

**Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Pinckney, May 29, 1797,
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TO THOMAS PINCKNEY j. mss.

Philadelphia, May 29, 1797.

Dear Sir, —I received from you, before I left England, a letter enclosing one from the Prince of Parma. As I learnt soon after that you were shortly to return to America, I concluded to join my acknowledgments of it to my congratulations on your arrival; & both have been delayed by a blameable sprat of procrastination, forever suggesting to our indolence that we need not do to-day what may be done tomorrow. Accept these now in all the sincerity of my heart. It is but lately I have answered the Prince's letter. It required some time to establish arrangements which might effect his purpose, & I wished also to forward a particular article or two of curiosity. You have found on your return a higher style of political difference than you had left here. I fear this is inseparable from the different constitutions of the human mind, & that degree of freedom which permits unrestrained expression. Political dissension is doubtless a less evil than the lethargy of despotism, but still it is a great evil, and it would be as worthy the efforts of the patriot as of the philosopher, to exclude it's influence, if possible, from social life. The good are rare enough at best. There is no reason to subdivide them by artificial lines. But whether we shall ever be able so far to perfect the principles of society, as that political opinions shall, in it's intercourse, be as inoffensive as those of philosophy, mechanics, or any other, may well be doubted. Foreign influence is the present & just object of public hue and cry, & as often happens, the most guilty are foremost & loudest in the cry. If those who are truly

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independent, can so trim our vessels as to beat through the waves now agitating us, they will merit a glory the greater as it seems less possible. When I contemplate the spirit which is driving us on here, & that beyond the water which will view us as but a mouthful the more, I have little hope of peace. I anticipate the burning of our sea ports, havoc of our frontiers, household insurgency, with a long train of et ceteras, which is enough for a man to have met once in his life.

The exchange, which is to give us new neighbors in Louisiana (probably the present French armies when disbanded) has opened us to combinations of enemies on that side where we are most vulnerable. War is not the best engine for us to resort to, nature has given us one *in our commerce*, which, if properly managed, will be a better instrument for obliging the interested nations of Europe to treat us with justice. If the commercial regulations had been adopted which our legislature were at one time proposing, we should at this moment have been standing on such an eminence of safety & respect as ages can never recover. But having wandered from that, our object should now be to get back, with as little loss as possible, & when peace shall be restored to the world, endeavor so to form our *commercial* regulations as that justice from other nations shall be their mechanical result. I am happy to assure you that the conduct of Genl. Pinckney has met universal approbation. It was marked with that coolness, dignity, & good sense which we expected from him. I am told that the French government had taken up an unhappy idea, that Monroe was recalled for the candor of his conduct in what related to the British treaty, & Genl. Pinckney was sent as having other dispositions towards them. I learn further, that some of their well-informed citizens here are setting them right as to Genl. Pinckney's dispositions, so well known to have been just towards them; & I sincerely hope, not only that he may be employed as envoy extraordinary to them, but that their minds will be better prepared to receive him. I candidly acknowledge, however, that I do not think the speech & addresses of Congress as conciliatory as the preceding irritations on both sides would have rendered wise. I shall be happy to hear from you at all times, to make myself useful to you whenever opportunity offers, and to give every proof of the sincerity of the

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sentiments of esteem & respect with which I am, Dear Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant.