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## American-Russian relations in the times of the American Civil War (1861-1865)

**Outline:** The 1860s were marked by an exceptional affection and friendship in the bilateral relations between the United States, a young American republic, and the long-established tsarist Russia. This phenomenon, which had never occurred with such intensity before or since, inspired Russian and American researchers and politicians to organize *The Tsar and the President: Alexander II and Abraham Lincoln, Liberator and Emancipator* exhibition which was displayed, inter alia, in Moscow in 2011. The following article analyses (on the basis of numerous source materials from the period) the reasons of this mutual amity and trust, as well as their military and economic cooperation—both internal (the Civil War in the U.S., the January Uprising in the Russian Empire), and external (the rivalry with Great Britain and France, and political calculations in the search for suitable alliances)—in the period of world power rivalry for global spheres of influence.

**Keywords:** President Lincoln, Tsar Aleksander II, US Civil War, Russian Empire, Polish Insurrection of 1863, Russian Fleet, United States – Foreign Relations – Russia, Russia – Foreign Relations – United States, 19<sup>th</sup> Century Diplomatic History.

On February 22, 2011, the seat of the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow saw the unveiling of an exhibition under the surprising and intriguing title “The Tsar and the President: Alexander II and Abraham Lincoln, Liberator and Emancipator”. Conceived on the initiative of the American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation and already displayed in the United States in 2008-2009, the exhibition attracted a large number of visitors and enthusiasts. The idea of comparing Tsar Alexander II’s centuries old Russian Empire with Lincoln’s young American republic born less than ninety years earlier, revealed the dissimilarities of two extremely different styles of government and authority, while simultaneously highlighting all of their similar and progressive trends, rendered the whole idea truly attractive and captivating. The current political message was not hard to

deduce; the “New York Times” associated it directly with the policy of “resetting” the 21<sup>st</sup>-century bilateral relations between Washington and Moscow, announced by Barack Obama’s administration<sup>1</sup>.

What then were the similarities that the organisers found between the American President and the Russian Tsar? They were two 19<sup>th</sup>-century leaders of two great nations on either sides of the Pacific, who had never met in person, and whose symbolic joint statue representing an imagined handshake appeared in front of the entrance to the exhibition? Andrei N. Artizov, Head of the Federal Archiving Agency, shed some light on the subject during the opening of the exhibition: “History decreed that almost simultaneously, in two of the great countries of the world, the Russian Empire and the United States of America, events took place that already contemporaries of that time deemed to be epochal. In St. Petersburg, Tsar Alexander II signed the famous manifesto of February 19<sup>th</sup> 1861, which heralded the emancipation of the serfs. Two years later, at the height of the Civil War, on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1863, in Washington, President Lincoln signed the no less famous Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves”. James W. Symington, the 82-year-old former Democratic congressman from Missouri, added: “Abraham Lincoln and Alexander II can be spoken of in the same breath”. Symington was an exceptional guest at the Moscow exhibition, given that his great-grandfather, John Hay, served as private secretary to President Lincoln. Also present at the opening was the US Ambassador to Russia John R. Beyrle, who concluded: “Maybe because we all remember very well the years of the Cold War, sometimes we mistakenly think that the spirit of ideological confrontation between Russia and America is characteristic of our relations, but this is a mistake”<sup>2</sup>.

The exhibition, the tacit message of which were the words “Remembering and appreciating what Russia and America meant to each other”, consisted of nearly 200 artefacts selected from Russian and American museums and archives, including portraits of both heroes, official and private correspondence, letters and documents from the period, as well as items of everyday use, such as both pens used to sign the famous emancipation documents, or costumes and flags. A prominent spot was dedicated to the uniform that Tsar Alexander II wore on the day of his assassination in 1881, and to the American flag used to cover the body of Abraham Lincoln after his assassination in 1865. Their tragic deaths at the hands of assassins united the leaders of both countries even more, according to the organisers of the exhibition. The historical ambience of the exhibition was complemented by music played by the Kremlin military orchestra clad in uniforms from tsarist times.

This somewhat idealistic note struck in the way the exhibition was conceived, designed to educate current and future generations, to overcome barriers and to make way for new, friendlier relations, cleverly referred to one of the most interesting episodes in the history of Russian-American relations in the second half of the

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1 S. Kishkovsky, *Russia Links Lincoln with the Freedom of Serf*, “New York Times”, 23 II 2011.

2 *Ibid.*

19<sup>th</sup> Century. The turbulent period of wars, struggles and internal rebellions (the Civil War in the U.S., the Polish January Uprising in the Russia empire, the French and British intervention in Mexico that resulted in the establishment of Maximilian Habsburg's monarchy, the Prussian-Danish war in Europe) put the mutual relations between President Lincoln and Tsar Alexander II to a searching test. Nevertheless, they seem to have emerged victorious, bound not only by common interests, but also by mutual personal regard.

According to a persisting controversial opinion, the Union's triumph over the Confederates would not have been so evident without the support from the Russian monarch. Another popular speculative theory relates to the alleged existence of a secret agreement between the President and the Tsar. This second concept was disseminated through a brochure called *Lincoln's Secret Ally*, published in 1944 in New York City by a certain Joseph O'Brien. The private letters between Lincoln and Alexander II also aroused some interest, as they began with the hearty salutations "My Dear Friend" or "My Great and Dear Friend". The personal tone of these letters by which the Russian monarch announced the latest births in his large imperial family, is interpreted as proof of an exceptional degree of intimacy<sup>3</sup>. However, without a deeper analysis of the court protocol and etiquette, the conventions of the era, the customs prevailing among the leaders of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe (often related to one another), it might be hard to distinguish between political courtesy and personal cordiality. For instance, President Thomas Jefferson used to address Tsar Alexander I in his letters with the words "Great and Good Friend and Emperor". Whatever their appeal, such concepts, speculations and seductive theories should best be left aside, allowing more attention to be devoted solely to official, exceptionally friendly relations between Washington and St. Petersburg, and the mutual help and support the two powers offered each other.

This friendship and entente were not necessarily due to mutual fondness, but rather to specific geopolitical and historical circumstances, and to political calculations in the search for an alliance against common enemies. Great Britain occupied a special place in the foreign policies of both countries. For the Russians, Queen Victoria's empire was an obstacle to the fulfilment of their eternal dream of global power, i.e. gaining control over strategic areas on the Black Sea, in the Bosphorus or in the Persian Gulf. As for the United States, a former British colony, the Crown prevented it not only from establishing continental dominance in the Western hemisphere, but also from achieving supremacy on the seas and oceans.

It did not take long for Russia and the United States to acknowledge each other as potential natural allies. Even though the attempts to obtain recognition by the young republic, such as Francis Dan's mission to St. Petersburg, launched by the Continental Congress in 1781, ended in fiasco, Empress Catherine II's initiative

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3 Lincoln to Alexander II, Washington 18 XII 1861, Washington 12 IV 1864, Washington 26 IX 1862, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy P. Basler, ed., New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955, vol. 5, p. 7475, 440, vol. 7, p. 296297.

to create the League of Armed Neutrality should be appreciated nonetheless. The League's aim was to defend its members' rights to free trade with all belligerents, including those in the American Revolutionary War. This way, the colonists could acquire weapons, ammunition and all other means necessary to survive and pursue their struggle. This decision, along with the refusal to send Russian soldiers as an auxiliary force to the British, did in fact support the revolutionary aspirations of the Americans<sup>4</sup>.

However, official diplomatic relations were established only in 1808, at the time of Tsar Alexander I's reign and Thomas Jefferson's presidency. The first person appointed to the position of Russian *chargé d'affaires* and Consul-General in Philadelphia was Andrey Dashkov, who presented his credentials on August 30<sup>5</sup>. William Short was to become his counterpart in St. Petersburg, having been appointed on November 8, 1808, by Secretary of State James Madison<sup>6</sup>, but he never reached the Tsar's court nor presented his credentials, as his nomination was rejected by the Senate. The post in St. Petersburg was assumed in 1809 by John Quincy Adams, later Secretary of State in James Monroe's administration in the years 1817-1825 and future U.S. president in the years 1825-1829.

The next important phase in U.S.-Russian relations was the period of the Crimean War (1853-1856). Although neutral in Russia's war against Turkey, France, Great Britain, Sardinia and, to a lesser extent, Austria and Prussia, the United States showed keen attachment to the liberty of maritime trade, hence their tacit solidarity with the Russian Empire in this matter. One key to understanding American attitudes was Cuba, the object of American expansionism and rivalry with Spain. The Spanish plans of freeing slaves in Cuba and "Africanising" the whole island, devised to hinder further American actions and supported, in consequence, by London and Paris, deeply disturbed Washington. The joint involvement of English and French forces in the Eastern war prevented Great Britain and France from intervening in Cuban affairs. In light of this, Washington and St. Petersburg signed an agreement on July 22, 1854, introducing the "free ships make free goods" rule allowing the free flow of goods, excluding contraband, into areas of conflict, as well as a rule forbidding

4 P. Ostaszewski, *Z dziejów amerykańskorosyjskich stosunków dyplomatycznych: pierwsza amerykańska misja dyplomatyczna w Petersburgu, sierpień 1781 – kwiecień 1783*, "Świat i Polityka", 2002 [no.] 3/4, p. 97112; T. Bailey, *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Time to Our Day*, Ithaca, New York 1950, pp. 111.

5 Ukase from Alexander I to the College of Foreign Affairs, St. Petersburg 8 [20] VI 1808, Instruction from College of Foreign Affairs to the Russian Consul General Designate and Charge d'Affaires at Philadelphia Andrei Ia. Dashkov, St. Petersburg 10 [22] VII 1808, Letter from Alexander I to President of the United States, St. Petersburg 31 VIII [12 IX] 1808 [in:] *The United States and Russia: The Beginning of Relations*, 17651815, ed. N. N. Bashkina ... [et al.; prepared under the direction of a joint Soviet-American editorial board, David F. Trask ... et al.] Washington D.C., 1980, doc. 263, 264, 272, pp. 518521, 538.

6 Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Alexander I, Monticello [17] 29 VIII 1808, From a Letter of Thomas Jefferson to the United States Minister Designate to Russia, Monticello [17] 29 VIII 1808 [in:] *The United States and Russia: The Beginning of Relations*, 17651815, doc. 267, 268, p. 527529.

the seizure of neutral goods found on the decks of ships belonging to countries involved in the conflict. For Russia, the agreement was of crucial importance in view of the blockade of the Danish straits, inhibiting its export of cereals and other commodities. Russia also contributed considerably to the signing of a trade agreement between the United States and Persia, hitherto undermined by Great Britain. Reciprocally, the Americans supported Russian trade and used diplomatic action to prevent Spain from supporting its allies in Crimea, stopped British recruitment on American soil, allowed the Russians to buy back their ship, which got interned in an American harbour, and protected two other Russian vessels en route to Rio de Janeiro and the Middle East. In return, they obtained the right to explore Siberia and Sakhalin, where American trading posts and a consulate were opened. This venture was facilitated by the famous Americophile Nikolay Nikolayevich Muravyov, Governor General of East Siberia<sup>7</sup>.

U.S.-Russian relations were therefore already friendly and well established when the Civil War broke out. This internal conflict, as the future was soon to show, far from affecting the general course of bilateral relations with Russia in any way, only served to strengthen and consolidate them.

The American secession was caused by gradually growing economic, financial, social and ideological inequalities between the highly industrialised North seeking qualified labour and the cotton-producing, slave-owning South. Furthermore, the separateness of the South was rooted in the "Cavalier" tradition, according to which the southerners were considered descendants of the English aristocracy that remained faithful to King Charles I, and emigrated from England under the dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell and Puritanism<sup>8</sup>.

The South's secession from the Union was directly triggered by the presidential election of November 6, 1860, won by Abraham Lincoln. Having often ardently advocated abolitionism during his electoral campaign, Lincoln owed his nomination predominantly to votes from the North. In total, 1,855,993 American citizens had accorded him their support, i.e. merely 39.65% of the voters, yet this translated to 180 electoral votes, eventually giving him a final 59.4%<sup>9</sup>.

On December 20, 1860, at the secession convention in Charleston, North Carolina was to be the first state to announce its withdrawal from the United States of America. This act was soon to lead to tragic consequences; but until then, the local

7 More in: A. Dowty, *The Limits of American Isolation: The United States and the Crimean War*, New York 1971; R. N. Franklin, *Franklin Pierce: Young Hickory of the Granite Hills*, Philadelphia 1958, p. 345; E. DvoichenkoMarkov, *Americans in the Crimean War*, "Russian Review" 1954, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 137145; F. A. Golder, *Russian American Relations During the Crimean War*, "American Historical Review" 1926, vol. 31, no. 3, p. 474.

8 K. Michałek, *Na drodze ku potędze. Historia Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1861-1945*, Warszawa 1993, p. 13.

9 D. Leip, *Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/>. Lincoln did far better in the subsequent election of 1864, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the war between the North and the South. A total of 2,211,317, i.e. 55,03% of Americans had voted for him at the time, which equalled 212 electoral votes, i.e. 91,0%.

white community greeted it with open joy. The “Charleston Mercury” proclaimed with exaltation: “[This day] has become an epoch in the history of the human race. A great Confederated Republic, overwrought with arrogant and tyrannous oppressions, has fallen from its high estate amongst the nations of the earth. Conservative liberty has been vindicated. Mobocratic license has been stricken down. Order has conquered, yet liberty has survived. Right has raised his banner aloft, and bidden defiance to Might. The problem of self-government under the check- balance of slavery, has secured itself from threatened destruction.”<sup>10</sup>

Other states soon joined South Carolina by announcing their own secession from the Union: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas, and then later, in April and May, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina. In Missouri and Kentucky, two parallel Union and Confederate governments were established. At the common convention held on February 4, 1861, in Montgomery, Alabama, the delegates declared the foundation of a separate state called the Confederate States of America, then proceeded with defining its structure, and appointing Jefferson Davis and Alexander H. Stephens as, respectively, President and Vice-President. A separate congress and government were formed. The position of Secretary of State of the Confederacy, responsible for foreign relations, was assumed first by Robert Toombs, then by Robert M. T. Hunter, and eventually, from March 1862, by Judah Benjamin. Their main goal was to procure financial and material support for the Confederacy from abroad, as well as to obtain international recognition, initiate diplomatic relations and sign trade agreements. Cotton, a material valued in Europe, was to be their bargaining chip.

The first commissioners of the Confederacy soon departed for Europe: William Lowndes Yancey to Great Britain and France, Pierre Adolphe Rost to Spain and Ambrose Dudley Mann to Belgium and the Vatican. They left together on March 31, 1861, shortly after Lincoln’s inauguration as President of the United States. However, even before they reached Great Britain, the calmer, negotiation phase of the conflict had already turned into a purely military one, as a result of the Confederates’ assault on Fort Sumter.

Russia initially adopted the position of neutral observer, even though its diplomatic representative, Eduard Andreevich Stoeckl (Эдуард Андреевич Стекль)<sup>11</sup>, aspired to the role of an arbitrator. His diplomatic career in the U.S., spanning a period of 20 years (he assumed the position of secretary of the legation in 1841, *chargé d’affaires* in 1850 and minister in 1854), as well as his vast knowledge of the American reality, its political milieu and the American *establishment*, predisposed him to take a more active stance. Although he believed that preserving not just democracy, but even federal coherence, should be an axiom for the American

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10 “Charleston Mercury”, 21 XII 1860.

11 Eduard Andreevich Stoeckl (18041892), often incorrectly addressed as “baron”, the son of an Austrian diplomat in Constantinople. Married since 1856 to American Elisa Howard, he is best known as the diplomat who, on behalf of Tsar Alexander II, sold Alaska to the U.S.

nation to keep its *prosperity*, the fact that American statehood was at stake made him predict different possible outcomes of the situation. In the worst case scenario, that is, the demise of the existing state structure, he advocated recognition of the Confederacy's independence and initiating separate diplomatic ties, as soon as the latter would normalise its relations with the North. Until then, he advised maintaining friendly relations with the Union without antagonising the Confederates at the same time<sup>12</sup>.

Stoeckl offered his arbitration services to William H. Seward, Secretary of State during Lincoln's administration, in a private conversation at a dinner held in early April at the Russian Embassy in Washington in honour of the new U.S. federal authorities. In order to avoid conferring excessive gravity to internal issues at such an early stage, Seward solely expressed his belief in the effectiveness of simple solutions, such as the economic isolation of the rebel states. This was far from the truth. Special commissioners of President Davis—Martin J. Crawford, John Forsyth and Allan B. Roman—had already been staying in Washington for a month at the time, unsuccessfully trying to trigger negotiations on the recognition of the Confederacy's independence, the establishment of official diplomatic relations and a peaceful transfer of the Union's military bases now situated on CSA territory. Stoeckl contacted Allan Roman on his own, offering informal meetings of representatives of both American camps at the Russian Embassy; he took the commissioner's assertions of the Confederacy's peaceful intentions at face value. Seward rejected the Russian diplomat's proposal once again, albeit with some hesitation. The seizure of Fort Sumter by the Confederates rendered all conciliatory efforts of the Russian Minister aimless. As humble and ineffective as they were, they still failed to gain the Union administration's favour. Frederick Seward, assistant of Secretary of State—and William Seward's son—judged Stoeckl's efforts as balancing on the edge of good reason. The Confederate press, on the other hand, interpreted them directly as the prediction of a quick, official recognition of the CSA by the Russian Empire. Forced by these circumstances, the Russian Foreign Minister, Prince Alexander Gorchakov, soon issued an official and unequivocal statement confirming Moscow's support and amity towards the Union<sup>13</sup>.

However, even before this happened, the alarmed Department of State supplied his newly appointed Minister to St. Petersburg, Cassius Marcellus Clay<sup>14</sup>, with an instruction, which emphasised the friendly bilateral relations so far and traced the precise areas for current cooperation. "This relationship between two nations, so remote and so unlike, has excited much surprise, but the explanation is obvious. Russia, like the United States, is an, improving and expanding empire. Its track is eastward, while that of the United States is westward. The two nations, therefore,

12 A. A. Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians: The Story of Russian American Diplomatic Relations During the Civil War*, Cleveland and New York 1952, pp. 23, 3940

13 *Ibid.*, p. 50-56.

14 Cassius Marcellus Clay (1810-1903), cousin of Henry Clay, congressman and senator, Secretary of State in the years 1825-1829. C. M. Clay acted as minister to Russia in the years 1861-1862, 1863-1869.

never come into rivalry or conflict. Each carries civilization to the new regions it enters, and each finds itself occasionally resisted by states jealous of its prosperity, or alarmed by its aggrandizement. Russia and the United States may remain good friends until, each having made a circuit of half the globe in opposite directions, they shall meet and greet each other in the region where civilization first began, and where, after so many ages, it has become now lethargic and helpless. It will be your pleasing duty to confirm and strengthen these traditional relations of amity and friendship.”<sup>15</sup>

The main current tasks assigned to the Minister also included the acceleration and augmentation of trade in cotton and tobacco from the U.S. in exchange for hemp, flax and tallow from Russia, the facilitation of cooperation between investors, engineers, mechanics, especially American ones on Russian soil, the standardisation of passport policies, i.e. the abolition of certain requirements by Russia to match the American regulations in this field, and the facilitation of a free exchange of press information, including scientific journals. Another of his duties was to clarify the positions adopted by the maritime law in regard to neutrals introduced at the Paris Peace Conference of 1856, notably the rules for privateering and blockading ports in times of war. An apparent emphasis was also placed on the observation of all signs of activity of agents sent by the rebels (as the Confederates were called in Washington) and the prevention of activities harmful to the Union’s international image. “The President will not forget, nor will he allow you to forget,” stated the instruction, “that he is the magistrate of the insurrectionary, as he is also of the loyal States, and in all his dealings concerning the plotters, aiders, and abettors of this great conspiracy, he will constantly remember that the people in whose name they act, and whose power they abuse, are still citizens of the republic”<sup>16</sup>.

On June 28 (16), 1861<sup>17</sup>, Clay presented his letters of credence during his first meeting with Gorchakov. The meeting proceeded in a very friendly and cordial manner, abounding in mutual assertions regarding the permanence of their close relations in spite of all temporary, internal problems of the Republic. Two weeks later, on July 14 (2), the American Minister and other employees of the American Embassy (Green Clay, William C. Goodloe, T. Williams) were received in person by Tsar Alexander II at an official audience at the Peterhof Palace, the residence of Russian Tsars. The monarch was greatly moved by the words of the diplomat conveying the respect and admiration of the entire American nation and the President himself towards the recent reforms in Russia, which they placed even above those of Tsar Peter the Great. He also expressed hope for an imminent recovery and strengthening of the Union’s integrity. Still profoundly impressed by the splendour of the ceremony and the warmth of his welcome, Clay reported in his note to the Department of State

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15 Mr. Seward to Mr. Clay, Washington 6 V 1861, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States [henceforth: FRUS] 1861, Washington, vol. 1, p. 293.

16 *Ibid*, pp. 294-297.

17 The dates are based the Gregorian calendar used in the U.S. The date in parentheses refers to the Julian calendar once used in Russia.

his personal impressions from the review of the Imperial cavalry and infantry that he witnessed, while in his private notes, he emphasised both the extent and the cordiality of this exceptional meeting. The Tsar was depicted in the following words: "It has been the habit of some foreigners to speak of Alexander II as a weak prince. This is not true. He was not a brilliant man, being more of the German type than the Russian, with a fine person, and large round face and head, with large blue eyes, and amiable expression; but he was a man of good common-sense. And, if he was not equal to the times in which he lived, it was rather because such great changes are too strong for any man". Clay expressed his admiration for the knowledge and education of the Tsar, who, provided with regular press round-ups and reports, remained perfectly in touch with the situation both at home and abroad<sup>18</sup>.

The mutual assurances of the perpetuity of close relations were complemented by Gorchakov's aforementioned declaration, delivered to the U.S. President by the Russian Minister in Washington on behalf of the Emperor of Russia. The document expressed sorrow over the lack of peaceful solutions and the misfortune of the nation plunging into the most dangerous of all social scourges, a civil war: "For the more than eighty years that it has existed the American Union owes its independence, its towering rise, and its progress to the concord of its members, consecrated, under the auspices of its illustrious founder, by institutions which have been able to reconcile union with liberty. This union has been fruitful. It has exhibited to the world the spectacle of a prosperity without example in the annals of history."<sup>19</sup> In fear of a potential annihilation of whichever side, the declaration appealed for an end to the war, and, without getting involved in the essence of the conflict, it concluded with concern: "This Union is not simply, in our eyes, an element essential to the universal political equilibrium. It constitutes, besides, a nation to which our august master and all Russia have pledged their most friendly interest."<sup>20</sup>

Gorchakov's declaration and the sentiment it carried were of special value for the Union, as they arrived in what was a difficult period for the North. Soon afterwards, on July 21, Union troops were to suffer a severe defeat in the Battle of Bull Run near Manassas, Virginia, the first clash of the Civil War. The "New York Times" regarded the official Russian stance on the American issue as a step of great importance, an event of immeasurable value, which produced a "profound sensation in the diplomatic circles". Never before had Russia openly disclosed the outline of its continental policy, taking a favourable attitude to the rise of America as an economic and maritime power<sup>21</sup>. For President Lincoln, the Russian declaration was

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18 Mr. Clay to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 21 VI 1861, FRUS 1861, vol. 1, p. 303305; *The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay: Memoirs, Writings, and Speeches*, vol. 1, Cincinnati, Ohio 1886, p. 293294, 336; J. R. Robertson, *A Kentuckian at the Court of the Tsars: The Ministry of Cassius Marcellus Clay to Russia*, Berea, Kentucky 1935, p. 54.

19 Prince Gortchacow to Mr. De Stoeckl, St. Petersburg 10 VII 1861, FRUS 1861, vol. 1, p. 308309.  
20 *ibidem*.

21 *An Emperor's Policy*, "New York Times", 10 IX 1861; *The Rebellion; The Sympathy of Russia with the United States Views of Edward Everett*, "New York Times", 15 X 1861.

the more important, the more complicated the United States' position grew in the global arena. In consequence of several unpopular decisions, namely the maritime blockade of the South and the incident with the British mail paddle steamer RMS "Trent", America faced the threat of war with Great Britain or arbitration followed by a joint intervention of Great Britain and France.

On June 19, 1861, a special proclamation issued by the President launched the blockading of seaports in South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, with the alleged purpose to "protect the public peace and the lives and property of quiet and orderly citizens" from the occupying authorities. A separate proclamation of April 27 extended the blockade to the ports of Virginia and North Carolina. Designated forces were assigned to implement the new law, so no vessels would enter or leave the seaports of the rebellious South. In case of a breach, they were required to intern the crew and tow the intercepted vessel to a Northern port<sup>22</sup>. In practice, the maintenance of a fully impervious blockade proved unfeasible due to the long coastline of 5,600 km comprising 189 ports with different layouts. The interventions were therefore limited to major coastal cities<sup>23</sup>.

The President's decisions, a factor hampering free trade for the West European powers, met with an immediate reaction from both Great Britain and France. On May 13, 1861, Queen Victoria proclaimed British neutrality towards the American conflict, which was tantamount to recognising the Confederates a belligerent power; in accordance with the Paris declaration of 1856, this decision enabled free trade with the CSA, save for the areas experiencing a total and effective blockade. Lincoln's administration responded with indignation. Secretary of State Seward wrote to Charles Francis Adams, the American Minister in London: "... The recognition of the so-called Southern Confederacy ... is not to be made a subject of technical definition. It is, of course, direct recognition ... of the sovereignty and independence of a new power. It is direct recognition to receive its ambassadors, ministers, agents or commissioners, officially. ... No one of these proceedings will pass unquestioned by the United States in this case."<sup>24</sup> In a different letter, addressed to William L. Dayton, the American Minister in Paris, Seward stressed the readiness of the Union's government to maintain good relations with every country in the world, except those that shall bring help and support to the insurgents, or recognise, officially or not, the separatists' independence. "It is erroneous," he observed, "so far as foreign nations are concerned, to suppose that any war exists in the United States. Certainly there cannot be two belligerent powers where there is no war. There is here, as there has always been, one political power, namely, the United States of America, competent to make war and peace, and conduct commerce and alliances with all foreign

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22 Proclamation, 19 IV, 27 IV 1861, *Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*, J. D. Richardson ed., Washington: Government Printing Office 1889, vol. 6, p. 1415.

23 K. Michalek, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

24 Mr. Seward to Mr. Adams, Washington 21 V 1861, FRUS 1861, vol. 1, p. 89.

nations.”<sup>25</sup> The federal authorities in Washington rightly feared that the rebels may obtain not only diplomatic, but also military support from Europe.

Despite warnings, other countries went in the footsteps of Great Britain: France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, Prussia, Russia, Hamburg and Bremen all declared neutrality<sup>26</sup>.

The blockading of Southern ports affected all major economies, including Russia. Nevertheless, Gorchakov's position in the matter left no doubt ever since the beginning of the conflict; asserted back when John Appleton, the American diplomat and Clay's predecessor, was still in charge in St. Petersburg, it never changed and could be brought down practically to one basic axiom: “The question of recognising the Confederate States was not before the Emperor, as the United States must remain a well-prospering whole in order to counterweigh the British trade empire”<sup>27</sup>.

The “*Trent* Affair” proved to be a far bigger threat to the U.S. image abroad. On November 8, 1861, the captain of the American steam frigate USS *San Jacinto*, Charles Wilkes, intercepted a British royal mail ship, the *Trent*, boarded her, and arrested two commissioners of the Confederates en route to Europe, James Murray Mason and John Slidell, appointed to diplomatic posts in London and Paris respectively<sup>28</sup>. Wilkes also confiscated Confederate documents and correspondence that he judged would qualify as contraband. Those actions were in direct conflict with the maritime law regarding neutral states and sparked a wave of outrage, especially in London, leading to a sudden crisis in bilateral relations<sup>29</sup>. The release of the two interned Confederate diplomats, the death of Prince Albert (December 14, 1861) and Queen Victoria's deep mourning after the loss of her husband, calmed down the fighting mood of the British. The federal government in Washington made every possible effort to avoid armed conflict. On November 30, 1861, after much consultation with President Lincoln, the American Secretary of State Seward dispatched a note to London regarding the incident, in which he held the American captain fully responsible for the incident, condemning him for his lawless behaviour with no official instruction<sup>30</sup>.

The Russians followed this international turmoil with close attention. In January 1862, Gorchakov entrusted the Russian Minister in Washington Stoeckl with the delivery of a congratulatory note to the American government, expressing the Emperor's words of satisfaction over the conciliatory settlement of the “*Trent*” issue.

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25 Mr. Seward to Mr. Dayton, Washington 17 VI 1861, FRUS 1861, vol. 1, p. 226.

26 M. Bernard, *A Historical Account of the Neutrality of Great Britain During the American Civil War*, London 1870, p. 134.

27 Mr. Appleton to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 820 IV 1861, FRUS 1861, vol. 1, p. 299.

28 Both commissioners were appointed to their missions on 24 VIII 1861, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* [henceforth: *Official Records*], Harry Kidder White ed., ser. 2, vol. 3, United States. Naval War Records Office, Washington, 1922, p. 11.

29 More in: G. H. Warren, *Fountain of Discontent: the Trent Affair and Freedom of the Seas*, Boston 1981; N. B. Ferris, *The Trent Affair: A Diplomatic Crisis*, Knoxville 1977 and the chapter *The Trent Affair* in: D. P. Crook, *Diplomacy During the American Civil War*, New York 1975, p. 4359.

30 *The Alleged Speculations of the Trent Affair*, “New York Times”, 5 XII 1861.

At the same time, the Russian Foreign Minister admitted, in a secret conversation with the American Minister Clay, his government's concern over the threat of Great Britain's military interference in American events, which could provide reinforcement to the Confederates, bring the latter recognition and disintegrate the Union. It was also the first time the possibility of bringing support to the federal government was considered. Secretary of State Seward later observed: "The relations of mutual confidence and friendship between a republican power in the west and a great and enterprising and beneficent monarchy in the east will afford new and important guarantees of peace, order, and freedom to the nations." President Lincoln acknowledged the importance of this American-Russian correspondence, hence he annexed it to his report to the Congress on the "Trent" issue<sup>31</sup>.

The incident surprisingly sparked one more international debate. As reported by the "New York Times", the powers of Western Europe—Great Britain and France, and also Spain at first—had already considered the possibility of mediating between the North and the South back in February 1862, with a view to recognising the Confederacy, establishing two separate American countries and bringing an end to the war. The initiative, devised in the name of humanitarianism, was meant to counter what was called a quickly progressing destructive and fanatical crusade of the Union against the social order of the South, thus preventing a bloody and cruel uprising of slaves against their landowners<sup>32</sup>.

The western powers, openly exhibiting their sympathies for the Confederates and secretly aiding them, turned their eyes towards Russia with hope. The latter was initially willing to join the diplomatic talks, albeit apparently on other, completely opposite grounds. However, the first months of 1862 were not favourable for the realisation of an international initiative. The Union army, under the command of General George McClellan, began the "Peninsula Campaign" in March with the aim of capturing Richmond, the Confederate capital. The operation ended in defeat for the Union troops, even though they managed to besiege and seize Yorktown and Williamsburg in May and June. They then arrived in the vicinity of Richmond, but this resulted in their withdrawal and the adoption of an offensive in the direction of Washington by the Confederate Army led by General Robert E. Lee. The most famous battles in this campaign were: the Battle of Seven Pines (May 31 – June 1), where both sides claimed victory at the cost of over four thousand dead or wounded on the Union side, and over six thousand on the Confederate side; and two victories of the Confederates, i.e. the so-called Seven Days Battles (June 25 – July 1), where fifteen thousand and twenty thousand soldiers, respectively, were killed or wounded, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Bull Run (August 29-30) with losses amounting to ten thousand and eight thousand.

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31 Mr. Clay to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 24 I 1862, FRUS 1862, vol. 1, p. 445446; *President Lincoln to the Senate and House of Representatives*, 21 II 1862, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol. 5, p. 137.

32 *The Danger of International Intervention*, "New York Times", 1 II 1862.

In the light of these circumstances, the idea of arbitration resurfaced among the great powers. "Your situation is getting worse and worse", stated a concerned Gorchakov in a conversation with the American *chargé d'affaires* in St. Petersburg, Bayard Taylor. "The chances of preserving the Union are growing more and more desperate", and "the hope of ... reunion is growing less and less". "Can nothing be done," he asked, "to stop this dreadful war? Can you find no basis of arrangement before your strength is so exhausted that you must lose for many years to come your position in the world?" He then declared: "Russia alone has stood by you from the first, and will continue to stand by you". Considering a potential separation imminent, he called it "one of the greatest possible misfortunes"<sup>33</sup>.

The first rumours suggesting an anticipated joint French, British and Russian arbitrating intervention appeared in the first days of August through the medium of an article from the Belgian newspaper "Independence Belge", reprinted by the semi-official "Journal de St. Petersburg", which considered the recognition of the Confederate States by the world powers as the only right solution. The counterclaims in the Russian press and the declarations of the Imperial government appeased the American public with words of mutual friendship and unity of interests<sup>34</sup>. However, reports incoming to Washington from other diplomatic missions, especially from Paris, confirmed the veracity of the rumours and unveiled Napoleon III's determination in the establishment of an *entente cordiale* with the Russians regarding the American issue.

However, it was only on October 30, 1862, that the French Foreign Minister Drouyn de Lhuys dispatched, on behalf of his Emperor, letters inviting Great Britain and Russia to cooperate in the settlement of the American conflict. As soon as he learnt of the French initiative, the Russian Minister in Washington Stoeckl informed his government of Lincoln's willingness to break off diplomatic relations with Great Britain and France in case they recognised the Confederates<sup>35</sup>.

In spite of numerous declarations, Russia's position in the matter was not perfectly clear. Gorchakov had already forewarned the American diplomat Taylor of French plans on the eve of actually receiving their proposal, and promised their rejection on the grounds of being harmful to international relations and contrary to the Russian Empire's current approach to foreign affairs. However, his simultaneous reassertion of Russia's friendly attitude towards the Southern society (*we have no hostility to the southern people*), could have been alarming for the Union's Department of State<sup>36</sup>.

Russia's official response, issued by Gorchakov and delivered to the French Foreign Minister on November 8, was far more subtle, reserved, elastic, and consciously exposing the complexities of diplomacy. In general, it did prove the Emperor's care and concern regarding the American armed conflict, hence the desire to bring all military activity to an end as soon as possible by all available arbitral and ratio-

33 Mr. Taylor to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 29 X 1862, FRUS 1862, vol. 1, p. 463.

34 Mr. Cameron to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 7 VIII, 19 VIII 1862, FRUS 1862, vol. 1, pp. 452456.

35 A. A. Woldman, *op. cit.*, p. 9697.

36 Mr. Taylor to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 29 X 1862, FRUS 1862, vol. 1, p. 464.

nal means. But on the other hand, it also pointed out the necessity to avoid exerting pressure on American society, in order to avoid offending its national pride, while a joint intervention of three countries was likely to create such a risk. If the government of France were to insist on the invasion, and Great Britain had shared that opinion, the Russian reaction would have been hard to predict. Nevertheless, the response concluded with an assurance that, whatever the further development, Russia would always bring moral support to every effort leading to the restoration of peace in the Western Hemisphere<sup>37</sup>.

The American *chargé d'affaires* Taylor interpreted these words as confirmation that even though the Russian Empire remained favourable towards the Union, it considered European intervention inevitable and was ready to participate at a limited scale only to prevent a coalition between Great Britain and France, which would exclude the Russians from American issues. Nevertheless, the note also conveyed the secret hope that the British government would reject the French proposal, what both Taylor and Gorchakov were convinced would happen<sup>38</sup>. Eventually, the British Cabinet gathered on November 11-12 to consider intervention, and then declined participation in the operation proposed by the French, motivating their decision with Russia's disapproval (!) and suggesting postponing the arbitrational efforts towards a more suitable moment.

Russia's clear opposition to the mediation earned the gratitude of the Americans, in the eyes of which it remained a trustworthy ally, whose strict position not only saved the U.S. from intervention, but also solidified even more the favourable relations between the two powers. In his letter to Taylor dated December 7, Secretary of State Seward conveyed the President's satisfaction in the wise, just and friendly course taken by the tsarist government towards the Union; and then, on December 23, he specified why Americans place such trust in Russia: "Simply because she always wishes us well, and leaves us to conduct our affairs as we think best." In return, Gorchakov assured Taylor in January 1863 of the inalterability of Russian policies towards the U.S., which shall remain free from all pressure and influence of other countries. The meeting of Taylor and Alexander II on January 13 at the Winter Palace, on the occasion of the reception of the American diplomatic corps, confirmed the cordiality of their mutual relations. When the American diplomat stated: "Your Majesty is one of our best friends", the Tsar responded: "I shall remain so". Two days later, during another meeting at a court ball at the imperial palace, Alexander II displayed great interest in the Union's situation on the battlefields, as well as Lincoln's expected proclamation of emancipation, to which the Tsar reacted with enthusiasm and empathy. "I may add", reported Taylor, "that ... I have been treated by all the officers of the imperial government with the most gratifying courtesy and kindness."<sup>39</sup>

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37 Mr. Taylor to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 15 XI 1862, FRUS 1863, vol. 2, pp. 844845.

38 *Ibid.*

39 Mr. Seward to Mr. Taylor, Washington 7 XII, 23 XII 1862, Mr. Taylor to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 21 I 1863, FRUS 1863, vol. 2, pp. 847, 851852, 855857.

It is symptomatic that, as time passed, the developments in international politics and the deterioration of Russian-U.S. relations due to their rivalry over global influence, this led to changes in the social attitude towards this “traditional” friendship of the two nations. In 1904, during the Russo-Japanese war, an anonymous columnist appearing in the “New York Times” under the pseudonym *Historicus*, sought to disavow the historically cordial relations between Washington and St. Petersburg. While recalling the Civil War period and the arbitrational attempts of worldwide powers, he commented that: “France undertook efforts for joint mediation and invited Great Britain and Russia to cooperate and Russia declined, but this decision was communicated only after, and not before the British one.”<sup>40</sup> This rather simplified image, openly asynchronous in 1904, was still intended to expose the back room mechanisms of Russian diplomacy. The American historian Thomas Bailey also rightly pointed out one more aspect back at the beginning of the Cold War. Alexander II’s undeniable aversion towards participation in the intervention affected the two other powers only minimally. Their decisions were influenced far more by the Union’s strategic victory at Antietam, Maryland (September 17), one of the bloodiest battles of the whole war. Almost twelve and a half thousand perished or were wounded on the Union’s side, and ten thousand Confederates. “If Antietam had resulted in an overwhelming victory of the Confederates,” noted Bailey, “France and Great Britain would have probably intervened with or without Alexander II’s blessing.”<sup>41</sup>

Nonetheless, in spite of what later comments and judgements may have suggested, Russia’s role in the creation of the trilateral coalition seemed important to its contemporaries, which would explain the Confederates’ efforts to include this so far neglected part of Eastern Europe in their foreign policies. By joint decision of CSA President Jefferson Davis and Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar was designated on November 19, 1862, as the commissioner to Russia<sup>42</sup>. Aside from traditional letters of credence, informing of his appointment in the role of diplomatic representative, Lamar brought to St. Petersburg separate letters from Benjamin to Gorchakov and from Davis to Alexander II, expressing in all seriousness a sincere desire to initiate and maintain friendly relations between both governments<sup>43</sup>.

In a separate instruction, the Secretary of State explained to Lamar his basic duties and tasks pertaining to every commissioner of the CSA sent on a diplomatic mission. His primary goals were: to disclose the real reasons for the establishment of a new country, to gain the trust and favour of its locals, and to create grounds for the establishment of official diplomatic relations. He was also entrusted with the task of

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40 *Historicus*, *Russia Attitude Toward America*, “New York Times”, 14 II 1904.

41 T. A. Bailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 7980.

42 *Official Records*, ser. 2, vol. 3, pp. 11, 137138.

43 Letter of President Jefferson Davis, Richmond 19 XI 1862, J. P. Benjamin to His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Richmond 19 XI 1862, President Jefferson Davis to His Majesty Alexander II, Emperor of All the Russians, etc., Richmond 19 XI 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 2, vol. 3, pp. 137138.

counteracting harmful Union propaganda. According to Benjamin, the difficulties encountered in Great Britain and France caused a delay in convincing Russia, having “created some hesitation in approaching his Imperial Majesty Alexander II”. “Nor is it improper to add,” he explained, “that a communication to which extensive publicity was given, addressed by the Cabinet of St. Petersburg to that of Washington, justified the inference of the existence in that city of the same views [i.e. unfavourable to the Confederacy – H.M.Z.] as those which were avowed in London and at Paris.” He was nonetheless confident that the time had come to convince all governments of Europe, including Russia, of the harmfulness of their passive policies towards the Confederacy, which contributed to the prolongation of the conflict between the North and the South<sup>44</sup>. The letter proved that the main goal was to persuade the Russian Emperor to support the arbitration efforts and to recognise the independence and sovereignty of the Confederate States as soon as possible.

