

far from approving in all things the conduct of the French agent in 1849. Since his retirement from the ministry there have been such frequent changes in the department of foreign affairs that I have had no suitable opportunity of recurring to the subject in the brief periods of official intercourse with the successive ministers who have temporarily occupied the department; nor indeed did I suppose from all that has come to my knowledge that there was any serious danger of measures being pursued which might compromise the independence or over-awe the freedom of action of the Hawaiian Government in regard to the matters in dispute.

Since the receipt of your dispatch, I have felt it my duty to address a communication to the minister of foreign affairs, setting forth plainly and frankly, but in a tone not calculated to wound the pride or dignity of the French Government, the views of the Government of the United States as embodied in your dispatch, the deep interest it feels in the independence of the Sandwich Islands, and the danger that would consequently arise of an interruption of the good understanding now happily existing between France and the United States, if measures should be pursued by her authority incompatible with a just respect of that independence. To give the full effect you desire to these representations, it seemed to me indispensable that they should be made in writing, for, besides the consideration that mere verbal communications never have the weight and importance that are attached to written ones, a strong additional reason is furnished by the changes of ministry which so frequently occur here for placing the views of the Government of the United States on *record*, where they will pass under the eyes of whatever ministers may successively be called to conduct the department of foreign affairs. A copy of the communication addressed to me by the minister of foreign affairs is herewith inclosed. I shall return to Paris in a few days, and if anything of importance should occur in my interview with the minister I will embrace the earliest opportunity to communicate it to you.

I have the honor to be, etc.,

W. C. RIVES.

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*Mr. Webster to Mr. Severance.*

No. 4.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
Washington, July 14, 1851.

LUTHER SEVERANCE, Esq.:

SIR: Your confidential communications, Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, have been duly received, submitted to the President, and by him considered.

They relate to a subject of great importance, not only to the Hawaiian Government and its citizens, but also to the United States.

The Government of the United States was the first to acknowledge the national existence of the Hawaiian Government, and to treat with it as an independent state. Its example was soon followed by several of the Governments of Europe; and the United States, true to its treaty obligations, has in no case interfered with the Hawaiian Government for the purpose of opposing the course of its own independent conduct, or of dictating to it any particular line of policy. In acknowledging the independence of the islands, and of the Government established over