

THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS: FACES DIFFICULTIES WITH ALGIERS: 1794 (From Official Records of the Congress)*

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Abstract:

This study investigates official discussions of members of the American congress in January 1794; various problems were facing the new republic in the American continent among them, the prohibition of the American commerce from reaching over the Mediterranean sea because of the Algerian navy. The Algerian non-recognition of the independence of the United States and its separation from Great Britain was due to Special relations between Algeria and Britain in that period. Therefore, members of the congress discussed the matter of the protection of American commerce in high seas. Besides, They have studied the establishment of US fleet to face the Algerian navy. At the end, though the deficiency in the required money, they agreed to construct canons and six ships of different size to hinder the Algerian ones. Some people even requested buying peace from Algeria, where as others refused because they claimed the Portugal support, its ports and ships to be against the Algerian fleet through the Strait of Gibraltar which was considered a vital transit to the Algerian fleet towards the Atlantic Ocean; and chasing the American merchant vessels. This has effectively led to taking down 11 ships in one month, in October 1793. Consequently, Britain has commanded Portugal to sign a truce with Algeria in 1793. This has enabled her to overpass the strait to the Atlantic. The result was the capture of 11 ships with their crew that contained 105 US sailor and 21 captives in July 1785.

ملخص

تتناول هذه الوثيقة الرسمية مناقشات أعضاء الكونجرس الأمريكي في جانفي 1794، الصعوبات التي واجهت الجمهورية الجديدة في القارة الأمريكية، وهي عديدة، من أهمها حرمان التجارة الأمريكية من الوصول إلى البحر المتوسط، بسبب

البحرية الجزائرية وعدم اعتراف الجزائر باستقلال الولايات المتحدة عن بريطانيا نظرا للعلاقات المميزة بين الجزائر وبريطانيا في هذه الفترة، وعليه تناقش أعضاء الكونجرس في مسألة حماية التجارة الأمريكية في أعالي البحار، ودرسوا مسألة إنشاء أسطول أمريكي لمواجهة البحرية الجزائرية، واتفقوا في النهاية على بناء ست سفن متنوعة الحجم والمدافع للتصدي للسفن الجزائرية، رغم عدم توفر المال اللازم لهذا الأمر، وطالب البعض بشراء السلم من الجزائر وعارضه الآخر، إلي طلب دعم البرتغال بموانئها وسفنها للوقوف ضد الأسطول الجزائر عبر مضيق جبل طارق، الذي يعد معبرا حيويا للأسطول الجزائري نحو المحيط الأطلسي واصطياد السفن التجارية الأمريكية ، وهو ما أدى فعلا إلى إلقاء القبض على 11 سفينة تجارية أمريكية في شهر واحد، أكتوبر، عام 1793، عندما أمرت بريطانيا البرتغال بإبرام هدنة مع الجزائر، سنة 1793. وهو ما مكنها من اجتياز المضيق إلى الأطلسي وكانت النتيجة أسر 11 سفينة بطاقمها المكون من 105 بحار أمريكي، و21 أسير سنة 1785 في شهر جويلية .

Introduction

The attempts of the United States to obtain a treaty of peace with Algiers and the release of the American hostages held in prison here constitute an interesting chapter in American diplomatic history. The problem arose soon after the end of the American Revolution. On July 25, 1785, an Algerian xebec captured the schooner « Maria » of Boston three miles southeast of Cape St. Vincent, off the coast of Portugal, and five days later the « Dauphin » of Philadelphia was captured. The crews were sold into slavery in Algiers. The Congress had previously authorized the American ministers in Europe to negotiate the treaty. Unable to go in person, they sent John Lamb, a sea captain of Norwich, Connecticut, and authorized him to ransom the prisoners at the price of two hundred dollars a head. The mission failed. «1» Jefferson later resumed the negotiation through a religious Order, the Malthusians, but with no better success. «2» in 1793, the Algerians captured more American merchant vessels, and Washington, aroused by the plight of the hostages, authorized new negotiations .David Humphreys, minister to Portugal, was empowered to expend \$800.000 for peace and ransom. «3» Humphreys thought that the initiative should rest with the Dey of Algiers, since that the Dey had rejected previous American overtures. «4» The death of fourteen American prisoners during the first seven months of 1794,

however, caused him to change his mind, «5» and he returned to America, late in 1794, to consult the government.

Difficultis with Algiers

After the reading of some of private petitions, it was moved that the House go into a Committee on the state of the Union.

The draft of a resolution was handed to the SPEAKER, which had been drawn up by the Committee appointed to examine the papers on the Algerian business .The substance of the resolution was, that certain parts had been marked by the Committee as improper for publication; and therefore, that, in the course of the discussion, they should not be referred to, or the reading of them called for, by any of the members.

A motion to this purpose was then made and seconded.

Mr. HUNTER said he would treat the Committee as he would wish them to treat him. He had no design of condemning the Committee; but he could not think of attempting to discuss a question where he was not at liberty to call for and examine the very materials requisite for deciding his opinion.

On motion, the House went into a Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union.

The resolution being read for building four ships of 44 guns and two of 20 guns.

Mr. MADISON rose to inquire whether there was in the public stores of the United States a sufficient quantity of cedar and live oak for building the proposed six vessels? He was answered that there was not. Mr. M. then observed that it was evident this fleet could not be ready for effective service in the course of the present year. He imagined that there was another resolution, precedent as to the time of voting it, which ought to be before the Committee. The resolution, to which he alluded, was that assigning a sum of money to buy a cessation of hostilities from the Regency of Algiers. He was of opinion that the project of fitting out an armed squadron was liable to many solid objections. There were two points of light in which this subject might be surveyed. The first of these was, whether the Algerians acted from their own impulse in this matter? In that case, they were known to be in the habit of selling a peace; and, if they are

willing to do so, he fancied that it might be purchased for less money than the armament would cost. On the other hand, if they do not act from their own impulse, but upon the instigation of Britain, we may depend upon it that they cannot be bought. Britain will keep them hostile. There is infinitely more danger of a British war from the fitting out of ships than from the resolutions on the report of the Secretary of State. The distance which the ships would have to sail is not less than three thousand miles, and their number is too small for a decisive advantage. The Combined Powers would embrace the equipment of these ships as an excellent opportunity to pick a quarrel with the United States. Mr. M. expressed his doubts with regard to the propriety of this measure, because the expense would be immense, and there was no certainty of reaping any benefit from it.

Mr. CLARK was anxious to state his doubts on this subject, that gentlemen, who, by their habits of life, had met with opportunities of better information than he possessed, might correct him where he was wrong. In the first place, the ships would be too small in the point of number to be of any kind of importance, amidst the numerous navies of Europe. The distance from any friendly port, where, in case of accidents, they might repair, was likewise very great. It was to be expected that, when they fell in with British ships of war, that the latter would endeavor to search them for prohibited cargoes, and for seamen, because they were in the practice of impressing, their own countrymen wherever they could find them. This would produce a quarrel. There was a scheme which occurred to him, and which he judged would be less expensive and more effectual. This was to hire the Portuguese to cruise against the Algerines. He understood that the Court of Lisbon desired to keep her ships of war in actual service. The British have been in the habit of building frigates for the service of the Algerians, and, as he was informed, mariners, at a distance upon sea, could distinguish in what country vessels were built by their construction. Hence it would be difficult for the Captain of an American frigate to ascertain at sea a British ship of war from an Algerian. He had an objection to the establishment of a fleet, because, when once it had been commenced, there would be no end of it. We must then have a secretary of the navy, and a swarm of other people in

office, at a monstrous expense. If we build six ships this year, we should next year find it necessary to build six more, and so on. The combined Powers would find a much better pretence for a war by this armament than from the resolutions on the Report of the Secretary. Mr. C. closed his speech, which was heard with great attention, by observing that he rose principally to submit his opinions on this question as hints for those who were better qualified to form a judgment on the subject than himself.

Mr. BALDUIN expressed his doubts as to every part of this subject. He had not been able to gain any information that was satisfactory. To block up the Mediterranean was, he believed, impracticable. Bribery alone could purchase security from the Algerines. Spain and Britain had always found this method the cheapest. He had much confidence in the gentleman who had been employed to go as an Envoy to Algiers from this country. He was a thorough man. Mr. B. had yet formed no decided opinion, and could wish to suspend his judgment till he learned the issue of the present application to the Dey. If bribery would not do, he should certainly vote for equipping a fleet.

Mr. NICHOLAS feared that we were not a match for the Algerines. A small number of sailors were sufficient to navigate one of their ships, and they had a militia to man them who were innumerable. He had not been able to form an exact opinion, but he was afraid that we were not a match for them by sea.

Mr. S. Smith rose chiefly to answer the interrogatories proposed by **Mr. CLARK**, as to what harbors in Europe American ships could retire to for shelter? In any early part of his life, Mr. S. said that he had been in that part of the world, and could assure the House that there was no want of proper harbors to refit or obtain provisions in. The first he mentioned was Toulon; Marseilles, likewise, had a most excellent harbor, and there was no doubt that our vessels would be received there in the most friendly way, as the Algerines had lately declared war against the Republic of France. Spain had likewise, several excellent ports—Malaga, Cadiz, Barcelona, and Ferrol. In all these the American squadron would be heartily welcome, and meet with all kinds of naval stores in the

greatest abundance. Lisbon, also, was a fine harbor, and Oporto would be proper for the same purpose. So that, in case of accident, the armament had nothing to fear from wanting a place of retreat. He had no doubt that our vessels and our sailors would both be much superior to those of the Algerines. Their ships were old and crazy, and were presents made them by the Powers with whom they are not at war. The American bottoms must be better; and our fleet will most likely have its station between Oran and malaga, and, stretching across between those two ports, block up the mouth of the Straits. He adverted to the mistake of Mr. BALDWIN, who had said that Spain never attempted to block up the Straits ; the proper answer to which was, the Spain had an extensive coast, not less than four or five hundred miles, within the Mediterranean, so that she was quite differently situated, with regard to them, from America. Mr. S. mentioned, as a consolatory circumstance, that our profit was twice as great at present, in commerce, as it was before the war, in spite of all the spolitions committed by Britain and by Spain; and, if the war continues, the profits will continue to multiply twice as fast as they would otherwise do. As an evidence of this fact, he mentioned the high price of wheat at present in this market, and asked whether any gentleman had heard of a price so high at this season of the year before? A gentleman (Mr. NICHOLAS) had spoken of an Algerine militia. Why, sir, (said Mr. S). I shall set down against them the American militia, and so that account is settled. He estimated that the whole American exports and imports, in round numbers, was twenty millions of dollars each; and that the extra insurance on account of the Algerines, from one end of the year to the other, would not be less than five per cent. On the whole, which was, altogether, two millions of dollars from this Mr. S. inferred that it must be the very worst kind of economy to hazard an expense of two millions of dollars of insurance, for the sake of saving the charges of this armament .He did not see it improbable that the Algerines might very soon be on our coast, under the command of British or American renege does. It was nothing uncommon, among seamen, for two Captains to be in the greatest friendship to-day, and plundering each other's vessels tomorrow. As an example of what Americans, in particular, are capable

of doing, he repeated the history of a Mr. Cooper, of Virginia, who, some years ago, fitted out a ship for the express purpose of cruising against American vessels bound from or to the East Indies. He sent a person into the harbor of Algiers to solicit a commission from the Dey, and this Envoy had very near been taken prisoner, as the Dey wanted to have made a slave of him. Mr. S. said that Mr. Cooper was known to be a man of courage, perseverance, and as possessing that species of intellectual resources which qualify an adventurer for bold undertakings. He inferred, from this anecdote, that, if Mr. Cooper, a man of respectable birth and connections, could form such a scheme, what was not to be feared from the common set of seamen? He could not tell where the danger might end; nor did he know whether Philadelphia itself would be in safety. They might speak of their forts as much as they pleased; he knew their force, and did not much value it. The British had gone past them, and what was to hinder the Algerines, or such a man as Mr. Cooper, from getting past them? Were he on the coast of an enemy, he should not have the least scruple of engaging to run a ship by such forts, when there was in view so great a prospect as the plunder of Philadelphia. He strongly pressed the necessity of sending out the proposed fleet as quickly as possible.

Mr. AMES attacked the mover of the resolutions on the Report of the Secretary (Mr. MADISON) for not displaying in the affair of the Algerines some part of the spirit which he had exerted on the other occasion. He thought it shameful to buy a peace, and that there could be no security, if we did. He recommended an armament. Portugal had shown herself friendly; and, referring to what Mr. CLARK had stated, he was of opinion she would give our ships shelter in her ports. He thought that six stout frigates at the mouth of the Straits would do the business. He went at considerable length into Mr. MADISON's resolutions, and condemned, upon various grounds, the arguments and conduct of the gentlemen who supported them. Yesterday, we were told that Britain durst not quarrel with America, and to-day she is represented as ready to do it our commerce is on the point of being annihilated, and, unless an armament is fitted out; we may very soon expect the Algerines on the coast of America.

Mr. GILES, in reply, said that Mr. AMES drew inconsistent pictures. One day he represented the American commerce at the summit of prosperity; the next, it was reduced to nothing. In defense of the commercial regulations, he reminded the House that Britain, and not Algiers, was the real object of alarm, and the real source of hostility. It was, therefore, proper to provide remedies against both of these illustrious confederates. Algiers was but the instrument, Britain was the cause. The reliance of Britain upon this instrument plainly showed that she was not equal to a war and a commercial contest. She had therefore, turned loose the Algerines upon us.--a fact which is pretty generally acknowledged on both sides of the House. It is, therefore, in the power of Britain to prevent the progress of these pirates. The commercial restrictions will reduce Britain to difficulty, and she will then, for the sake of friendship with America, be glad to put a stop to the Algerine ravages. Until some measure of this kind has been adopted, Britain, as she has raised up Algiers, will keep her up. The cheapest mode of getting peace will certainly be by embracing the commercial regulations. Mr. G. was averse to the proposal of a fleet. He agreed very much with the gentleman from New Jersey, (Mr. CLARK,) that it would be a better expedient to hire the fleet of Portugal. He considered the establishment of a maritime force as having a direct tendency to war; whereas, the commercial restrictions had the same tendency to peace. The sending of American armed ships into the midst of the fleets of Europe would certainly produce a quarrel. It had been well remarked, (by Mr. CLARK,) that, if an attempt was made to search our ships of war, like our merchantmen, it would infallibly produce a public affront, and consequent hostilities.

Mr. MADISON, in reply to some remarks which had fallen from Mr. SMITH, respecting the present high price of wheat, in the American market, said that he had been informed of a place where wheat sold for four shillings and sixpence per bushel only, where the dollar passes for six shillings.

Mr. M. supposed that Britain could render very essential service to the Algerines, without embarking in a war. She has not embarked in a war to the Northwest of the Ohio, but she has done the same thing, in substance, by supplying the Indians with arms, ammunition, and,

perhaps, with substance. He had no assert that Britain directed the plan of the Indian expeditions, for he had no explicit evidence that they actually did so. In the same way that they give underhand assistance to the Indians, they would give it to the Algerines, rather than hazard an open war.

The Committee now rose, without coming to the question.

THE NAVAL FORCE The House resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House on the state of the Union. The Chairman read the resolution before the House for equipping a Naval force.

Mr. MADISON thought this expedient unlikely to answer the purpose, and liable to many objections. Before the American squadron can be equipped, the truce between Algiers and Portugal must expire. When the expiration shall take place, she either will not renew the truce at all, or she will stipulate that the United States shall be comprehended in it. He would save the money intended for the fleet, and hire the Portuguese ships of war with it, as soon as the truce ends. He wished that the Committee might reject the present motion, and when they did so, he would move a resolution, a copy of which he read to the Committee. It was in substance:

« That the sum of---dollars be provided to be employed in such a manner as should be found most effectual for obtaining a peace with the Regency of Algiers ; and failing of this, that the sum should be applied to the end of obtaining protection from some of the European Powers. »

Mr. M. considered the armament at present proposed, as quite too small to answer any efficient purpose.

A member here observed, that it would be hazardous to rely on Portugal; because though the truce might expire in about six months, it would possibly be renewed at the end of that time, or converted into a peace.

Mr. FITZSIMONS wished that gentlemen would pay some attention to attested facts, before they so abruptly declare that the six ships proposed by the Committee to be built and put into commission, were incompetent to the end for which they were designed. The Committee had bestowed considerable time in deliberating upon the best information which could be obtained, before they specified the force requisite to be employed, and they had been satisfied, that what

was now proposed would be equal to the end. Here Mr. F read a different statement of the ships of war in service of the Regency of Algiers, at a different time. One of these shows that in the year 1789, there were nine xebecs from thirty-six to ten guns, and one ship of forty guns upon the stocks, but that several of the xebecs were laid up or unfit for service. A second estimate of the Algerine maritime force, had been transmitted by Mr. Humphreys. He specified four frigates, two xebecs and one brig. By advices still more recent, the fleet consisted of one vessel of forty-four guns, one of thirty-six, one twenty-eight, three xebecs and a brig. Mr. F. observed, that gentlemen had objected to the sending out an American fleet; that they could not always keep together. He reminded them, that from November to March or April, the corsairs of Barbary never go out to sea.

There were two months during that time, when they were restrained by their religion from piratical excursions. The Committee had been told, that the Portuguese are ready to assist us. There is ground to expect this assistance, but not to depend upon it. Two American frigates, along with the Portuguese vessels, would be fully equal to the task of curbing the Algerines. As to militia, he could not see of what consequence they could be in a Naval contest. With regard to the expense, he stated a very important fact. The United States import, annually, two millions of bushels of salt from these countries, which the Algerines will cut off from our commerce. The rise on that article must then be at least one dollar, per bushel; which is at tax of two millions of dollars at one, or three times the expense of the armament. Probably, however, the loss may extend to four millions of dollars on this single article of salt, in one year only; a sum which would keep up the fleet a long time. We have been trying to buy a peace, but without success; and if we are not able to enforce it, the price of buying it must be so much the higher. As soon as Portugal is left to herself, she will certainly protect us, because it is much for her interest to do so. At present, she cannot, perhaps, from the influence of the combined Powers. Mr. F, therefore, recommended an armament in the mean time.

Mr. SMILIE objected to this measure, because it was unequal to the task. Britain would assist the Algerines underhandedly, as she

did an enemy in another quarter, and would continue to do so. He did not think she was shameless enough to own it, but she would do it. He spoke at some length.

Mr. NICHOLAS went on the same ground. He said that Britain had not been content with striking up a truce for Portugal, that the Algerines might be let loose on American commerce, but her minister at the Court of Lisbon had endeavored to prevent our vessels from obtaining a Portuguese convoy. Not content with insuring a loss to America, she had striven to make that loss immediate. As to the duration of the truce, it could not last long, for the Queen of Portugal had, in fact, broken it already. She had declared that the trade to that country should pass unmolested; to which condition it was not likely that the Algerines would consent. The Portuguese nobility had clamored at the acceptance of a truce. So that, on the whole, it could hardly last long. A Naval force was a very expensive affair. The greater part of the immense debt of England had been lavished on her Navy. He was against building a Navy.

MR. SWIFT had been always sensible that the situation of this country was not fit for war. We have a very heavy debt; but still it is better to bear debts than depredations. A gentleman of extensive information (Mr. S. SMITH, in yesterday's debate) had state the rise of insurance as much less than the armament would cost. Britain had always more dependence on her navy, than on the immense sums that she pays to these Barbarians. Mr. S. had no doubt that the proposed fleet would have its intended effect. He despaired of either buying a truce or buying an ally. As to the militia of Algiers, they could not be brought into action against frigates. He considered the charge of hiring the Algerines, as an unfounded accusation on the honor of Britain. He could not bring himself to believe that she was capable of a conduct so exceedingly disgraceful. He had no direct evidence to convince. It might be objected to this armament, that it would augment of National Debt and throw too much influence into the hands of the Executive Government. But the same objection might be started against every armament whatever.

Mr. MURRAY said, the gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. MADISON,) yesterday observed that he was not a little surprised that

those who a few days since had appeared so alarmed at the phantom of war, should on this question appear so willing to meet it. He would remark that those gentlemen were alarmed at a shadow which appeared followed by the substance of war and were unwilling to do anything that might lead to a war that did not yet exist. But we were now at war with Algiers, and had no choice. They had been at war with the United States ever since the end of the Revolutionary war. The Spaniards and Portuguese kept them within the Mediterranean. Gentlemen who are averse to the report, hold up two substitute measures: one, which was suggested, and has been argued by the gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. MADISON) is, that we ought to grant a sum to Portugal for her protection of our trade. The other is, that commercial regulations will accomplish our protection. He liked neither. The last, if permanent, will withdraw all temptation from Great Britain to interpose her good offices. The first is worse; it is subsidizing Portugal at the expense of our own people, and that too without security. Gentlemen would make it the interest of Portugal to make such breaches of truce, as would occasionally withdraw protection, and oblige us to subsidize her higher. It would create a disgraceful dependence on a foreign Power, and weaken the spirit of our marine; whereas, if you fit out frigates, you employ your money in nourishing the roots of your own industry; you encourage your own ship-building, lumber, and victualing business. He believed, that however true might be the suspicion of British interference in Indian affairs, and he feared it was too true, he did not believe the evidence as to Algerine interference strong enough to induce an argument against the report, under a supposition that as Great Britain had effected the truce, so she would aid Algiers against us. He thought so, because it was not now as much her interest as it was in times of peace. In times of peace, had she let loose the Algerines, her own navigation would have been enabled to carry for us, but now it would be molested by the French. He did not believe nations, more than persons, would do wrong purely out of evil designs devoid of interest; the greatest villain would not. At present, their ships are liable to attack from the French, and he had it from good authority, that so far were the British from having advantaged themselves if they had been

so base, that scarcely a British ship had appeared in our ports. The ship frigates would be able to blockade the Gut of Gibraltar ; the Algerines did not sail in fleets ; they wanted plunder, not glory, when they discovered they had to get the first by hard fighting, they would listen to peace, accompanied by money. Spain, it was true, had purchased a peace, but there was a hereditary inveteracy against Spain, and a facility of attacking her shores which we need not fear, so it was her interest to buy a peace when war could bring her nothing but a glory that almost disgraced her armies; as to jealousy of power in the Executive, he hoped to see a proper equipoise in the powers of this government; but, when proper occasions occurred, he hoped Congress would never refuse the adequate means to enable the Executive to discharge its Constitutional duties.

Mr. GOODHUE observed, that the Committee had carefully looked over the statement of the marine force of Algiers for several years back, and had no reason to doubt that the six vessels would be equal to the purpose intended. There was no ground to suppose Algiers would have more force at present than she had during her war with Portugal. He had no doubt that the Algerines were let loose on the American commerce to prevent supplies going to France and while the war lasts, we shall not be able to buy a peace. It is said, that the truce was but for a year, and in six months it will expire. He did not wish to depend on that when the evil is so great .And why depend on Portugal? She is more under the influence of Britain than other nation in Europe. When Britain has been at the trouble of stipulating a peace for Portugal, will she suffer that nation to assist us? Certainly not. Or is it wise to stand by and depend such a resource?

Mr.MADISON, said that gentlemen thought so differently on this subject, and advanced arguments against his side of the question of such a different nature, that it was difficult or impossible to give them an answer. He then proceeded to quote the speech of Mr. Goodhue; when that gentleman rose to explain .Mr.M. then proceeded to notice the speeches of Mr. FITZSIMONS and Mr.S.SMITH. Both of these gentlemen were up more than once to explain, as having been misquoted .In a speech of considerable length, he was not suffered long to proceed without interruptions of explanation. This produced a

scene of altercation. One circumstance, however, was mentioned by Mr. FITZSIMONS that deserves particular notice. From April to December next, he said, the insurance on American ships from England and the rest of Europe, will not be less than twenty-five per cent of their value on account of the Algerines. The House now adjourned, without taking any question.

VESSELS OF WAR

The House then went again into a Committee of the whole on the state of the Union; and, proposition for building sundry vessels being under consideration.

Mr. BOURNE approved of the proposed armament of four 44-gun ships and two others of 20guns, against the Algerines. It had been objected that they would be inadequate to the purpose, since Britain would interpose. There is no sort of proof that she would do so, nor is it likely that she will, because it is her interest to cultivate, as far as possible, her connection with this country. With regard to Portugal, it is very hazardous to reckon upon her assistance. Her sending a fleet to annoy the American merchantmen was not a proper foundation to say; that she had already broken the truce with Algiers, as had been alleged, (by Mr. NICHOLAS) It was the established custom, in case of this kind, to protect the ships that were trading to any particular country which happened to make a peace with any of States of Barbary. Spain often did the same thing nor was it complained of by the Algerines themselves. There was a great risk in depending upon so precarious a resource as the Navy of Portugal. He should be glad, besides adopting the resolution on the table, that the Executive might be authorized to engage the assistance of Portugal, if it was practicable Mr. B. professed that he had met with no satisfactory evidence that Britain had excited the Algerines to the present war. He recommended the armament.

Mr. LAYMAN was of opinion that the Algerines acted by the instigation of Britain. He would as soon question the existence of the resolution before them, as question that. The proposed armament must bring on a very certain expense, for a very uncertain advantage. He apprehended no danger from the Algerines, on the coasts of America. Though Britain might not venture openly to support the corsairs, yet

she could do it clandestinely, as she supported the Indians. He disapproved of the intended armament for many reasons –one of which was, that though \$600,000 had been stated by the Committee as the expense of it, that sum would not half discharge the expenses. He recommended that private individuals should be encouraged to fit out vessels for attacking the Algerines.

Mr. HILLHOUSE had heard of no expedient suitable to the end in view except that of sending out a fleet. He ridiculed the project of attempting to encourage individuals to attack the Algerines. He asked if a legislature, in the possession of their senses, could fancy that private persons were to be induced to squander away, their property in such away, without compensation? Was there any body solost to all common sense, as to embark in such an undertaking? As to the interference of Britain, he was willing to take that for granted. But could the members return to their constituents, and tell them that Congress could do nothing in this matter because Britain had been the occasion of it? He observed, that a more humiliating situation could not be conceived, than that of America becoming tributary to Portugal, and going there to tell her that Americans could not protected themselves. Such an application must wound the honor of the United States in a most sensible manner. Gentlemen had said, the other day, that Britain would submit to any hardship sooner than declare war against this country. It was now said by members on the same side of the question, that she will assist Algiers by sending her military supplies. These assertions are inconsistent, if Britain sends ships of war to Algiers, she must come to an open rupture with America, for he understood that, by the Law of Nations, it must be the consequence.

Mr. DEXTER found many difficulties in this matter; but he was willing to adopt the measure proposed because he saw nothing butter.

Mr. HUNTER. said that the damage sustained by trade, from the Algerines, is not so great an object as to deserve such an expense : especially since Portugal offers to protect that part of our shipping which is bound to and from her Dominions. It has been said by several gentlemen, that the only motive which induced Britain to make a truce with Algerines, was to get the Portuguese's fleet to join her in

attacking their common enemy, the Republic of France. It had been said by one gentleman, that Britain had more interest to set the Algerines loose upon American commerce before the war than since. This was a very mistaken idea. Before the war, our trade with Britain in regard to insurance, was upon equal terms. But as soon as Britain engaged in the war with France, the insurance on her own vessels rose very high. Her own insurance companies would not insure the freight of British vessels, and the property of her own subjects, on the same low terms that they would ensure on American vessels and American property. This preference was extremely provoking to the pride of Britain. Particularly as the nation thus preferred had been, but a few years before, her own subjects. Her seamen were likewise quitting her service for that of America. Thus, her carrying trade have must have been cut up by the roots. It was no more dishonorable for America to get a peace made with Algiers by means of Portugal, than it had been for Portugal to get a peace in the same Quarter by means of Britain. He did not think that Britain would ever suffer America to get a peace if she could help it, as long as the war lasted; for then America would take off the carrying trade. She could supply the Algerines with ships, under the pretence of being their allies: and then, when they were employed against America, say that she could not help it. Mr. H was averse to the armament.

Mr. MURRAY could not believe that Britain had been guilty of any design of exciting the Algerines against the United States. It was opposite to her interest, and he could not believe any nation capable of such a crime only for its own sake.

Mr. GILES said that Britain was at length acknowledged to be the cause of the algerine piracies. It was now said to be for the sake of reducing France. The baseness of the end corresponded with the atrocity of the measures employed to produce it; for he should always consider it as one of the greatest of crimes for one nation to attempt the subjection of another. As to the state of insurance, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. HUNTER,) had spoke rightly. Mr. G. said that with respect to what he had formerly observed, about Algerine militia, he had been mistaken. He did not intend to say that the four American frigates were to go to land, and give battle to a hundred

thousand Africans; but if a nation could, by any effort, assemble so numerous a militia, they can surely produce a maritime force more than equal to four frigates. He could not think gentlemen serious in proposing to send them against Algiers. He adverted to the numerous dangers to which they were exposed by sea, at such an immense distance from their own country. It had been said by a gentleman (Mr. DEXTER) who, whenever he happened to be in the wrong, had a very happy talent at making himself appear to be in the right, that the inconvenience of seas and tempests would be no greater to the Americans than to the Algerines. But the member had overlooked this great difference: that the latter, if any accident befell them which required a friendly port, were not far from home; whereas, the former had to sail 3, 000 miles. A gentleman (Mr. S. SMITH) had mentioned several harbors of France, Spain, and Portugal, to which the American frigates might retire, if they wanted repairs. He was not sure that they would be welcome at present in the ports of either Spain or Portugal, as to France, from the measures that we seem lately to pursue, it is very uncertain whether she would much longer give the American flag a friendly reception. Gibraltar had likewise been held out as a place where the intended fleet might be sure of a hospitable retreat. But this, likewise, he thought very doubtful. He consider navies altogether as very foolish things. An immense quantity of property was spread on the water for no purpose whatever, which might have been employed by land to the best purpose. The old Government of France had been ruined in a great measure by the expenses of its navy. England groaned under a great part of her immense load of taxes from the same cause. He was persuaded that four frigates would not even form an additional motive to make the Regency of Algiers conclude a peace. He was afraid the Algerines would laugh at them.

Mr. S. SMITH said it was a singular example of integrity, in the present age, and would be the wonder of posterity, that Captain O'Brien and Captain Stephens never had accepted of any offers from the Algerines. We have now been told that eleven ships are taken. Some of these are not commanded by natives of America, and it cannot be surprising if renege does are found among them. Portugal, with only three ships, had blocked up the corsairs: what, then, was to

hider America from accomplishing the same end with six ships? Where Portugal has one ship on the Ocean, America has ten. She is, therefore, ten times as able as Portugal to beat the Algerines; and yet we are told that she cannot do it. He had one objection to the fleet: he wished that the two 20-gun ships had been made to carry 36 guns, as he fancied, from the shortness of their keels, that they would not be able to keep up with the 44-gun vessels. He said that the Algerines had to place of shelter till they got home, as they were not admitted into the harbors of any other nation. He asked, who would join this country, when we declared that we could do nothing? It was disgraceful to Republicans to be in such a situation. He was sure that this defenseless state was contrary to the maxims of the Republicans of all former ages. He was sorry, when he heard gentlemen who called themselves Republicans. Vindicate such pusillanimous measures. He suspected that they were at bottom friends to Monarchy, and wished to bring it back again. He then proceeded to demonstrate that America would lose infinitely more by the rise of insurance, than she would save by setting aside this armament. He closed by once more asking, whether the United States could not perform that with six ships which the Queen of Portugal had performed with three?

The Committee now rose without coming to any decision.

The House proceeded to consider the resolutions reported yesterday by the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union: Whereupon.

The question being taken on the first resolution, in the words following to wit:

« Resolved, that a Naval force, to consist of four ships of forty-four, and two ships of twenty guns each, be provided for the protection of the commerce of the United States against the Algerine cruisers; »

It was resolved in the affirmative—yeas 43, nays 41.

Footnotes:

*Annals of the Congress of the United States, third Congress, House of Representatives, (January-February, 1794): 432-451; 459.