

*Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning*

St. Petersburg

Febry. 17th, 1824

Private, By Sardinian Courier to Berlin

The Sardinian [minister] sends a Courier to-night to Turin via Berlin which gives me the opportunity of sending this letter and a couple of despatches to the care of Clanwilliam and thus avoiding at least the Russian Post Offices. It sounds odd to tell the Secretary of State that I am too busy to write to him to whom it is my particular business to keep writing, but such is the fact, and like Rabelais' semiquaver friar, I must speak in monosyllables.

I had yesterday my first interview with the Plenipotentiaries Nesselrode and Poletica respecting our N. W. Coast Convention, and we meet again to-morrow. As I was getting into my carriage to go to the conference, Mr Middleton, to whom I had communicated the fact and the reasons of my being instructed to treat separately in this affair, and who had been mightily embarrassed by the intelligence, called upon me and stated totidem verbis that he should think it necessary to protest against any territorial division between Russia and England of any parts of the Coasts in question as prejudicing more or less the claims of His Government founded on the Treaty of Washington, and this, notwithstanding the assurance which I had given him that I should insist upon the insertion of a clause in any convention which I might conclude which should save those pretensions. Upon arriving at Nesselrode's I thought it my duty to acquaint him with what Mr. Middleton designed to do, and after discussing what he *could* do, we agreed to proceed in our business. The fact is that he could do nothing, nor does any agreement which we may make with Russia preclude the United States from bringing forward hereafter any pretensions which they may think they have to any privileges, or rights, territorial or other, within the allotments assigned either to us or to Russia. I do not deny that Russia would come to the discussion of any such pretensions with increased advantage *after* a Convention of Limits with us. This Russia sees, and it makes Her as anxious as I am to conclude the business with us as soon as possible. Pray do not conceive that I am not following your prescription as to the mode of treating Middleton, or that I am not upon the best possible footing with him when I tell you that I am not sorry that he should be both defeated and disappointed in this business, not on his account, because he must ride to order and do his best, but on account of the perfidious Adams. Middleton tells me that he regrets the course which we take because he now feels in a scrape for not having sooner executed his original instructions instead of waiting to see the result of the proposal made to us for a concert of measures—and what do you imagine those original instructions were? Nothing less than to propose to Russia to proceed to divide the whole coast in question between Her and the United States to our entire exclusion. It is even so—I had it from his own lips yesterday that such were his instructions, and an hour afterwards I had from those of Poletica that he had actually made to him this proposal. Now there does appear to me to have been a baseness in this business on the part of Adams which nobody but Adams was capable of. But this trick has failed—I shall conclude certainly speedily, and I think satisfactorily, our separate arrangements, and Adams may bellow as much as he pleases.