

Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin New York, 5 June 1788 (excerpts)

As the moment to decide the great question that agitates everyone approaches, the Congress is filling up; nearly ten States are currently represented, and this assembly awaits only the decision of two Conventions before ordering the election of a President and other Members of the new Government. The matter that will afford the most difficulty will be determining the residence. The largest number of Delegates are of the opinion not to convene the new Congress in New York, but it will be almost impossible to agree on the place that ought to be chosen since each Delegate will follow his own passions or the instructions of his State in this regard. Given this prospect, one hopes that this Assembly will remain in New York, since the different parties will not easily be able to bring together seven votes for any other city. It is generally agreed that the seat of Government ought to be between the Hudson River and the Potomac River, but this area includes four States that all want to have Congress in their territory.

This Assembly, while waiting, occupies itself with several matters that have a major importance for the confederation; such as, among others, the emancipation of the district of Kentucky and its admission to Congress as the fourteenth State. According to the resolutions of the inhabitants of this district the Government of Virginia must give up her Sovereignty there on 31 December of this year and a new Constitution must be drawn up there modeled after those of the other States. Virginia consented to this emancipation, on the condition that Congress admit the new State into the confederation, and to obtain this object a Kentuckian is currently in this Assembly in the capacity of a Delegate from Virginia. But party spirit, always active, always narrow in viewpoint, always more indefatigable in a democracy than under all other Governments, raises great difficulties in the way of an aim that ought not to meet with any. Kentucky is, like Vermont, independent *in fact*; it is a question of making it a friend or of detaching it entirely from the union and making it an asylum for all the malcontents, all the Bankrupts, all those who will have incited revolts or who will have refused to contribute to the repaying of the debts of the Confederation; but the Northern States are jealous of the importance that one more vote would be able to give to the Southern section; to compensate for this disadvantage they want to have the State of Vermont admitted, if circumstances permit it. New York, on which this last emancipation depends, will not be against it at all, but a large number of private individuals whose land had been usurped by Vermonters having asked the legislative Assembly of this State for compensation for the losses that the independence of Vermont would occasion, this Assembly has deemed it best to turn its attention to it no longer. The Northern States thus look for all sorts of pretexts to deprive the Kentuckians of a Seat in Congress, and they put so much concerted effort and obstinacy into their measures that it will be difficult to defeat them....

MacGillivray, Chief of the Creeks, still continues his devastations in Georgia. He has declared that he will not lay down his arms until he has chased the Georgians from the Continent or has made them give the most positive assurances that they will no longer disturb his nation in the peaceful possession of its lands. This unusual man has introduced a practice among the Savages that cannot fail to have a good effect. Instead of killing prisoners, he takes

care to incorporate them into his warriors. Negroes especially are a great help to him; he has abducted a considerable number of them from the planters in Georgia. If he can overcome the natural indolence of the Creeks, he could perhaps make a powerful and formidable nation of them. He has already accustomed them to raising Animals; this perhaps can be considered as their first step toward civilization.

The troubles that Georgia has to fear from the restless nature and ferocity of these Savages will make it fervently desire the establishment of a more effective Government. It is supported in this regard by South Carolina, which has just ratified the new Constitution by a majority of 149 to 73. The news of this important event, which took place on the 25th of last month, has only arrived today, and it was received by Federalists with the greatest satisfaction. The Virginia Convention is currently assembled, and there is some hope that it will be the ninth State to ratify thus putting the seal on the new Constitution. Its example will necessarily bring over North Carolina, which has for a long time been in the habit of following the impetus that Virginia has given it.

The elections of the State of Newyork, My Lord, are not favorable to the Government that is being brought into existence, and the opposition party there seems to have a majority of two-thirds. The defection of this State would certainly be very embarrassing for the new Confederation, which would find itself divided, so to speak, by a foreign territory, but sooner or later it would result in a schism between the maritime districts of Newyork, which are Federalist, and those of the North, which are of the opposition party, and as the City of Newyork commands the mouth of the river that is the only resource of this State, it will necessarily force the interior districts to submit to its commercial regulations and fiscal policies, which are the principal purpose for the revolution that is brewing.

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