplomats were cordial and amicable.

In the United States when President James Madison pushed his country into war with Great Britain, he lost no time in trying honorably to end the hostilities. He precipitated the war on June 22, and eight days later he tried to precipitate the peace. Through his Secretary of State, James Monroe, Madison ordered London Charge D'Affaires Jonathan Russell to approach the British with a peace bargain. If Great Britain would renounce impressment as a national policy, the United States would try to prevent enlistment of British-born seamen in American ships. But in 1812 the British desperately needed sailors to fight a two-front war. Moreover, long-standing British views and support of the "ancient and accustomed" practice had not changed. Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh lost no time in rejecting the American offer. Later it became Great Britain's turn to propose an armistice, and Admiral John B. Warren pressed Monroe in

3. Ibid., 65.
4. Ibid., 180. Italics in the original.
Washington. However Britain would not abandon impressment, and the United States would not surrender its principles. Monroe rejected the offer. The forcible removal of nationals from foreign ships on the high seas—a principle abused but upheld by Great Britain and loathed by the United States—thus became the sole official reason for another two years of war, for the conquest of Canada had never been officially admitted as a war aim. In the end, ironically, impressment would not be dealt with by the peace conference.

Meanwhile in Russia in September, the Czarist government was seeking ways to end the Anglo-American conflict. Count Rumiantsev called on John Quincy Adams one evening and told him that the Emperor was concerned and disappointed because the new war would cut off American commercial benefits. It seemed to the Russian leader that reluctance to engage and prosecute the war was evident on both sides. The Czar was also anxious to prevent the departure of British troop strength to North America just when he and Napoleonic France were engulfed in the throes of internecine strife. The Czar was an enlightened despot who admired America’s (and harbored his own) liberal republican tendencies. Whatever the reason or combination of reasons, Rumiantsev broached the idea of a Russian mediation of Anglo-American difficulties to effect a speedy pacification.

The resolute Adams had had no indication of his government’s

5. Ibid., 401-402.
policy, but he knew that it was with divided opinions that America had engaged in the war. He himself lamented the appeal to arms, and decided that the United States would welcome a peaceful and hasty settlement of its differences with Great Britain. Adams told the Count that he saw no reason why the American government should refuse the offer. The Russians then sent official proposals of third-party mediation to Washington and London.

John Quincy Adams in Russia was an intense, hard-working man. But he could not ignore diplomatic protocol. While he was handling the probes of Russian officialdom, the social life of the Adams family in St. Petersburg was an endless round of balls, dinners, parties and Te Deums. John Quincy evinced his native curiosity, and took long walks to see the sights, visit places and meet people. On one occasion he viewed a dormitory arrangement where the manager told him that although marriages were encouraged, the boys and girls were kept carefully separated, and not a single accident had happened. Adams pondered on this, attributing it to climate, hard work, and "constitutional coldness." Another time he was introduced to the Slav Princess Woldemar Galitzin, "venerable by the length and thickness of her beard." Adams noted that of all the females he had ever seen, that one most resembled a Grecian philosopher.

On Christmas Eve of 1810, four years to the day before the Peace of Ghent would be signed, Adams attended a ball which he found

8. Ibid., 402-403.
9. Ibid., 113.
10. Ibid., 141.
"excessively tedious." Talking with the Emperor about it a few days later, he had to restrain himself, for fear of being uncourtly or uncourteous, from wishing aloud that it had been shorter. To his amazement, the Czar then voiced the same sentiments. The tact of a true diplomat was never far from the surface in John Quincy Adams.

A social amenity of the cold Russian capital which particularly annoyed Adams was the custom of leaving business cards. "A diplomatic visit paid in person," it required the caller to appear in full court dress, be seen by all the porters, and, even if the host were at home, merely to leave his card. The Minister found it "inconvenient and absurd... . There is so much punctilio in this usage that it admits of no substitute." But as always, business came before pleasure for Adams, and his business was diplomacy. Governmental stratagems on both sides of the ocean had come to the fore.

On December 7, 1812, John Quincy Adams became involved in another phase of the subtle diplomacy at which he was so skilled. He received notice that the American government, although at war with Britain, did not contemplate a more intimate connection with another British enemy, France. Adams passed the news to Count Rumiantsev, who was pleased that America would not be added to the list of Russian enemies. But the Count asked Adams if he had any objection to communicating the dispatch to the British Ambassador, Lord Cathcart.

11. Ibid., 203-205.
12. Ibid., 265.
Adams had no authorization to pass any such assurance on to the enemy. He reasoned, however, that if Britain's fears of a Franco-American alliance were put to rest, the result might be a harmonious and pacific disposition. Adams told the Count to go ahead; he could not believe it would produce any unfavorable effect. There is no reason to believe that it did.

After some delay due to courier difficulties, the Russian mediation proposal was delivered to President Madison in Washington on March 8, 1813, by the Czarist Charge D'Affaires, Count Andre de Dashkov. Although Adams in St. Petersburg heard no official report, unofficial sources stated that the United States would accept the offer, but that Great Britain would refuse. Actually there was no question as to the action of the United States. The country was faced with British incursions in the Northeast, East coast blockades, disaffections in New England, factionalism in the War and Finance departments, and the French military collapse in Russia. Under these circumstances Madison eagerly grasped the straw of peace. He did not even wait to hear of the British reaction to the Russian overture.

14. Updyke, 146.
15. Official reasons for Madison's abruptness were given in a letter from Monroe to Adams: "... a sincere desire to avail himself of every opportunity to conclude peace on just and reasonable conditions; to manifest his respect for the Emperor personally, and to avoid the delay which might otherwise result from our distance from the theatre of the proposed negotiations." James Monroe to JQA, Department of State, April 26, 1813, in Ford, IV, 477.
In an impolitic display of readiness, the impulsive Madison named two envoys and sent them off to join John Quincy Adams in St. Petersburg. The two, designated as Envoys Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary to negotiate with the British, were James A. Bayard, a Federalist Senator, and the Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin. In May of 1813, Bayard and Gallatin embarked on the Neptune, bound eventually for the capital of Russia.

Adams's government was unusually slow in delivering his official dispatches. His main sources of information were English gazettes that found their way to Lord Cathcart in St. Petersburg, and letters from Dashkov that he perused in Rumiantsev's office. It was from a British newspaper that Adams first learned that Gallatin and Bayard had been designated as Commissioners, and he doubted the accuracy of the report. "I presumed a commission would be appointed," he told the Count, "but I questioned whether they would be the men. Mr. Gallatin could not easily be spared, and he and Mr. Bayard were so opposed to each other in our politics that I thought it doubtful whether they would be joined in one commission." It was Count Rumiantsev who reasoned, probably correctly, that in a government like that of the United States the very reason for joining them was to represent all the great opposing interests. When the National Intelligencer arrived a few days later, confirming the report of the appointments of Gallatin and Bayard, Adams ruefully conceded that

the Count had judged the probability more correctly. At the same time the British government informed Russia that British differences with the United States were of such a nature that Britain did not think them suitable to be settled by a mediation. Dispatches from Count Lieven, Russian Ambassador in London, stated with many friendly and polite assurances, that Britain's trans-Atlantic relations involved "certain principles of the internal government of England." "As if the United States were a mere appendage to the British dominions," acidly remarked John Quincy Adams. The British were not final in their rebuff, but they left very little cause for optimism. Other reasons later given for Britain's refusal are suspiciousness of the Czar's friendliness towards the United States, unwillingness to allow Russian neutralist inclinations possible to color the settlement, distrust of the principles of the old Leagues of Armed Neutrality, to which Russia had belonged, and a desire to hold off until the American Union could be sufficiently beaten and divided.

Minister Adams was not unprepared for the British rejection. He had given some thought as to what the President had in mind for Bayard and Gallatin, who had left Washington in such a hurry that their nominations had not yet come up for Senate confirmation. Adams conjectured that one of them was destined to succeed him in Russia

17. Ibid., 479.
18. JQA to James Monroe, St. Petersburg, July 14, 1813, in Ford, IV, 495.
19. Updyke, 155.
and that the other would move to another post. After the two envoys arrived in St. Petersburg, on July 21, 1813, Adams realized, when he received no replacement orders, that his initial conjecture had been wrong. He had doubted whether the President would appoint the mission solely upon the expectation that the British would accept. He thought that Madison had risked appearing precipitous out of respect and honor for the Czar's motives and a desire to save six or nine months time. Adams probably did not realize how much the impetuous Chief Executive really wanted to end the war.

Bayard and Gallatin also brought with them to St. Petersburg instructions to consult with Great Britain and Russia on treaties of commerce. Gallatin was named chief of the two dealings with Britain, but Adams's name was first on the Russian list. Gallatin said that it was an intentional arrangement, and Adams considered it a mark of delicate attention towards him. "I should have been perfectly satisfied," the gallant Adams noted, "had Mr. Gallatin's name been first in all the papers."

The three Americans consulted together on the official note they would send to the Chancellor officially accepting the offer of mediation. In this preparation the difficulties of collusion were apparent. "It has been the work of a week," Adams angrily wrote, "and might have been done by either of us in two hours. It is a

21. Ibid., 488.
22. Ibid., 491.
sufficient specimen of the method of negotiating by commissions. In
the multitude of counsellors there is safety, but there is not dis-
patch." If Adams could only have foreseen the internal trials of
the delegation at Ghent, he would have marvelled at how quickly the
Russian business was transacted.

The two new residents of St. Petersburg, Gallatin and
Bayard, must have quickly begun to wonder just what their mission
entailed. Gallatin received notice that the Senate, led by a
Federalist phalanx, had refused to confirm his nomination as envoy on
the dubious grounds that it was unconstitutional for the Treasury
Secretary simultaneously to hold another high office. The Federal-
ists conveniently forgot that Chief Justice John Jay had undertaken a
similar mission to London in 1794.

The certainty of a British rejection of the mediation
proposal became increasingly apparent in the absence of any signs of
an acceptance. Bayard was often ill, and, according to Adams, "not a
little uneasy in his situation." Gallatin, however, had "more
tranquillity, though with more cause for uneasiness. His temper is
more equable." Despite the efforts of the Count to make the
Americans feel at home, their positions became more insecure. On
August 17, Gallatin received a letter from his friend Alexander
Baring, a London banker with access to the government. Baring said
that the British wished to negotiate directly with the Americans,

23. Ibid., 497.
without the benefit of a third party. It has since been alleged that the Czar knew of the British desire, and did everything in his power to conceal from the Americans at St. Petersburg the fact that the British were ready to treat with them directly. The Emperor was perhaps attempting to keep faith simultaneously with Napoleon and with Great Britain; with a new enemy whom he and Rumiantsev had never ceased to admire, and with new allies whom he did not really like, though Count Nesselrode was known to entertain strong British sympathies. The Czar blandly sacrificed his American friends to his own indecisive policy. Alexander probably became less interested in pressing the matter as the allies became more successful and it was seen that the weight of America was not sufficient to deter the British war effort. Although they suspected the outcome, Adams and his friends were powerless to do anything but cool their heels in the Russian capital city. Not even the renewal of the Russian mediation offer by Count Rumiantsev reduced the nervousness and restlessness of the two newcomers. By November, Adams, Gallatin and Bayard were positive that there was no chance of a three-power consultation. Communications between Lord Castlereagh, his Russian Ambassadors Lords Cathcart and Walpole, the Czar and the Chancellor constituted a potpourri of semi-official refusals, reasons, and requests. Much confusion evidently stemmed from the Emperor's lack of faith in the

27. Dangerfield, 56-57.
Count, and his soon to be fulfilled desire to fire Rumiantsev.

Adams sent Monroe his appraisal of the situation, and added that Bayard and Gallatin were waiting for notices to return home, or possibly to go to London or Gothenburg to treat directly.

Aware that they were thousands of miles from home with nothing to do, Bayard and Gallatin became increasingly restless and short-tempered. A feeling of uselessness pervaded their actions; their speech became biting and invective. Bayard railed to Adams that Gallatin was going to blame the failure of the negotiation on the rejection of his nomination. Gallatin asked for his passports and an audience of leave. Both men argued between themselves and with Adams on the possibility of their journeying to England to enter into direct negotiations. Adams's rejoinder reminded them that they had no authority to do so. Bayard was anxious, as always, to compromise the United States position on impressment, and he may have brought the previously immovable Gallatin over to his side.

On the 25th of January, six months and four days after their arrival in St. Petersburg, Bayard and Gallatin ended the hot three-cornered discussions by departing for London despite the remonstrances of

29. Updyke, 164.
30. JQA to James Monroe, St. Petersburg, November 22, 1813, in Ford, IV, 532-533.
32. Ibid., 560.
33. Ibid., 558.
Rumiantsev. Gallatin may have thought that he could retrieve his political fortunes only by rescuing the negotiations.

The British government finally decided to contact the United States, with a view to entering into direct peace negotiations. In a note received in Washington on December 30, 1813, Lord Castlereagh, evidently desirous of placating the Czar and preventing the American conflict from becoming entangled with the European settlement, and upholding the "maritime rights of the British Empire," asked the views of the American President. Madison waited only two weeks to nominate an authoritative commission. In St. Petersburg on March 20, 1814, John Quincy Adams heard the news that he and Bayard, together with Henry Clay and Jonathan Russell, had been appointed to negotiate at Gothenburg. Gallatin had not been included due to Madison's apprehension of Federalist opposition. Soon the President learned, however, that a Cabinet office became vacant when absent for six months. He appointed a new Treasury Secretary, and reinstated Gallatin to the peace commission. Gallatin, the last man nominated, thus became the junior member of the group, and the leadership went to the Minister to Russia, John Quincy Adams.

36. Dangerfield, 57-58.
37. Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York, 1953), 149.
38. Updyke, 165-166.
40. Walters, 272.
Adams left St. Petersburg in April for the month-long journey to Stockholm, where he first met Jonathan Russell, newly-appointed United States Minister to Sweden and a member of the peace delegation. Adams learned that Gallatin and Bayard were in London urging a removal of negotiations to Holland or England, and that Clay, already in Gothenburg, conditionally consented. Perturbed, Adams lost all hope for the fruitfulness of the mission, and even debated whether he should go on to Holland. But the conscientious minister wrote that for such an important matter he would cheerfully sacrifice any personal conveniences and obey his sense of the public interest.

Then Adams received news from Clay of the appointment of the British commissioners and the transfer of the conference site to Ghent. He pushed on to Gothenburg, and embarked from there on the sloop John Adams for Amsterdam. Russell, who had dallied a while in Stockholm, and Clay, who had made the trip by land, caught up with him there, and the three journeyed by stage to the city of Ghent. There they waited for the arrival of the rest of the American and the entire British delegation. Bayard arrived shortly, followed by Gallatin on July 6. The five American commissioners, who were to represent their country's interests against those of Great Britain, impatiently awaited the arrival of their counterparts.

It would be a month before the British condescended to send over their delegation, and during that time John Quincy Adams must

have ruminated on his negotiating partners. Of Russell, he could have few opinions. Although a rising diplomat, with experience as Charge D'Affaires in France and England, Russell had less experience than the others and was to prove inferior in other respects in the forthcoming deliberations. His status in 1814 was Minister to Sweden; he was known to be an expert on neutral rights. Adams had corresponded agreeably with Russell, but had met him only a few weeks earlier.

Neither was Adams particularly well acquainted with the former Swiss national, the heavily-accented Abraham Alphonse Albert Gallatin. Fifty-three years old in 1814, Gallatin had arrived in the United States in 1780, taught at Harvard, spent three months in the United States Senate before being expelled by a Federalist cabal on dubious citizenship grounds, and served in the House of Representatives from his adopted state, Pennsylvania. Thomas Jefferson appointed Gallatin to head the Treasury Department in 1800, and the national-minded Republican stayed in that position for twelve years, longer than any other man. Gallatin had requested a place on the Commission—he was alarmed at discord in the Cabinet, and he felt he could best solve wartime monetary problems by negotiating an end to hostilities. Although not a trained diplomat, the accomplished Gallatin would prove to be perhaps the most valuable man at Ghent, for his persuasiveness, tact, humor, ability and personality would

42. Bemis, John Quincy Adams, 190.
43. For a full account of the career of Albert Gallatin see Walters, Albert Gallatin, from which the following sketch is taken.
prevent the breaking off of negotiations and still dissensions within
the American ranks. He was "a man of great and varied experience and
attainments, acute, subtle, and powerful." In St. Petersburg, Count
Rumiantsev had noticed Gallatin's "facility of communication, which
gave him more readiness." Adams himself had no difficulty in
getting along with Gallatin, and in the long Russian sojourn,
Gallatin's "character, and especially his talents, gained ground upon
my opinion," Adams wrote home. "His desire to accomplish the peace
was sincere and ardent. I had several opportunities of observing his
quickness of understanding, his sagacity and penetration, and the
soundness of his judgment. I should have relied very much upon him
had the negotiation taken any serious effect... ."

Adams had made previous acquaintance with another member of
the commission, Henry Clay. The Kentuckian was filling out a
resigned-member's Senate term, and there Adams noted that he: "... made
an ardent speech... . He is quite a young man--an orator--and a
Republican of the first fire." Clay was chosen Speaker of the House
on his first day of elective office in November, 1811, and it was he,
more than any man, who goaded the War Hawks and the nation into armed

44. Prentice, 103.
45. Memoirs, II, 504.
46. JQA to Abigail Adams, St. Petersburg, March 30, 1814, in Ford,
V, 24.
47. The biographical material in the following sketch is taken from
Gerald W. Johnson, America's Silver Age (New York, 1939), and
Bernard Mayo, Henry Clay, Spokesman of the West (Boston, 1937).
conflict. His fiery Congressional speeches rang with a desire to take Canada by force--the Kentucky militia could do it, he claimed--and he led a rising generation of young politicos. Aged thirty-seven, his distinctive career still stretched before him. At Ghent he desired to uphold Western interests and escape the stigma of a frustrated warmaker. He was bright, and he was brash. He displayed fiery oratorical talent, and a deep desire to gain in the peace what the war had failed to afford. His opinions were like those of Adams--nationalistic overall, but strongly sectional when his own region was concerned. This would lead to the greatest of inner conflicts just as the peace negotiations were approaching their conclusion.

The man whom Adams knew better than any, and about whom he harbored the most serious doubts, was the patrician Delaware Senator, the likeable James A. Bayard. Bayard was initially a High Federalist; it was his action as floor leader of the House of Representatives, under the prodding effects of letters from Alexander Hamilton, that swung the 1800 national election from Aaron Burr to Thomas Jefferson. Bayard and John Quincy Adams were fellow Senators from 1804 until Adams's abrupt resignation in 1807. During that time the two became mutually antagonistic, though the real reasons for their discord are

49. For a full account of the life and times of James A. Bayard, see Borden, Federalism of James A. Bayard, from which the following brief biographical outline is taken. The particular chapter used is "Struggle between the Independents: Adams and Bayard," 157-168, in which the author is himself puzzled at Bayard's "unaccountable antagonism" to Adams.
not clear. The abstemious Adams abhored Bayard's taste for fine wines, and his belief that the Delawarean was intemperate may afford a partial explanation of the political disputes between the two men. Adams was nevertheless impressed with Bayard's eloquent Senatorial oratory, though he once wrote that he believed his own talents, other than speaking, to be superior. A cordial dislike governed the actions of the two men, nurtured by their vast cultural differences. Each man respected the talents of the other, but each accused the other of betraying Federalism for personal rewards. It is possible that Bayard's antagonism to Adams was a calculated and intended feeling, for the former never missed an opportunity to hound the latter to distraction. Seemingly without basis, the quarrels in committee and on the floor continued, resulting in an open feud and new highs of mutual antipathy. Their breach was further widened by the political intrigues of Republican William Branch Giles. At any rate, Adams thought Bayard to be a political proselyte to Republicanism, and Bayard attributed the same status to Adams. Both the Federalists were merely reflecting the conservative temper of Jeffersonian times; each considered himself a political and moral independent. It was a quarrel that would carry over when the men became diplomatic partners. Oddly enough, however, the two would become firm and serious friends during the heat of the negotiations.

Bayard, although not aligned with the extremist views of the Essex Junto, continued to play the role of loyal opposition. He counselled moderation when war appeared imminent, but his voice was
lost in the crisis. He lent bipartisan support to the mediation com-
mission when it sailed for St. Petersburg. It was there that the old
feud with Adams again flared up. Adams remembered their strong
personal antagonism in the Senate, but now earnestly desired to
harmonize with Bayard. He treated Bayard with respect and attention,
but, on talking with Levett Harris, the Secretary of the Embassy,
after Bayard and Gallatin had left the Russian capital, he learned
that Bayard had made attempts to destroy the characters of both
Gallatin and himself. Adams told Harris that he "hoped never again to
be placed in relations which would make it necessary to associate with
Mr. Bayard." "I cared very little," he added, speaking of Bayard's
actions behind his back, "what a man capable of such conduct said or
thought of me." The virtuous Adams disposed of the Senator with:
"Mr. Bayard was an eloquent speaker in a popular assembly; but of his
abilities for anything else I had seen little evidence here."
Bayard returned the insult, confiding to his diary that Adams had
little talent for society, did not appear to enjoy it, and displayed
harsh manners and a singularly cold and repulsive address. Yet
despite Adams's personal opinions, Bayard displayed many useful
characteristics. Count Rumiantsev noted that he had "a strong,
judicious and discerning mind, seizing at once upon the essential
points of a subject, and discarding all the immaterial incidents to

50. Memoirs, II, 574-577.
51. Elizabeth Donnan, Ed., Papers of James A. Bayard (Washington,
    1915), 427.
Bayard, forty-seven years old in 1814, brought to Ghent a knowledge of constitutional law, a skill at oratory, seventeen years of Congressional experience, sound reasoning and good judgment.

All told, the Commission of the United States presented a formidable array of talent. Of the five men, four displayed exceptionally high levels of ability. Each was a man of importance, conscious of his abilities and resources, unwilling to see them aborted. This separate uniqueness would result in continuous behind-the-scenes quarrels and differences, but together the Commissioners presented such a united front that when Castlereagh nominated three errand-running nonentities to oppose them, he sacrificed whatever advantage diplomacy offered. The Americans had a future President and a three-time candidate, two future Secretaries of State, two future Ambassadors to Britain, and future Congressional members. Their pasts included two national Representatives, two foreign Ministers, three Senators, and one Cabinet officer. It was an impressive display of ability and experience.

Opposing this adroit American assemblage were three inexperienced mediocrities whose sole purpose was to act as messenger boys to Whitehall. With the movements on the great stage of international affairs at Vienna, the machinations of the Americans at Ghent were mere curtain rustlings. Pulling the strings of policy in London were Lord Castlereagh; Lord Bathurst, Secretary for Colonial Affairs and

52. Memoirs, II, 504.
War, an able minister; and England's greatest soldier, the Duke of Wellington. And implementing that policy in Ghent were James, Lord Gambier, an aging armchair Admiral; Henry Goulburn, the irascible, quarrelsome thirty-year old Undersecretary for War and the Colonies, who was in time to become Chancellor of the Exchequer and play an important secondary role in British public affairs and the Tory Party during the second quarter of the century; and Dr. William Adams, an obscure Admiralty lawyer who was destined to justify his obscurity.

Gallatin thought that the paucity of ability represented by these men meant that Britain did not really want to negotiate for peace; but the English were counting on the nearness of London and military might to gain their ends. Adams reasoned that the British motives for the choices manifested a fear of the American Commissioners.

When Adams and his colleagues gathered at Ghent, the situation of the United States was a portent of disaster. Napoleon was banished to Elba, leaving the bulk of British naval and land forces free to fight in North America. Invasion campaigns menaced the United States from the North, East and South. America had made few territorial gains during the war, and was threatened with internal disorder by the Essex Junto at Hartford. Public opinion in England was unfriendly: "Our demands may be couched in a single word—Submission!"


55. JQA to Levett Harris, Ghent, July 9, 1814, in Ford, V, 58-59.
said the London Times. The outlook for a peace incorporating American aims was dim indeed. The father of the American leader put it most succinctly in a typical exaggeration: "Is there nothing to prevent the English," wrote John Adams, "from obtaining command of the Lakes, and as many posts as they please upon our side of them. Is there little to prevent them from demolishing as many of our seaport towns as they choose. We have no regular army, for our men will not enlist. The militia will fight when they please and run when they please. Our revenue is inadequate, our credit is fallen, our dignity lost. The English have guillotined us."

Meanwhile the American delegation in Ghent impatiently awaited the arrival of their British counterparts. The five held daily meetings and attended ceremonies and balls; their accomplishments were not conspicuous. Once Adams witnessed a mass marriage ceremony in the company of Clay. "The brides were all ugly," he observed. Despite past differences, and oblivious to those to come, the Americans were a temporarily cheerful, compatible group. Clay asked Adams to eat at a communal table, after Adams had once withdrawn. The seldom-affable New Englander agreed, even though the other gentlemen "sit after dinner and drink bad wine and smoke cigars, which neither suits my habits nor my health, and absorbs time which I cannot spare. I find it impossible," continued the reserved diarist, "even

56. Quoted in Adams, 325.
with the most rigorous economy of time, to do half the writing that I ought."

It was under an ominous cloud of events, and after a month of rest and relaxation, that the United States Peace Commissioners met for the first time, on August 8, 1814, with the British Plenipotentiaries who had journeyed over from London two days before.

59. Ibid., 656.
CHAPTER IV: A TIME OF TRIAL
John Quincy Adams sat down with his accompanying diplomats in August of 1814 to negotiate with the representatives of Great Britain. Once before an Adams had been confronted with the same task, for John Adams had wrestled to win his country's independence with these same Britons in 1782-1783. Now his son faced a similar problem, for it soon became obvious that the British were pursuing a policy of delay. Diplomatic devices were introduced merely to consume time with rhetorical gestures. Only two joint meetings were held, after which the British Commissioners submitted their points in writing. Communications between the two groups thereafter took the form of a series of notes. Adams and the American delegation always answered the notes in a matter of days; Goulburn and his fellow negotiating tyros transmitted them to London, so that it required ten or more days for the British to reply. The substance of the British notes constituted only a fraction of their length. The rest of the folios delivered diatribes of political chicanery that Adams alone wished to reply to in kind. It took three months before the pressure of outside events caused the British to recede from their time-consuming topics; only then did a treaty become a possibility. During this time the fortunes of the American delegation fluctuated with the whims of the British Ministry. The Americans were thoroughly pessimistic about the British intentions and the eventual outcome, yet they were never prepared to cut off the discussions. They remained in Ghent as a debating society until peace was finally concluded.
The first British note came on August 20, 1814, after the two conferences. The remaining schedule of notes, as covered in this chapter, was as follows:

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The inept British delegation wasted no time in committing its first mistake of the negotiations for peace. On August 7, the Secretary of the Commission, Anthony St. John Baker, arrived at the American residence with a proposal for a joint meeting to arrange proceedings and exchange credentials. It seemed proper to Goulburn and his fellows to have the Americans come over to the Britishers' hotel. John Quincy Adams led his associates in their irritation at this pretense to superiority. "What?," he is reported to have thundered. "Meet the English ministers who have kept us here so long awaiting the condescension of their coming? Meet them at their bidding, at their own hotel, to be the laughing stock of Ghent, of London, and of all Europe? It would be a submission to English encroachment, to which, for one, I will not submit." Nor would the remaining Americans lower themselves with the initial bow. Adams demonstrated that he was the intellectual leader of the group when he cited chapter and verse of Martens' Summary. The course taken by the

1. Quoted in Wilson, 375.
British Commissioners appeared precisely to be the usage from 2
Ambassadors to Ministers of an inferior order. After a few diplo-
matic parleys, a neutral meeting site was chosen. It happened to be
the Hotel des Pays-Bas where the Americans had first resided. Here
diplomatic cordialities were exchanged, Goulburn set down the British
terms, and the meeting ended. The negotiators agreed to alternate
meeting-places between their two residences. The first get-together
outside the Pays-Bas was held at the American hostel on August 9, to
the satisfaction of the mollified Adams.

The stipulations as presented by Goulburn represented a
conqueror's terms. Firstly, The British were willing to discuss the
impressment problem, although it was evident that the American inter-
pretation of the situation would not be allowed. Secondly, provisions
in the peace for Britain's "Indian allies" were demanded, with a
definite geographical ideogram to be determined for their separate
"territory." This was set forth as a sine qua non. Thirdly, a re-
vision of the boundary line between the United States and British
North America was deemed a proper subject for discussion. And
fourthly, added almost as an afterthought, the British stated that
special fishing privileges long accorded the United States were not
3
to be renewed without an equivalent. This "afterthought" doubtless
angered John Quincy Adams, whose Massachusetts neighbors depended in
a large part on the fisheries for a livelihood. Adams orally reviewed

the British treaty topics to make certain of their meaning, and ex-
cused his delegation for consultation.

This first meeting caught the Americans unprepared to dis-
cuss half of the newly-presented proposals, for instructions from the United States had assumed a somewhat different British approach. Memoranda from Monroe had trickled down to the delegation ever since the first abortive peace proposals of 1812. In sum, Adams and his associates were empowered to insist on the cessation of impressment, following the strong American line of staunch resistance. In the field of neutral rights, unmentioned by the British, they were to obtain a precise blockade definition and secure indemnity payments for destroyed and confiscated property. No mention at all was made in American messages of the Indian question or the fisheries. And as for Canada, the Commission was not to stop at a mere boundary re-
vision, but to request the complete transfer of that British dominion to the United States: On the Indian proposal and the fisheries, therefore, the Americans were un instructed, while impressment seemed as volatile as ever, neutral rights became a sole American contention, and boundary opinions were diametrically opposed.

The American stand was rendered more negotiable, and what promised to be the major barrier to a peace settlement was quietly stricken on the night of the first joint meeting, August 8. The latest set of instructions from Monroe was received in Ghent, the

4. Ibid., 176-185.
United States had reversed its decades-long stand on impressment.

Bayard's contention for many years had been to temporize on the point, and a succession of letters from him and his convert Gallatin had brought the question to an American Cabinet meeting. While no hint was to be dropped that the United States was abandoning its claim, the Commission was allowed to omit from the treaty any stipulation on the subject of impressment, if it was indispensably necessary to terminate the war. Thus the only ground for war that had existed since August, 1812, when the Orders-in-Council were known to have been repealed, was quietly and unobtrusively removed. It would not be a subject of Conference discussions—a good thing, for with it an impasse could only result.

The next day, August 9, John Quincy Adams presented the American case, carefully refraining from mentioning the bypassed impressment issue. Adams must have been disturbed by the decision of his superiors in Washington. Impressment had long been a volatile, emotional contention with the Bay-Stater; one he would have preferred to meet head-on rather than ignominiously omit. "If all the people of America," he once wrote, "were of my sentiment, the last drop of American blood and the last dollar of American property should be staked, rather than flinch an hair's breadth from our whole ground in this quarrel. It is pure unmingled tyranny that constitutes the whole British claim, and we cannot allow the minutest part of it..." Now,

6. JQA to R. G. Beasley, St. Petersburg, April 29, 1813, in Ford, IV, 479.
because the British were refraining from the practice of impressment, Adams was advised to abstain from any mention of the " unmingled tyranny." If unbridled adherence to the dictates of the Department of State constitute the flower of a diplomat, then John Quincy Adams was surely the fairest of them all.

On the 9th the combination of American talents behind Adams, the leader, brought what might be interpreted as the first American victory at Ghent. The proposed British Indian article was concerned. A barrage of questions thrown by the aroused ex-colonists was inexpertly fielded by the slow-witted Goulburn. With every answer, the Englishmen made their insidious intentions more obvious. At the end of the session, it was established that the British were resurrecting their demand for a great neutral Indian barrier state, to prevent British provinces and the United States from being coterminous—"a proposition unexampled in the practice of civilized nations." The Americans learned that the Indians, under British policy, would be prohibited from selling land to the United States, but European powers would still be allowed to deal with the Redmen. American opposition stiffened at this potential threat to westward movement. The five nationalists would not even permit a provisional article to be drawn. Puzzled by this stone wall of adamancy, the British trio called a halt for consultations with their upper division. The Americans had carried the day.

7. JQA to James Monroe, Ghent, August 11, 1814, in Ford, V, 77-81.
It was ten days before Castlereagh's emissaries received their new orders. On August 18, the Lord himself, with a considerable retinue, passed through Ghent on his way to Vienna. Castlereagh was irritated at the haughty and preponderant tone used by his underlings in the initial meetings. No less so was the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, who expressed dismay at the "erronious view" of British policy given by his Ghent delegation. "If the negotiations had been allowed to break off upon the two notes already presented," Liverpool wrote Castlereagh, "I am satisfied the war would have become popular in America."

But if Castlereagh wished to soften the stringent mood of his demands, he gave no sign of it in his new instructions. The Indian question was back with all its ugly implications. Now the British government fell back on the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, in which the United States had set up a mutual-occupancy territory, with proprietary rights for the Indians and both military posts and access for the Americans. This great expanse of prime continental territory was to be converted into the Indian buffer nation. Again, a sine qua non condition was attached. Gallatin wondered what was to be done with some one hundred thousand American settlers already living beyond the Greenville line, and was told by Dr. Adams they would have to shift for themselves.

9. Quoted in Mahan, 418.
11. Walters, 278-279.
One aspect of the Castlereagh-dictated orders was less arbitrary, but only because he asked for no additional territorial acquisitions nor a Canadian border at the Ohio River. Instead, Great Britain requested complete American disarmament on the Great Lakes, including the dismantlement of present fortifications and the removal of the fir-frigate navy. The astute Gallatin again asked whether Great Britain, in requiring the United States to keep no naval force on the Lakes and no forts on the shores, intended to reserve a British right of keeping them there. Certainly, was the answer.

There were also proposals for the navigation of the Mississippi River, the cession of a part of Maine to provide a direct route between Halifax and Quebec, and the retention of Moose Island and other islands recently captured by British arms in Passamaquoddy Bay, on the present boundary of Maine and New Brunswick. These overwhelming demands were based on the military situation, and seemed to confine future America to the Atlantic seaboard. The American Commissioners retired, on Adams’s suggestion, to plan their strategy.

Not one of the New World quintet held out any hopes for the continuance of the negotiations. The British demands were so harsh and inadmissible, the tone and language used so peremptory and overbearing, that John Quincy Adams thought the conference of the 19th of August would probably be the last. Adams expected to return to St. Petersburg. He had given up hope for a negotiated settlement.

14. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, August 23, 1814, in Ford, V, 90.
and wrote his father that a second war for independence was the only way to obtain peace. Despite unfavorable military news from America, Adams felt that a united country would ultimately have nothing to fear. Only Henry Clay held the notion that the British would recede from their grounds. Whether Clay was trying to convince himself that what he said was true, whether he wanted to remain in pleasant Ghent or Paris a while longer, or whether he employed his astute knowledge of the game of brag to perceive that the British were really bluffing, is conjecture. Clay's feelings were probably more honestly expressed when he wrote to Monroe that there was no room for comment, that the prospect of peace had vanished, that the pretensions of Great Britain did not admit of deliberation, and that continued war was the only answer.

Neither side wished to bear the onus of breaking off the talks altogether. Both knew that the other would not yield its principles. The Americans realized that the British were stalling for time, and rather than grant them a stunning diplomatic victory, the Yankees decided to fight fire with fire. "Westward the star of empire takes its way," John Quincy Adams once said, and no

15. JQA to John Adams, Ghent, August 20, 1814, JQA Letterbook, Adams Papers microfilm.
17. Johnson, 83. Clay, an inveterate gambler, is reputed to have lost $8,000 in one night playing brag, then won it back again.
19. JQA, Oration at Plymouth, 1802, quoted in John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations (Boston, 1955), 306.
camouflaged plan to sever the country under the guise of Indian welfare would stand in its path.

"I began the first draft of an answer to the note of the British Commissioners," solemnly recorded John Quincy Adams as the American Commissioners opened four days of labor preparing their response. Adams must have recalled the St. Petersburg collaboration with a sigh of nostalgia. He spent one of his precious days drafting the answer, only to have his colleagues expunge it before his eyes.

He recorded his sentiments in a famous diary diatribe:

I found, as usual, that the draft was not satisfactory to my colleagues. On the general view of the subject we are all unanimous, but in my exposition of it, one objects to the form and another to the substance of almost every paragraph. Mr. Gallatin is for striking out every expression that may be offensive to the feelings of the adverse party. Mr. Clay is displeased with figurative language, which he thinks improper for a state paper. Mr. Russell, agreeing with the objections of the other two gentlemen, will be further for amending the construction of every sentence; and Mr. Bayard, even when agreeing to say precisely the same thing, chooses to say it only in his own language. It was considered by all the gentlemen that what I had written was too long, and with too much argument... We then sat until eleven at night, sifting, erasing, patching, and amending... The remnant left of mine certainly does not form a fifth part of the paper as finally settled, and it is patched with scraps... 20

The careful, painstaking John Quincy Adams was having his troubles at Ghent.

The Americans did agree to repulse excessive British claims, and their reply proved as harsh as the British demands. The five Ministers claimed that the British delegation had exceeded its original instructions. They denied any British right to create a sovereign state on American soil. They totally denounced the admissibility of British pretensions on the Great Lakes. Their language left little room for doubt: "They [the demands] are founded neither on reciprocity, nor on any of the usual bases of negotiation, neither on that of uti possidetis nor of status ante bellum. They are above all dishonorable to the United States in demanding from them to abandon territory and a portion of their citizens; to admit a foreign interference in their domestic concerns, and to cease to exercise their natural rights on their own shores and in their own waters. A treaty concluded on such terms would be but an armistice." The note was written in terms that added up to a flat negative, and John Quincy Adams laconically asserted that it would bring the negotiation to a close very shortly. The American delegation made preparations to leave Ghent; they allowed themselves a week or ten days, and arranged to move out of their house. But the British ruling hierarchy had other ideas.

The Americans were responding not to a set of proposals but to a state of mind—the unformulated ideas and half-conscious emotions of unimaginative men. Gambier, Goulburn and Dr. Adams represented

the old-fashioned view that America was still in the British Empire, a colony that paid its own expenses. They could not accept the reality of an independent America successfully challenging the mighty British Empire, and they formulated the position of their superiors into such disparaging demands that no American could or would accept them.

Others, too, were prepared to retreat from the initial stumbling blocks. They were Lords Castlereagh and Liverpool, who realized that their underlings had overstepped themselves, had gone so far out on a limb that it would be their own fault if it broke. If the negotiations were ended at this point, England would be placed in the position of continuing the war for the sake of pure conquest and expansion. Furthermore, the Americans had arrayed a detailed panorama of charges calculated to inspire their country behind the war effort. A beneficial corollary might be the unpopularity of that war in England. Perhaps, too, Castlereagh feared that if the war in North America continued, it would rekindle the flames in Europe.

All this inspired the Foreign Secretary to declare the territorial question one of expediency and to attempt to keep the American delegation in Ghent. Castlereagh's motive was to bargain for time until his military forces accomplished what his diplomacy could not. He issued a new note, and in it weakened his position by a retreat from

23. Dangerfield, 67-68.
24. Fish, 183-184.
an ultimatum—the sine qua non condition was silently withdrawn from the Indian case. Otherwise his promulgation of September 4 was a mere repetition of old arguments, ambiguous in its tenor, and couched in striking diplomatic innuendo. Accusations charged territorial aggrandizement and conquests; the party of Jefferson was blamed for having travelled along the road to war; the note was written for the benefit of High Federalist opposition in America. It was an unequalled example of diplomatic duplicity.

When the British note reached the American delegation on September 5, Bayard, the bipartisan diplomat, pronounced it a very stupid production. Clay was for answering it by a note of half a page. But John Quincy Adams neither thought it stupid nor proper to be answered by half a page. Adams always took everything seriously, and a communiqué from another government was nothing to be lightly disposed of. All told, the Americans were so riled at the defamatory language used, they failed at first to perceive that the British had left the Indian sine qua non position unmentioned. Clay was so provoked that he wrote Goulburn asking for his passport. The roots of most of the American ire lay in the fertile soil of their expansionist minds. The British charges were implicitly true. Although never officially mentioned, the conquest of Canada was a tacit war aim. Clay had repeatedly harped on this theme in Congress. Monroe

included it in his instructions to the delegation. And although John Quincy Adams was a New Englander, seemingly removed from the vibrant expansionism of the frontier, his logical and reasonable rhetoric on that score served two purposes at Ghent. On the one hand he argued for the future of the American West; on the other he denied the British claim of a contiguous Indian territory. Adams held a long conversation with Henry Goulburn, who deemed the Indian boundary necessary for the security of Canada, and who pointed to the evident United States manifestation of the desire and determination of conquering and annexing that northern province. Adams replied that the conquest of Canada had never been an American war aim, and that the present United States policy of settlement with compensation was an amicable arrangement. "To condemn vast regions of territory to perpetual barrenness and solitude that a few hundred savages might find wild beasts to hunt upon it," continued Adams, "was a species of game law that a nation descended from Britons would never endure." Such a policy of abstinence was incompatible with the moral and physical nature of things. Only the utter extermination of American settlers, Adams added, could prevent the rising tide of population from sweeping into the West. A single treaty purporting to exclude posterity from its natural subsistence would be a mere bond of paper, a feather before a torrent. Only a liberal and amicable detente with America, combined with British trade preponderance, could serve as security for Canada. Officially, Adams led his colleagues in a

28. Ibid., 28.
silent sidestep of the touchy proposition. His solution was another long-winded note, taking the British to task for their insipid implications.

"As we are inclined not to be behindhand with them whether in civility or in prolixity, we return them a note of equal dimensions," Adams advised his wife. "If they choose to play this game of chicanery they may, I know not how long. But if they will take no for an answer, we shall be released in two or three days." Such would be the tone of the American rejoinder of September 9, almost a facsimile of the August 24 notification which left the delegation sorely lacking in optimism. Once again Adams penned a stiff and denunciatory reply; once again his vanity suffered as he saw it withered away. By now he was becoming used to such intrusions on his semantical art.

While the five diplomats were busy preparing the reply they thought would also serve as a one-way ticket from Ghent, they found time for relaxation and pleasure. Even the weighty Adams indulged in a little card-playing, after which Clay relieved him of a picture he had won in a lottery. Such frivolous pastimes for a lofty American Minister! The Massachusetts Puritan did not, however, go to extremes. "Just before rising," he scrawled in his diary one morning at 3:45 A.M., "I heard Mr. Clay's company retiring from his chamber."

29. Dangerfield, 71.
30. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, September 9, 1814, in Ford, V, 120.
I had left him with Mr. Russell, Mr. Bentzon, and Mr. Todd at cards. They parted as I was about to rise. I was up nearly half an hour," he added, fixing the time of day, "before I had daylight to read or write." The nocturnal activities of Adams’s compatriots did not, fortunately, detract from the pursuance of the business at hand. In their answering note of September 9, the five gave their long repetition of arguments in defense of American territory and sovereignty, again refuting the British Indian boundary claim and resisting exclusive military possession of the Lakes. "Will you return immediately to St. Petersburg?" asked the smug Lord Gambier of Adams. "Yes," was the reply. "That is, if you send us away." The second round of the diplomatic give-and-take was over, and it was again up to Great Britain to give or to take.

Lord Liverpool’s Ministry in the British Isles decided to give. It receded from the Indian demands which sound policy had from the first recognized as untenable, unless reposing upon decisive military success and occupation, for which Liverpool had been impatiently waiting. The usual reasons for procrastination of a diplomatic rupture lay behind the Ministry’s decision—trouble brewing in Europe, desire for a peace policy at Vienna unhalted by the nagging weakness of the American expedition, and hope of a ringing victory in North America. Liverpool knew that one good note deserved another, and as long as the letter-writing continued, so would the

32. Ibid., 36.
33. Mahan, 421-422.
negotiations. The sine qua non conditions regarding the Indians were watered down—now the Indians were merely to be included somehow in the treaty and restored to their pre-war status. The implied sine qua non attached to the Great Lakes disarmament scheme was also gone; the military situation there was to be put up for discussion. Clearly British desires emanating from London had come a long way down from those earlier put forth in Ghent.

Once again, however, the hand in Ghent did not carry out the thoughts of the mind in London. The British Commissioners subtly changed the verbiage of their superiors to render it less conciliatory. Besides, the rest of the British charges stirred American anger. The note of September 19 was clothed in the usual accusatory language, this time citing proclamations of Generals William Hull and Alexander Smyth as evidence of the American desire to conquer and annex Canada. The note was overbearing and insulting in its tone: "the style of the papers we receive is bitter as the quintessence of wormwood—arrogant, dictatorial, insulting!" thundered the restless Adams to his wife. It is small wonder that Adams and his fellow Commissioners were disheartened by the lack of peace assurances. "We so fondly cling to the vain hope of peace," the downheartened Minister wrote, "that each new proof of its impossibility operates upon us as a disappointment." The pressure of having continually to rebut the obnoxious British charges was telling on the humorless

34. Updyke, 253-256.
35. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, September 27, 1814, in Ford, V, 147.
Adams, and he sometimes could not restrain his temper. Bayard unexpectedly met Adams's outbursts with accommodation and compliance, the Minister noted, while Gallatin, more pliable and playful, brushed away the explosions with a joke. The Bay-Stater held increasing admiration for these two men, notwithstanding his previous dislike of Bayard.

The Americans endured another argumentative session while preparing their response to the British. The official task of drafting notes had since fallen to Gallatin, but John Quincy Adams took it upon himself to present his own views in writing. His lengthy and lurid reasoning went beyond the British concession and denied their right to impose any type of sine qua non at all. Adams went even further in his arguments against the Indian proposal and his support of westward expansion. The American nation, he insisted, had the moral and religious duty of a civilized people to settle, cultivate, and improve the Indian lands. Even if the ultimate result was the extinction of all the rights of the savage tribes, Adams postulated, the end would have come about through fair and amicable means. Adams upheld his principles by references to the laws of nations, and viewed his stand as the only solid and unanswerable defense against repeated British charges. With these cogent explanations by John Quincy Adams, the temper of the American times is traced. Adams undoubtedly agreed with the desires of the frontier nationalist in his

37. Ibid., 40.
hunger for territory to the north, west and south. His statements at Ghent provide the background for his sweeping decisions as Secretary of State. Frontier expansion was the rallying cry of generations of American pioneers, and it certainly brought out the best and the worst in the thoughts of John Quincy Adams.

Adams cited God, Providence, Heaven and the United States as the ultimate benefactors of the Indian savages. Clay, however, deemed his florid language so much cant, and while the substance of Adams's ideas remained in the final draft, the phraseology was Gallatin's. The former Treasury Secretary had emerged as the sage of the delegation; even Adams admired the extent and copiousness of his information, his sagacity and shrewdness of comprehension, his vivacity of intellect, and his fertility of resource. Gallatin's supremacy was rudely brought home to the contentious Adams. He observed "if any one member objects to anything I have written, all the rest support him in it, and I never can get it through... if I object to anything written by Mr. Gallatin, unless he voluntarily abandons it every other member supports him, and my objection is utterly unavailing." Yet Adams understood the British longing to keep the Americans in Ghent, and although he felt restricted and hampered, he could not end the discussions with a suitable attitude of indignation. The Americans, while upholding the honor and integrity of their country, were sacrifices to Great Britain's policy

38. Ibid., 42.
39. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, September 9, 1814, in Ford, V, 121.
40. Memoirs, III, 41.
of delay.

The American rejoinder, delivered to the British representatives on September 26, continued the point-by-point line of resistance that had been followed before. It disallowed the statements of the American Generals as unsupported by actual governmental policies. It stated the American position and refuted the British interpretations. It called for a commission to determine the Maine boundary, and refused to consent to any inclusion of the Indians in a treaty that would recognize them as independent nations. Goulburn forwarded the note to London, with an accompanying letter written in the worst possible temper, charging the Americans with making a variety of false and fraudulent statements. While the British Cabinet reviewed it, the Americans felt their position at Ghent daily growing weaker. For the third time the American team had put its opponents in their places, giving them ample reason to quit the discussions. If any reliance were to be placed on the principles of the British diplomats, there would be an exodus to Paris within a week.

Between the American reply of the 26th of September, and the return statement of the British case on October 8, news of two events of significant proportions reached Ghent. The first dispatch arrived on September 29, in the form of several copies of the National Intelligencer. On July 22 a large number of northwestern Indians, in

41. Adams, 336.
council at Greenville, Michigan Territory, had signed a treaty binding themselves to aid the United States in the war against the British and those Indians who remained hostile. This Second Treaty of Greenville undermined the British policy, which was determined not so much by concern for the welfare of the Indians as by the necessity of securing the Canadian provinces against the repetition of American invasion, and of defending economic interests. Now that they had far fewer allies in the area, the British might be expected to perceive the emptiness of their position and drop their Indian proposals.

The second occurrence was one not so favorable to American interests. On August 24 a British force had sailed up the Potomac River and wreaked havoc upon the capital city, Washington, D. C. Information of this disaster had just become available to the British ruling councils and to the delegation at Ghent. In the mind of John Quincy Adams it was the first of a long line of expected British victories, "only the beginning of sorrows; the lightest succession of calamities through which our country must pass, and by which all the infirmities and all the energies of its character will be brought to light." Reacting to this military victory, the British could be expected to be even more haughty and high-handed in their pronouncements. Adams again predicted the course of his adversaries: "I have

44. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, October 4, 1814, in Ford, V, 149.
never for an instant believed that peace would be practicable by the negotiation here. I believe the sole object of Britain in protracting our stay here is to impose both upon America and upon Europe, while she may glut all her vindictive passions and bring us to terms of unconditional submission." The next British note would record the influences of the outside world on the mind of the Ministry.

A fifteen page diatribe "hot from the British Privy Council" was received by the Americans on October 8. The great Indian difficulty was removed by a British ultimatum: the two countries reciprocally to put an end to the war with the Indians and restore them to their pre-war conditions. On the answer of the American Plenipotentiaries depended their continuance at Ghent.

Adams and his colleagues agreed to accept the ultimatum article, but were of divided procedural opinions. The obstinate Minister from Massachusetts wanted to represent it as a very great concession, made only for the sake of securing peace. The rest desired to adopt it as perfectly conformable to previously-taken views. Adams also strongly urged the expediency of avowing that the session of Canada would be to the interest of Great Britain as well as to that of the United States. The continentalist-minded Adams was overruled on both his points. The rest of the delegation viewed the

45. JQA to William Harris Crawford, Ghent, October 5, 1814, in Ford, V, 152.
46. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, October 11, 1814, in Ibid., 155.
47. Updyke, 275.
British ultimatum as compatible with oft-stated American interests. It was not prepared to break off the talks on the issue, and so agreed to the Indian article _sub specie_.

The British displayed their arrogance in the remainder of the October 8 note, manifesting charges of territorial aggrandizement, avarice and oppression. These were handily dealt with by the now-experienced Americans. Conspicuous by its absence was any mention of the Lakes disarmament proposal. More than two months of discussion, involving four separate note-passing rounds, had resulted in eliminating the Indians from the dispute, and in agreeing to maintain silence in regard to the Lakes. The American Commissioners had been relieved of insuperable difficulties from both sides: Indians and Lakes armaments from the British; impressment and neutral rights from home.

The American reply was sent to the British on October 14, requesting a treaty project and offering immediately after to furnish a counter-project. Clay had written the note; because it was short, and because Adams's ideas had not been included, Adams was totally dissatisfied and disliked it very much in all its parts. He dubbed the British note by far the most labored, the best written, and the most deserving of a complete and solid answer. He termed the "concession" to the Indian ultimatum so great that he would have been prepared to break off rather than give it up. Most irritating to

49. Adams, 327.
50. Memoirs, III, 52.
51. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, October 14, 1814, in Ford, V, 158-159.
the defiant Adams was the submissive tone taken by the Americans in their reply. "The tone of all the British notes is arrogant, overbearing, and offensive," he wrote. "The tone of ours is neither so bold nor so spirited as I think it should be. It is too much on the defensive, and too excessive in the caution to say nothing irritating. I have seldom been able to prevail upon my colleagues to insert anything in the style of retort upon the harsh and reproachful matter which we receive." "My principle would have been to meet every one of their charges directly in the face... to maintain... a tone as peremptory as theirs." But Adams was not insusceptible to reason, and after a serious conversation with Bayard, he reported that he had finally come down to the prevailing sentiment of the mission. Adams did not like to yield to anything, but realized that to walk out on the Indian ultimatum would be to sacrifice the negotiations without gaining honor. And in reality, the language used in transactions was a somewhat minor point. Once again the true qualities of a diplomat—conciliation, moderation, and an inner toughness—came to the fore in John Quincy Adams. From now on he would attack his chores with some degree of optimism. He would fight on for his country no matter what the odds. "We must drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs," he announced with an air of finality to his far-away spouse.

52. Memoirs, III, 51.
53. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, October 14, 1814, in Ford, V, 159.
54. Ibid., 161.
55. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, October 18, 1814, in Ibid., 161.
During the interim between the American note of October 14 and the British reply of October 22, the British Ministry received notice of a military disaster. One of the main forces detailed to invade and split the United States had been thoroughly defeated and routed. A British fleet under Captain Downie had been captured by an American flotilla of its own size under Captain Thomas Macdonough at Lake Champlain. At the same time an American army, stiffened by regulars but composed in large part of militia commanded by General George Izard, had successfully resisted at Plattsburg a force of veteran British regulars under Sir George Prevost outnumbering it three to one. The threat of invasion by way of Lake Champlain was definitely ended, and the British had failed to win on a very important matter.

Knowing of the Plattsburg-Lake Champlain debacle, the British in the fifth note considerably reduced their territorial demands. John Quincy Adams described the dispatch as of "the same dilatory and insidious character, but... shorter." The presentment was "more distinctly marked than any of those that had preceded it," he added, "with the intention of wasting time, without coming to any result." Up to this point the British had coveted half of Maine and all the banks of the St. Lawrence from Plattsburg to Sackett's Harbor; now these lands were to be relinquished to America. Still, the British

57. Memoirs, III, 57.
58. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, October 25, 1814, in Ford, V, 164.
controlled Northern Michigan and the Niagara area. They now wanted to end the war on the basis of *uti possidetis*. Incorporating the British demand for the right of way across Maine to Quebec, they wanted Moose Island and stood to gain more than they lost. Coupled with the *uti possidetis* proposition were several other British demands: negation by the United States of the long-guaranteed fishing rights in waters under British jurisdiction, and a northwest boundary settlement which could only prove detrimental to American interests.

The note did not comply with the American request for a treaty projet.

John Quincy Adams and the ardent American congregation in Ghent took only two days to frame their reply; evidently there were no dissensions or varying opinions as to its content. The Americans were influenced not only by their nationalist and patriotic outlooks, but by the favorable military news and a note from the Secretary of State. Monroe expressed approval of the early rejection of the terms proposed by the British, and granted authority to agree to *status quo ante bellum* as the basis of a treaty. The short American answer merely refused to negotiate on the basis of *uti possidetis* and repeated the request that the British communicate a projet of all other proposals they intended to offer.

The Americans began to map out a treaty projet which would be exchanged for the British version. They had already been engaged at this task for two days when the sixth official British note arrived.

59. Dangerfield, 75.
60. Updyke, 287–288.
on October 31. Although faced with failure in the North, Liverpool and Bathurst were sure of success in the South. The expectation of this favorable change in affairs decided the Ministry to gain a little more time before bringing the negotiation to a close; the messengers at Ghent were instructed to demand a full projet of all the American conditions before entering on further discussions. The British position, the note stated, was previously well known. The Americans were already busily complying with this request.

Three months had passed—three months of internal and external bickering which had served not to negotiate a treaty but to insure that ultimately it would be negotiated. Through it all John Quincy Adams knew that the representatives of His Britannic Majesty were waiting for the advantages which the success of the North American campaign would give them. He realized that the policy of the British government was neither to conclude peace nor to break off the negotiation, but to delay. He deemed a rupture on the part of the Americans inadvisable, as long as even a faint possibility of a just and honorable peace glimmered on the horizon. He also viewed the course of events in Europe as leading to trouble for the British. It was this last contention that would ultimately prove true, and force the British to liquidate the American liability and concentrate on Napoleon. Trials and troubles still lay ahead for John Quincy Adams.

63. Essentially the same as originally: Impressment (up to the Americans); Indians (reduced to the provisional article); boundaries (still to be determined); and fisheries (also yet undecided).
however. In the next two months his talents, resources and abilities would be strained to the utmost as he tenaciously fought to insure a decent and proper respect for the Treaty of Ghent.
CHAPTER V: A TIME OF TENACITY
No one today doubts the reasoning powers and talents of John Quincy Adams. Yet in Ghent in 1814 there were four men who did just that—the four negotiators who were Adams's colleagues at the peace conference. Adams was not long in assuming an extremist position on the question of the Massachusetts fisheries, and was soon relegated to isolated aloofness, unsupported by his colleagues. The desertion of Adams came about after a series of bitter quarrels and torrid dissents which to any other man would have resulted in lifelong enmities. Not so to Adams. Immediately after the fire and fury of virulent discord, Adams set down his opinions of those who had left him in his hour of need. Of the feckless Jonathan Russell, Clay's sycophant, Adams wrote that there had never been anything like a misunderstanding between him and the delegation. Russell was inclined to yield the fisheries. Of James A. Bayard, whose character gave Adams severe misgivings, the forgiving Minister wrote "the Chevalier has the most perfect control of his temper, the most deliberate coolness... . I can scarcely express to you how much both he and Mr. Gallatin have risen in my esteem since we have been here... ." Bayard chose to give the fisheries to the British. Of Albert Gallatin: "He has a faculty, when discussion grows too warm, of turning off its edge by a joke, which I envy him more than all his other talents, and he has in his character one of the most extraordinary combinations of stubbornness and of flexibility that I ever
met within man." Gallatin supported Adams until the final moment, then withdrew his help. And to Henry Clay, with whom Adams had the greatest diversities of sentiment and the most animated mutual oppositions, the Bay-Stater paid the supreme compliment: "There is the same dogmatical, overbearing manner, the same harshness of look and expression, and the same forgetfulness of the courtesies of society in both. An impartial person judging between them I think would say that one has the strongest, and the other the most cultivated understanding; that one has the most aridency, and the other the most experience of mankind; that one has a mind more gifted by nature, and the other a mind less cankered by prejudice." John Quincy Adams paid these tributes to men with whom he would not even sign a peace treaty.

The first ten days of November, 1814, were significant for the evaluation of the positions of both sides. Acrimonious debates raged among the American Ministers, and serious questions were discussed in the British Cabinet. The American difficulties were centered around two propositions: navigation of the Mississippi River by the British in return for a renewal of New England fishing rights in Canadian waters. The coupling of these two resolutions had been a British stipulation since the initial meetings in August; only now in November did they come to absorb the attention of John Quincy Adams and his fellow negotiators.

1. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, December 16, 1814, in Ford, V, 238-239.
The Treaty of Peace of 1783 guaranteed the right of the people of the United States to fish the continental waters of North America. It was agreed that Americans should continue to enjoy unmolested the right to fish on the Grand Bank and all the other banks of Newfoundland, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and at all other locations previously used by fishermen of both countries. Americans had liberty to fish on the coasts, and in the bays and creeks of all other British dominions in America. They could dry and cure their catches in any of the bays, harbors and creeks of Nova Scotia, Magdalen Islands, and Labrador, as long as the islands remained unsettled or uninhabited. The treaty also upheld the free and open navigation of the Mississippi River, guaranteeing that right forever from the source to the Gulf of Mexico, to the subjects of Great Britain and the citizens of the United States. Now Great Britain threatened to withhold the vital fishing rights unless a Mississippi equivalent were returned. The British felt that the War of 1812 had abrogated both the Mississippi and the fishing privileges, and that they could concede one only with the renewal of the other.

The British claim to the privilege of Mississippi navigation was almost an academic one. At the most its success rested on the outcome of another Ghent proposal, that of rectification of the

3. Ibid., 42.
northwest boundary. The British had long been excluded from a northern access to the headwaters of the Mississippi; John Quincy Adams's successful blocking in the Senate of the proposed King-4
Hawkesbury Convention of 1803 had seen to that. The British evidently counted on a diplomatic victory to move the Canadian boundary south to the upper reaches of the river, and insure the navigation throughout. The lever they planned to use to pry this concession from the Americans was the fishing rights clause.

Albert Gallatin inaugurated American discussions on their proposed treaty projet by offering to renew both articles—the right to catch, dry and cure fish in waters within British jurisdiction plus the British right to navigate the Mississippi. John Quincy Adams tended to agree with this arrangement. To Adams, allowing the British to sail up the center of the continent was only a paper concession, of no actual value. Not so to "Harry of the West," the ardent sensationalist Henry Clay. His feelings on the matter were exactly opposite to those of Adams. Clay considered the fisheries an object of trifling amount. A renewal of the navigation right, according to Clay, would be giving the British a privilege far more important than any America should secure in return. A battle royal shaped up between the Massachusetts Minister and the Kentucky Representative.

Each man could marshall an imposing array of arguments to bolster his position. To John Quincy Adams the fishing question was

5. Memoirs, III, 60.
real and significant; it involved the livelihood of New England in general and Massachusetts in particular. Moreover the situation deeply touched the emotions of the righteous pedant, for it was tied up with family pride, and the Adams clan was a formidable family indeed. In the negotiations at the end of the Revolutionary War, the arguments of John Adams alone had resulted in the grant of the fishing rights so beneficial to his home area. Now the same question devolved upon the shoulders of John Adams's son, and it was to the father that John Quincy turned for advice. As the Americans began their discussions on the contents of the project, Adams addressed a letter to Quincy:

The situation in which I am placed often brings to my mind that in which you were situated in the year 1732. And I will not describe the feelings with which the comparison, or I might rather say the contrast affects me. I am called to support the same interests and in many respects the same identical points and questions. The causes in which the present war originated and for which it was on our part waged will scarcely form the most insignificant item in the Negotiating for Peace. It is not impressment and unalienable allegiance, blockades and orders in Council, Colonial trade and maritime rights or belligerent and neutral collisions of any kind that form the subjects of our discussion. It is the boundary, the fisheries and the Indian Savages. If there is among your papers relating to the negotiations of Peace in 1782 & 1783 any information tending to elucidate the third article of those Treaties, which you can communicate to me it may perhaps serve a valuable purpose to the Public.  

6. JQA to John Adams, Ghent, October 27, 1814, in JQA Letterbook, Adams Papers microfilm.
Instructions from James Monroe to the American Commissioners forbade them to bring the fisheries question into the discussions. But John Quincy Adams observed that those instructions were drawn without knowledge of the question as it then stood in Ghent. Adams agreed to Gallatin's initial proposal or one alternative. He took the ground that the whole right to the fisheries was recognized as a part of the national independence of the United States, that it could not be abrogated by the war, and that it needed no stipulation for its renewal. Adams was using every weapon available to bring Clay over to support the fisheries.

If it was possible for any man to be completely antithetical to the views of John Quincy Adams, that man was Henry Clay. Clay represented an interest that was rarely heard in 1783—that of the now-powerful West. The West had pushed America into war in 1813, but if Clay had anything to say, it would not be punished for its action. Clay had much to say. He argued vehemently against the proposed British navigation right, which involved an argument against the New England fishing privileges. Clay insisted that since Louisiana had become a state, the Mississippi was part of her sovereignty which the United States could not deal away, and that in the Congressional law authorizing Louisiana to form a Constitution, Clay had deemed it necessary, on the same principle, to introduce a section reserving the right of the people of Kentucky to navigate the river. Clay considered the river "a privilege much too important to be conceded for the mere

8. Ibid., 64.
liberty of drying fish upon a desert." The Mississippi, Clay contended, was destined to form a most important part of the interests of the American Union. Each day, according to Clay, its importance increased, and the British should have no more right to its navigation than to that of any other river flowing exclusively within American jurisdiction. Henry Clay could not allow any British encroachments upon the river trade and commerce on which his Western constituents depended. Finally, Clay feared that such a right would be used by Great Britain to back a claim for territorial access to the Mississippi by pushing south the northern boundary of the Louisiana Purchase.

It was a strong combination of sectional and national interests that Henry Clay used to argue against the British suppositions. No man interested in eventual westward expansion could fail to note their significance.

Henry Clay was willing to leave the fisheries as a grievance for another war, and to conclude the peace without saying anything about it. John Quincy Adams contended that such a solution would be a virtual abandonment of the American right, since the British had served notice that the matter was to be included in any treaty. As the first round of antipathy between the two men got under way, the imperious Clay found no other member of the Mission taking his stand, and he grew earnest in defense of it. John Quincy Adams noted that

10. Fish, 185.
Clay was "losing his temper and growing peevish and fractious." "I, too," the obstinate Bay-Stater reminded himself, "must not forget to keep a constant guard upon my temper, for the time is evidently approaching when it will be wanted." Yet Adams blandly wrote to his wife that "our deliberations have been cool, moderate, mutually conciliatory, and I think will result in full harmony." The embattled peace commissioner could spin a beautiful yarn when he so desired.

John Quincy Adams had thus taken his stand in favor of a treaty stipulation protecting New England fishing rights; he would not sign a compact without this provision. Gallatin's position called for the renewal of both articles, to which Adams, but not Clay, subscribed. Oddly enough, it was the adamant Clay who resolved the dilemma for the moment. Although Gallatin's compromise had received a 3-2 vote for inclusion, Clay was in the minority and had vowed he would not sign the communication. However, Clay shortly after proposed a paragraph for the note to be sent to the British Plenipotentiaries, as a substitute for the Gallatin measure. Clay's proposed paragraph took the ground that Adams had originally suggested—all the fishing rights formed a part of American independence and were excluded by instructions from the discussions. Clay asked that all mention of both the Mississippi and the fisheries be left out of the treaty draft, but a side objection be made protecting the claim to the fisheries.

12. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, November 8, 1814, in Ford, V, 178.
Thus the American projet stated that the Mission had no authority to discuss the fisheries, while upon the subject of the Mississippi it said nothing at all. Other projet articles rejected, as before, the basis of uti possidetis for ending the war; suggested temporary agreements for the record on impressment and indemnities, and left all points in dispute to future negotiation.

The one suggestion that engendered the most internal dispute, next to the Adams-Clay feud, was Adams's proposal to conclude the peace, anticipating instructions, on the basis of status quo ante bellum. Clay opposed this principle because he thought it renewed Britain's right, by Jay's Treaty of 1794, to trade with the Indians. Gallatin agreed with Adams, but not Clay. Adams was troubled by the argument, for he wrote "I would at this moment cheerfully give my life for a peace on this basis. If peace was possible, it would be on no other." If England would not accept a status quo proposal, Adams felt, the continuance of the war would be placed entirely at the British door, leaving America with the strongest possible case in its favor. Finally the Adams argument swung over its opponents, and the projet was adopted, signed and presented to the British on November 10. It requested a contre-projet specifically treating the British proposals.

As usual, John Quincy Adams was pessimistic regarding the eventual outcome of the peace conference at Ghent. His attitude
remained unchanged after the deliverance of the project. "Our negoti-
tiation is spinning out," he angrily wrote, "and unless our government
brings it to a close, will be a mere chancery suit." Adams be-
lieved his status quo proposal to be more comprehensive, more liberal,
and more adapted to ensure peace than any other aspect of the Ghent
correspondence. He was prepared to take all the blame that would
devolve upon him if the British chose to break off negotiations on
his point. The resolute Minister expressed his continued irrita-
bility at his prolonged residence in Ghent: "Had the British
plenipotentiaries been sent here honestly to make peace," he roared
to his wife, "this is what might and should have been done before the
twentieth of August on both sides. The pretended etiquette is an
absurdity." A dispatch from Secretary of State Monroe must have
served to assuage Adams's irascibility and patch up his ego, for it
authorized the Commission to press for status quo ante bellum—Adams's
precise offer.

Events outside of Ghent now conspired to bring the prospect
of peace—and Adams's troubles—to the forefront. Several factors
caused the British Ministry to pause and consider its response. Al-
though the Cabinet was hopeful that General Sir Edward Pakenham would
win a smashing triumph at New Orleans, it was believed that he must

15. JQA to William Harris Crawford, Ghent, November 6, 1814, in Ford, V, 180.
16. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, November 11, 1814, Ibid., 183.
17. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, November 22, 1814, Ibid., 204.
follow through by new descents on Eastern coastal cities to offset the
American victories in the North. Liverpool however could not supplant
this future hopeful conjecture with present unpleasant reality. He
gave other reasons to Wellington and Castlereagh for being "most
anxious to get rid of the American war." Castlereagh, at Vienna,
was unable to make the full influence of England felt, so long as land
and sea disasters proved its inability to deal with an enemy persis-
tently termed contemptible. The Ministry learned that a vigorous
prosecution of hostilities would cost more than ten million pounds,
an added expense for the tax-weary British populace. Parliament was
extremely unwilling to vote additional taxes for another year's war
in North America in order to advance the frontiers of Canada. The
Russian Czar was making a bid for European leadership, and in Paris
plotting against the peace of 1814 were fermenting. So dangerous
did the situation appear there that attempts upon the person of the
Duke of Wellington were feared. Conditions certainly threatened an
explosion in France. Moreover, English merchants were impatient to do
business with their old customers in the United States, and the
American privateers that haunted the trade routes were a constant
bane to commerce. From home and abroad came compelling reasons to
negotiate a peace with the Americans at Ghent.

18. Irving Brant, James Madison, Commander in Chief, 1812-1836 (New
York, 1961), 372.
But the British had one iron left in the fire. In a troublesome situation in Paris sat England's greatest soldier, the Duke of Wellington. The Cabinet, on November 3, in a move calculated to bring morale to the North American army and hasten the victorious prosecution of its affairs, called on the Duke to go to America and assume leadership of British military forces there. Wellington's answer determined British policy. In a long letter to Liverpool, the Iron Duke expounded his military and political views. The war, he said, had been honorable to Great Britain. But neither he nor anyone else could achieve success, in the way of conquests, unless naval supremacy on the Great Lakes were asserted. Wellington endorsed the importance of Macdonough's victory by stating that it was impossible to maintain an army along the frontier without control of the Lakes. "I shall do you but little good in America," the famous commander wrote, "I shall go there only to prove the truth of Prevost's defence, and to sign a peace which might as well be signed now." Then the Duke displayed a startling example of the direction of foreign policy by military generals. He frankly observed that due to the state of the war, Britain had no right to demand any concession of territory. "Why stipulate for the uti possidetis?" he asked. His letter may be regarded as decisive.

Interestingly, the Iron Duke may have once held alternative

23. Ibid., 431.
ideas. Replying to a later query concerning the retreat of his own veterans--"the negotiators from Bordeaux," as John Quincy Adams contemptuously termed them--at Plattsburg, the warrior intoned, holding up his clenched hand, that "they wanted this iron fist to command them." And only five days before his November 9 letter, prior to serious meditation upon the effects of naval supremacy, Wellington had intimated a desire to go to North America within months. It was to the everlasting good fortune of John Quincy Adams and his colleagues at Ghent that Wellington waved a peace and not a battle flag in London.

Lord Liverpool was still digesting Wellington's report when an American political maneuver scored a coup. President Madison had thoughtfully released the initial August correspondence regarding the Ghent deliberations. On November 19 the British press published the dispatches and the public learned for the first time of the excessive British demands. Englishmen were appalled, and the Parliamentary Opposition bore down against more war and more taxes. The seed planted by the August draft of John Quincy Adams bore pleasant fruit three months later. All things taken into account, Great Britain would now have to choose between immediate peace and the sending in 1815 of a force considered too strong to be resisted. The British

24. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, November 8, 1814, in Ford, V, 178.
25. Quoted in Bierne, 303.
26. Dangerfield, 78.
27. Engleman, 87.
government decided: far from its usual policy of delay and inaction, it determined to force the Americans to make a peace.

Thus, when the British delivered their answer to the American project on November 27, the stipulation of uti possidetis was stricken. With the exception of certain dual-claimed islands in the Bay of Fundy, restoration of the status quo ante bellum was accepted. Consisting of a note from the Commissioners and the American draft with marginal annotations, the latest presentation simply removed as unnecessary the articles on the use of Indians in any future war, impressment, blockades and indemnities for British spoliations. Slight changes were suggested in the article relating to the northwest boundary. Silence was maintained regarding the fisheries, but again access to and navigation of the Mississippi was asserted. Always the British left a side door open: they would not be bound to adhere to these lenient terms later, should a peace not be concluded presently. Henry Clay positively objected to the River provision, but generally the American delegation was pleased.

"All the difficulties to the conclusion of a peace appear to be now so nearly removed," confided the seldom-optimistic John Quincy Adams to his diary, "that my colleagues all considered it as certain. I think it myself probable." However Adams toned down his first real burst of enthusiasm with a second observation: "But unless
we take it precisely as it is now offered, to which I strongly incline, I distrust so much the intentions of the British Government, that I still consider the conclusion as doubtful and precarious."

have everything but peace in our hands," he reasoned, adding that several relatively unimportant demands still implicated the national honor and would have to be dealt with. Always a stickler for details, the meticulous Adams had his first glimpse of peace.

Henry Clay again advanced the main arguments against the chances of amity. Gallatin offered an article securing the two 1783 rights—Mississippi navigation and fishing privileges—and Clay lost his temper, as he usually did whenever the right of the British to navigate the Mississippi was discussed. Evidently the violent Kentuckian had not yet developed the talents which would endear him to later generations as the Great Compromiser. Clay was utterly averse to admitting the one as an equivalent for the other. The more he heard of the fisheries, Clay exploded, the more he was convinced that they were of little or no value. The Mississippi was of immense importance, the fisheries of none. Gallatin implored Clay to consider New England's separatist proclivities; to deprive that area of its previous rights would drive it further from the Union. Clay railed that there was no use in attempting to conciliate people who never

would be conciliated. The discussion between the delegates threatened to get completely out of hand, and Adams added fuel to the fire. In an outburst of pedagogy he reduced Clay's ideas and opinions to the realm of an historical phantasmagoria. It was not the first nor would it be the last Adams stand on the fisheries.

Adams told Clay that the loss of any part of the fisheries would be a subject of triumph and exultation both to the enemy and to those Yankee dissidents who opposed the war. If he should consent to give up even Moose Island, the constrained Adams continued, he would be ashamed to show his face among his countrymen. Moose Island contained the town of Eastport, which for many years had been regularly represented in the Massachusetts State Legislature. As for the Mississippi right, Adams considered it nothing, a mere grant from the United States. The British had a just and equitable right to its use according to the Treaty of 1783, but it was an empty right, completely non-injurious to the Americans. Moreover, the Americans were pressing for a northwest boundary that would originate at the Lake of the Woods and run westward, not even touching the Mississippi. Therefore the navigation right would be most useless to the British, especially since they had abandoned all pretense to any territorial possessions upon the River. Only British national pride and honor upheld their claim; the Ministry was loathe to make a peace abandoning it.

33. Ibid., 72.
Henry Clay dropped his guard at the avalanche of Adams's polemics, and conceded that his Kentucky constituents would indeed be able to import goods from Europe with a land carriage of only fourteen miles. But, he argued, the British request for territorial movement in the north would give them a dangerous and pernicious access to the country, and enable them to trade with the Indians and exert their harmful influence over those savages. Adams's rebuttal called for a provision to collect duties on the British goods and in that way keep tabs on the traders. The ardent New Engander had an answer for every Clay objection, as well as an abundance of reasons of his own. The force of his judgments was borne out when Gallatin's original article offering the navigation as an equivalent for the fisheries came up for a vote. Clay and his toady Russell recorded their disapproval, but signed the final note. Adams told Clay that he would make a coalition with him of the East and West: if the British withheld the fisheries, Adams would join Clay in refusing them the navigation. Incly, Clay replied that the Americans would probably lose on two counts.

The American note, delivered to the British on November 30, requested a joint conference, the first since August 19. The delegation from the British Isles agreed to the request, and the eight negotiators met on December 1 at the Chartreux, the British hotel--

34. Ibid., 73-74.
35. Bemis, John Quincy Adams, 214.
36. Memoirs, III, 76.
much to the dissatisfaction of the precise Adams, who recalled that according to form it was the Britishers' turn to pay a visit to the American residence.

At the December 1 meeting, a wide range of topics was discussed, including the cessation of hostilities, the restoration of territory and prizes, boundary lines, and indemnities. Adams, aided strongly by Gallatin and secondly by Bayard, did most of the talking; Clay, defeated by his own colleagues, remained strangely taciturn. On the vital equivalents question, Adams told his British antagonists that the Americans considered both the Mississippi and the fisheries as inviolable, and neither would have to be mentioned in a treaty. But, he continued, Great Britain, by asking for a new Mississippi stipulation, had implied that the rights on both sides were abrogated by the war. If one were granted, the other must of need be included. After some further inconclusive remarks, the subject was passed over.

The urgency of the problem was brought home to John Quincy Adams during the second conference on December 10. Amid the usual diplomatic bickering was the British interpretation of the Adams-fisheries Clay-Mississippi controversy: Great Britain agreed to negotiate with the United States for granting the fisheries within the British jurisdiction for an equivalent to be granted by the United States; and the United States agreed to negotiate with Great Britain.

37. Updyke, 327-329.
for granting to British subjects the right to navigate the Mississippi for an equivalent to be granted by Great Britain. The meaning of all this to Adams was the sinister implication that both rights were forfeited, or subject to forfeit, by war. The effect of forfeiture on Adams, to whom the natural right to the fisheries was an article of faith, was appalling. Adams was astounded when even his staunch supporter Albert Gallatin ventured the opinion that the American ground for claiming the fisheries was untenable. The faltering of his comrade made Adams all the more certain of his own stand. The people of Massachusetts, he stated, could not be prevented from exercising their right without the constant maintenance of an armed force to drive them from it. Moreover, the British position proved clearly to Adams that Great Britain itself did not consider the American claim untenable, since it offered to abandon the Mississippi because of the claim. In addition, Great Britain considered the fisheries even more than equivalent for the navigation, since it refused to continue both, proposing, instead, to abandon both.

Adams still entertained great doubts of the British intentions. By abandoning everything of value in their original demands, yet stubbornly clinging to details, it seemed to Adams that his adversaries were still merely keeping the negotiations open for their own benefit. To break off the talks and place the blame on an

39. Dangerfield, 84-85.
American trifle was Adams's view of the latest developments. Gallatin did not agree, and said that it was an extraordinary thing that the question of peace or war now depended solely upon two points in which the people of the state of Massachusetts alone were interested—Moose Island and the fisheries. Adams retorted that that was the very pernicious character of the British propositions; they were trying to separate the disaffected New England states from the Union. The nationalist Adams would not give treasonous interests the right to sway the people by claiming that their livelihood had been sacrificed.

At this point Henry Clay intervened: he was for a war three years longer. He had no doubt that three more years of war would make the Americans a warlike people; then they would emerge with honor. Clay wanted to retrieve the American military reputation; he was for playing brag with the British Plenipotentiaries. They had been playing brag all along, blustered Clay. He asked Adams if he knew how to play brag. Adams had forgotten. Clay said it was the art of beating your adversary by solemnly and confidently outbragging him. Adams undoubtedly agreed with Bayard who reminded both men of the unfavorable odds of the game. Clay's outburst may be explained by his attitude, as his position became more and more displeasing to himself. He, more than any man, had made the war. He had goaded his countrymen into waging it and had predicted great victories: an easy conquest of Canada, a peace dictated at Quebec, an acknowledgment by a defeated

41. Ibid., 100-101.
England of all the rights claimed for American commerce and seamen. To make peace in Ghent in December would stultify all his prophecies and perhaps blast his career. If peace could be delayed, perhaps the fortunes of war would turn. John Quincy Adams would not hold such extremist views, but his identity with the fisheries was, to him, sacrosanct, and if Great Britain would not concede his point, Adams would undoubtedly join Clay.

The men from the Bay and the Bluegrass states were mutually antagonistic throughout much of the deliberations. They did agree on one thing—that any peace made would be bad enough. Adams felt that when the people were secure in the enjoyment of all the five Commissioners should obtain, they would count it for nothing, and only look at what was yielded. The very people now the most clamorous against the war, he continued, would be equally clamorous against the concessions made for peace. Clay may intuitively have perceived a British gun upon a rampart or a warship upon a river. Both the eternal pessimists were destined to be wrong.

The five Americans faced the three Britons again on December 12. Only two differences remained—Adams's islands in Passamaquoddy Bay and the fisheries. It seems both countries had long laid claim to Moose Island, and while it rested under British bayonets in 1814, it was not to be returned to the United States under

43. Memoirs, III, 104.
the status quo agreement. Discussion on the past, present and future ownership turned into violent argument, and tempers flared on the British side. An agreement was reached, under Adams's leadership, to refer the problem to special post-war commissioners. Then the agenda turned to the equivalents, and John Quincy Adams reiterated the arguments which to him sounded so forcible, to others so illusory. After some desultory conversation upon the point, the British Commissioners requested the American position in writing, and the meeting adjourned. Clay was now confident that the British desired peace, but Adams dissented. "The whole tenor of the conference had confirmed me in the opinion that the British government have insidiously kept these two points open for the sake of finally breaking off the negotiation and making all their other concessions proofs of their extreme moderation, to put upon us the blame of the rupture," summed up the recalcitrant Minister. Now the determination and reserve of John Quincy Adams would be put to the supreme test.

In the preparation of the written note, Clay was for persisting in the rejection of both the British demands, but eventually yielding to both. Bayard chose to deliver the islands, and wavered in his support of the fisheries. Gallatin had given up the islands and leaned toward disposal of the fisheries. Adams himself had made both questions an ultimatum, but resolved to yield on the islands and stand rock-firm on the fisheries. Finally Adams was reduced to the

44. Ibid., 104-112.
45. Updyke, 347-348.
point of despair. He told his colleagues that he had at last seen the difference between them: they had determined ultimately to give up the fisheries and Adams had not. He believed his ground to be good and solid; he could not admit a distinction between the two articles of the Treaty of 1783. John Quincy Adams took his stand. Since his four coadjutors were ready to yield his fisheries, Adams thought they were wrong not to submit to Britain immediately, and sign a treaty without another reference to England, as well as without his signature. He could not sign the treaty for he could not yield a Massachusetts lifeline. "I owed a duty to the State distinct from that which we all owed to it as a member of the Union," rationalized Adams. "I was called upon to make a double sacrifice, both in this and the Moose Island question, and it placed me in one of the most painful dilemmas I had ever experienced." Thus spoke the adamant New Englander, willing to reject the peace that was offered on the fisheries article alone.

What was the reason for this peculiar turn of events at Ghent? Why did John Quincy Adams place himself on a pedestal in support of an American right to fish in British waters? Where had his previous support gone? The answers to these paramount questions lie in the immediate past of Albert Gallatin and the long-range past of Adams himself.

Albert Gallatin was under extreme financial pressure to
conclude a peace. He had first volunteered to join the Commission from a sincere desire to halt the ruining effects of wartime governmental spending. Since then his worries had been justified. In November he had received a letter from his friend Alexander Baring, the London banker for the United States and the middleman between the British Cabinet and the American Commissioners. Baring, undoubtedly acting under suggestions from Whitehall, was blunt and to the financial point. Interest payments were due from the United States on the balance of the Louisiana dividend. A large sum was charged in account for the relief of seamen. Baring expressed doubts about paying the bills of a hostile government; he hoped for a favorable change to relieve his anxiety before January. Implicit in the letter: a threat to deprive the United States of all banking facilities in Europe. To the ex-Treasury Secretary this prospect was tormenting. A second Baring letter only reduced Gallatin to further fiscal faintheartedness. Both letters must have reached Ghent by December 4; by December 14 Gallatin was ready to abandon the American claim to the fisheries. John Quincy Adams had lost a pillar of support to the financial exigencies of running a nation.

Adams owed his adamancy to his upbringing. Old John Adams, the Revolutionary patriot, had imbued in his son, John Quincy, a strange mixture of national and sectional ideas. Both men were proud and self-reliant, had a strong sense of public duty, and were certain

47. Dangerfield, 80-81.
that everything they did was for the common good. Determination, integrity and self-examination—their vigorous code of life—produced an intractible feeling of truth to their God, their country and themselves, and no man, they felt, could demand of them more. They were earnest, capable certain men. Both were intensely patriotic, inflexibly honest, erudite and industrious, as well as irascible, stubborn, aloof, pious and abstemious. And if the arguments of John Adams were successful in wringing the fishing concessions from Great Britain in 1783, the same arguments would serve to preserve those fruits in 1814. Those principles were repeated in letters from John Adams to his son, as the fisheries gained significance towards the end of the peace conference. To the Adamses, as John wrote, United States rights to the fisheries constituted no grant from Great Britain. Rights and liberties were so valuable that they could never be surrendered. The metaphysical distinction between a right and a liberty was not obvious; a right was a liberty, and a liberty was a right. It was as much a natural right to fish in Newfoundland waters as it was a liberty to angle off the Massachusetts coast. The ocean was the common property of all mankind, to fish wherever and whenever he pleased. Indeed, Americans had a stronger and a dearer right than even the Englishmen, for it was the colonial seamen who, at their own expense, had initially discovered, explored and settled the fishing

48. For a discussion of John and John Quincy Adams see Martin B. Duberman, Charles Francis Adams, 1807-1886 (Boston, 1960), 2; and Nelson Manfred Blake and Oscar Theodore Barck, Jr., The United States in its World Relations (New York, 1960), 119.
grounds and the surrounding areas. The moral and divine right was earned by God and the sword; the strong and clear liberties could never be forfeited. In short, the Americans had more right to the fisheries than any other nation. Moreover, the English could fish the North American coasts from Newfoundland to Louisiana; they had an eternal obligation not to alienate the American pretensions. Thus did John Adams justify New England's livelihood in 1783; so did John Quincy Adams uphold the same rights and liberties thirty-one years later. In mid-December at Ghent, he stood alone.

For one week Adams remained secluded in his lonely and unassailable ivory tower. Certain he was that the British would reject the American's last request for silence; certain he was that he would not sign a peace without it. On the 22nd of December the British answer came. Adams had gambled, and Adams had won. Bathurst agreed to a discreet silence on both the Mississippi and the fisheries, a silence that expressed no abandonment of either right. If ever a man had quickly learned how to play brag, it was John Quincy Adams. The peace was assured. The fisheries were safe. Adams was rescued.

CHAPTER VI: A TIME OF TRIUMPH
"I cannot but remark," John Quincy Adams once reflected, "how large a portion of the obstacles with which statesmen have to contend proceeds from the vices and passions and perversities of those with whom they have to co-operate."

If Adams ever considered himself a statesman, which indeed he was, he could have found no better time for application of his observation that the tumultuous months preceding the signing of the Treaty of Ghent of 1814. The indomitable American Minister, meticulous and fastidious in his ways, had labored long under varying handicaps. His staunch reserve and inflexible modes rendered him unsuitable to lead a delegation of complex and magnetic personalities who were equally individualistic. His home-state support consisted of disgruntled Federalists with separatist proclivities; he himself had been forced from the United States Senate for refusing to conform to its peculiar policies. Not one to quibble over local interests when the security and welfare of his country were at stake, Adams caustically referred to the Essex Junto as the "demon of disunion," or "the internal ulcer in our body-politic." Adams, the son of Massachusetts, fought alone for his state; Governor Pickering disdained to tell him, as he told others, that she would certainly yield half her territory to save the fisheries. On that subject Adams almost lost the fruits of five months of tedious diplomatic dealings.

In typical Adams behavior he refused to budge from a prepared position so sectional in nature yet so national in all its overtones. He asked his colleagues for one last stand, and after a week of painful prospects it was the opposition that paved the path to peace. "The relief to my mind when the proposed article was withdrawn," sighed Adams, "was inexpressible."

When the British note finally arrived in American hands on December 22, Adams at once realized that the last obstacle to peace was removed. For the time being the fisheries question was solved—withdrawn by the British Cabinet—and though the subject was left open for a dangerous future controversy, Adams's immediate involvement was ended. Having twice previously stated the American views fully and strongly, he did not think any further written declaration upon the subject was necessary. The dour patriot was no doubt happy with the solidifying turn of events.

Henry Clay did not take the British concession with such an air of relief. Adams noted that Clay manifested some chagrin, talked of breaking off the negotiation, and was in a particularly ill humor. Clay would have preferred to admit formally that both the British right to navigate the Mississippi, and the American right to the fisheries within British jurisdiction, were abrogated by the war. Clay even entreated Adams to join him in breaking off the negotiations. Adams refused; he had offered to break off on the Indian article.

3. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, December 30, 1814, in Ford, V, 257.
which Clay had not chosen to do, and now there was nothing to break off upon. Gallatin and Bayard did not know where it was that Clay's shoe pinched, and both were astonished and impatient with their high-strung cohort. Perhaps Clay felt as he had a week before, when he said that "we should make a damned bad treaty, and he did not know whether he would sign it or not."

The next day, December 23, a final conference was held between the delegations of the two English-speaking countries. An embroilment arose over the type of money—specie or currency—to be used to repay certain advances. The position taken by the three Englishmen prompted the tart Adams to remark that "there is nothing that more distinctly characterizes the temper and spirit of the British Plenipotentiaries in this negotiation than this artifice to filch a profit of fifteen or twenty per cent." Perhaps the Minister wondered if British degradations on American commerce would actually cease with the end of the war.

Conversations and odds and ends of business were generally at a mundane level that day, as the British Commissioners had been instructed to conclude a peace, and neither side was anxious to put it off. Copies of the document were drawn up overnight, and the next day, December 24, Christmas Eve, 1814, the eight negotiators gathered at the Chartreux, the British residence. The five Americans, if the
recreated Sir Amedee Forestier painting can be relied upon, were clad in the sombre suits of the day; the three Britons were resplendent in their colorful official garb. Six copies of the Treaty of Peace were signed, sealed and sent on their way to the respective governments. Confronting the enemy over the conference table for the last time, John Quincy Adams voiced the hope that it would be the last treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain. That night he finished his journal entry with a truly pious paragraph: "I cannot close the record of this day without an humble offering of gratitude to God for the conclusion to which it has pleased him to bring the negotiations for peace at this place, and with a fervent prayer that its result may be propitious to the welfare, the best interests, and the union of my country."

Initial celebration of the official end to the greatest of all calamities, war, was confined to the city of peace, Ghent. On the 28th the American delegation gave a dinner for the British Ministers and others of the city's social elite. John Quincy Adams outdid himself in offering toasts to everyone from His Britannic Majesty to the lowliest citizen of Ghent. All the while the band of the Society of St. Cecelia played an excellent selection of bipartisan patriotic airs. Another strictly formal affair was a banquet given by the Ghent society on January 5 at the stately Hotel de Ville. The principal pastime was again the drinking of toasts to the accompanying

7. Ibid., 126-127.
of national anthems. John Quincy Adams rose to the occasion with brilliantly prophetic polemics: "Gent, the city of peace; may the gates of the temple of Janus, here closed, not be opened again for a century!" Within a few days the five Americans departed forever from the "city of peace." They had matched wits and wrath for six months before emerging with a just and honorable treaty. Russell would continue an undistinguished diplomatic and domestic career. Bayard would die in a few months, immediately after returning to his Delaware home. Gallatin would serve in France and England before assuming the revered status of elder statesman and oracle. Clay would return to his House Speakership, and a long and distinguished Senatorial career. And ahead of John Quincy Adams lay successively higher levels of fame and fortune: the Ministry in England, Secretary of State, the Presidency itself. In his mind, after two years of bitter humiliation, the honor of the United States at last had been redeemed. The future belonged to Adams, to Clay, to the new nationalists, to the continentalists.

The Treaty of Ghent was actually a hollow document. Article One provided simply for a firm and universal peace, the cessation of hostilities, and the return of property under the uti possidetis principle. Article Two set up time limits for the return of prize ships captured after ratifications had been exchanged. Article Three dealt with prisoners of war. Article Four left the fate of the

disputed islands in the Bay of Fundy—Grand Manan and those in Passamaquoddy Bay—to a binational Commission which would meet at a later date. Another Commission was created in Article Five to survey the northeast boundary and report its findings. The same formula was applied to the northwest boundary in Articles Six and Seven. Article Eight merely described the administrations of the mixed Commissions, now four in all. The great early difference was dismissed in Article Nine, as the Indians reverted to their status of 1811. Both parties agreed to strive for the abolition of the slave trade in Article Ten. The final Article provided for ratification proceedings.

Both sides, then, agreed to disagree on everything important except to end the war and maintain pre-1812 boundaries. The simple cessation of hostilities left every claim on either side open for future settlement. The Treaty was in the nature of an armistice, disputed questions either ignored or postponed for future negotiation.

The United States thus secured nothing for which it went to war—neither a redress of the grievances that President Madison had outlined, nor the hoped-for annexations of Canadian or Florida land. Impressment, bitterly resented though it was, was not even mentioned. Neutral rights drew a Treaty blank. The Treaty glossed over the great differences between Great Britain and the United States, dwelling instead on unimportant superficialities. In such a

compromise peace none of the original issues was settled. Neither side imposed its will on the other; both sides, in a sense, had won the war and emerged from it with a treaty that did not contradict the war aims of either.

The Treaty of Ghent freed England to cope with the growing crises of Europe. To be sure, there was no guarantee in the treaty that England wanted to settle her affairs with America peacefully. It was a negative sort of affair capable of leading the nations toward peace or war. The mutual apprehensions created by the war were continued in the peace. Yet the treaty is remarkable more for what it omits than for what it contains. The Commissioners secured the benefits desired without enumerating them, perhaps even to a greater extent than if the benefits had been enumerated. For by leaving the disputes to be settled by time, they allowed that final negotiator to calm the rankled passions and animosities that still lingered in 1815. Because the treaty contained no violent disagreements, no cause for future hostilities lay dormant. The American nation was expanding, in population, productivity, capital accumulation, opportunity, social mobility, goals of enterprise, and openmindedness of economic thought. After the treaty, the United States gave secondary importance to European affairs, and concentrated on its own internal growth. The work of John Quincy Adams and his associates

15. Edward Howland Tatum, Jr., The United States and Europe, 1815-1823 (Berkeley, 1936), 22.
16. Wilson, 385-386.
marked America's removal from essentially European entanglements.

After the Treaty of Ghent, America, unhampered by English designs, was free to fulfill its continental destiny. The envoys saved the West from British encroachments, and America advanced, eventually, to the Pacific. A hundred years of unrivalled growth and an era of unchallenged American security and expansion began.

John Quincy Adams recognized the nature of the Ghent document and expressed it in unexampled prose: "The Treaty would more properly be called an unlimited armistice than a peace, and the day we agreed to sign it, I told my colleagues that it would immortalize the negotiators on both sides, as a masterpiece of diplomacy, by the address with which it avoided the adjustment of any one dispute that had ever existed between the parties. Certain it is," Adams somberly added, "that no other than such a peace could have been made."

John Quincy Adams was content to let the world be the judge of his diplomatic handiwork. "It is not such as under more propitious circumstances might have been expected," he wrote to his mother, adding that to be fairly estimated it should be compared not with American desires but with the world situation before and during the deliberations. "We have abandoned no essential right," wrote Adams, "and if we have left everything open for future controversy, we have at least secured to our country the power at her own option to

17. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, January 3, 1814, in Ford, V, 261.
extinguish the war." To his wife Adams expressed the same reserve, but more personal feeling: "Although the peace is not what I should have wished, and although it may acquire no credit in our country to those who made it, I consider the day on which I signed it as the happiest of my life; because it was the day on which I had my share in restoring peace to the world." "I have the comfort of reflecting that no one right of any sort has been abandoned; and that no reasonable man can hesitate a moment in saying that between such a peace, and the continuance of the war for another year, it was impossible to make a question." Adams evidently considered himself a reasonable man, and there was no question in his mind but that the treaty perpetrated no injustice or did no disservice to his country. "I dwell with delight upon the contemplation of the peace," Adams finally broke down and confessed. "Our honor remains unsullied; our territory remains entire."

John Quincy Adams had thus been concerned with the peace settlement from the September day in 1812 when he had been approached by Russian officialdom, to the concluding festivities in the opening days of 1815. From the beginnings of the Ghent deliberations he had been pessimistic, rightly blaming the British for their policy of delay and inaction. As titular leader of the American delegation,

18. JQA to Abigail Adams, Ghent, December 24, 1814, in Ibid., 248.
19. JQA to Louisa Catherine Adams, Ghent, December 30, 1814, in Ibid., 256-257.
20. Ibid., January 3, 1815, 260-261.
and diplomatic dean of the other seven novitiates, he lent his long years of experience to the task at hand. Often he was treated brusquely, his ideas ridiculed, his language flaunted, his papers attacked. Yet without his knowledge of international law, his cogent if fancifully-worded arguments, and his constant desire for action, the early position of the Americans would have indeed been seriously threatened.

In the last two months of the negotiations, Adams's value to the delegation asserted itself. Those who would gladly have yielded the occupied islands, and who would have delighted in dealing away the fisheries to obtain an earlier settlement, ran aground on his forceful reason. His section was governed by a resentful regime which had no sympathy among Adams's colleagues. He alone stood firm enough for a long enough time to prevent the disruption of New England's interests.

John Quincy Adams had thus nurtured the Peace of Ghent through its infancy, through growing maturity, finally to completion. Because of the peculiar nature of the British demands, which required Adams to live up to his past and to gamble his future career, it can be said that, as much as any man's, it was his Treaty.


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