On December 1, 1862, Lamar embarked on his extremely difficult and risky clandestine mission, via San Antonio and Havana<sup>45</sup>. He managed to leave safely for Europe only in February 1863, a fact reported to the Secretary of State Benjamin by the Confederate commissioner in Cuba, Charles Helm<sup>46</sup>. The first stage of Lamar’s journey was London, which he reached on March 1. He was supposed to meet there with Walker Fearn, appointed to serve as his secretary in St. Petersburg. As advised by the Department of State, Lamar prepared for his Russian mission in Great Britain, and then in France, where he collected information on the attitudes of the European powers and the evolution of the situation; he also conferred with commissioners Mason and Slidell. In his report sent to Richmond from London on March 20, he described the swinging moods of the British *establishment* regarding the American conflict and expressed, quite naively and far too enthusiastically, his hopes of success at the Russian court. “... I am glad to say,” he stated, “that whilst the Government of Russia is inclined to favor the cause of the United States there does not exist any feeling of hostility toward the South. I have some reason to think ... that when the true nature and causes of the present war shall have been known, and especially when the Emperor is made to see that it is not a rebellion but a lawful assertion of sovereignty, we may reasonably expect his more active cooperation with the views of the French Emperor.” And then he reasserted: “There is no party in Russia absolutely hostile to the South”<sup>47</sup>.

The authorities in Washington had long predicted and anticipated the conspiratorial efforts of the Confederates in the Russian Empire. Successive Ministers to Russia were constantly reminded of this threat by the Secretary of State Seward and ordered to maintain strict vigilance in this matter. After his conversation with

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44 J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State to Lucius Q. C. Lamar, Commissioner to Russia, Richmond 19 XI 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 2, vol. 3, pp. 606608.

45 E. Mayes, Lucius Q. C. Lamar: His Life, Times and Speeches, Nashville 1896, p. 106.

46 C. J. Helm to J. P. Benjamin, Havana 14 II 1863, *Official Records*, ser. 2, vol. 3, pp. 690691.

47 L. Q. C. Lamar to J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, Confederate States of America, London 20 III 1863, *Official Records*, ser. 2, vol. 3, pp. 716718.

Gorchakov in April 1861, Appleton reasserted that there were no agents of the South in the Russian Empire and none were expected soon. His successor, Clay, reported a lack of signs of undercover activity in June 1861, underlined Gorchakov's strict position on turning away all potential emissaries in December 1861, and then, in February 1862, he quoted directly the Minister of Foreign Affairs: "No, no one dared to appear"<sup>48</sup>. The rumour about the dispatch of, to quote *chargé d'affaires* Taylor, "an agent of the so-called confederate government" was therefore approached by the American mission in Russia with calm; Taylor then proceeded with preparing the Russian authorities for the agent's arrival<sup>49</sup>.

The emissary of the Confederates never reached St. Petersburg. He remained in Great Britain and France, awaiting a more suitable opportunity. Lamar had in fact begun his mission at the least convenient and favourable moment for the Confederates, i.e. just as the January Uprising broke out in Polish territories belonging to the Russian Empire<sup>50</sup>. On April 20, 1863, Slidell informed the authorities in Richmond that as long as no progress would be made in the resolution of the Polish issue, Lamar would remain in Western Europe. Shortly afterwards, the CSA Senate rejected the approval of Lamar as its commissioner in Russia, effectively ending his mission. Secretary of State Benjamin informed Lamar of the Senate's decision in a separate letter, quoting a change in foreign policy as the sole reason for that decision, rather than reservations towards himself or his actions. Indeed, due to the citizens' discontent, the Senate decided not to designate any new commissioners until the country was officially recognised by the rest of the world<sup>51</sup>.

In response, the Confederate emissary expressed his gratitude for the confidence that had been placed in him, but admitted that the situation, promising at first when it came to establishing contacts with Russia, had suddenly changed for the worse. "Not only," he noted, "did there appear no evidence that the influence of France was in the ascendant in the councils of Russia, but it was very apparent that a growing coldness existed between the two governments, caused by the attitude which the French Government had assumed in relation to Poland. The progress of the insurrection, and the increasing manifestation of French sympathy with its success, have still farther widened the breach, until at present all Europe is greatly alarmed at the imminent risk of a hostile collision of the two empires."<sup>52</sup>

48 Mr. Appleton to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 820 IV 1861, Mr. Seward to Mr. Clay, Washington 21 V 1861, FRUS 1861, vol. 1, pp. 299, 301; Mr. Seward to Mr. Cameron, Washington 16 IX 1862, FRUS 1862, vol. 1, p. 458459; J. R. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

49 Mr. Taylor to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 17 XII 1862, FRUS 1863, vol. 2, p. 850.

50 More on the subject of the public image and attitude of global powers towards the January Insurgency in: J. F. Kutolowski, *The West and Poland: Essays on Governmental and Public Response to the Polish National Movement, 1861-1864*, Boulder, Columbia University Press 2000.

51 John Slidell to J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, Paris 20 IV 1863, J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State to Lucius Q. C. Lamar in St. Petersburg, Richmond 11 VI 1863, *Official Records*, ser. 2, vol. 3, pp. 743, 796.

52 Lucius Q. C. Lamar to J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, Confederate States of America, London 22 VII 1863, *Official Records*, ser. 2, vol. 3, pp. 848849.

The previous reports of other commissioners that flowed into Richmond from Europe were similar in tone. A. Dudley Mann, emissary to Brussels, spoke of Poland and the Poles with an obvious trace of jealousy, as they captivated the attention and affection of all Europeans from Stockholm to Lisbon, whatever the age, sex and provenance; Henry Hotz, emissary to London, portrayed the uprising as a movement gradually turning into a great national revolution, enjoying universal interest and affection even from Britons, so far reluctant towards the Confederates' cause. John Slidell, emissary to Paris, added: "Mexico and Poland are great stumbling blocks in the way of energetic action in our affairs"<sup>53</sup>.

The January Uprising had obviously reduced international concern regarding the CSA, minimising their chances, but it also emerged as another important test for the existing friendly relations between Washington and St. Petersburg. In May 1863, the French Minister to Washington, Henri Mercier, submitted a note dated April 23 to Secretary of State Seward, in which France, Great Britain and Austria asked Lincoln's administration to take part in a joint arbitration initiative in support of the Polish insurgents. The proposal of putting moral pressure on Tsar Alexander II was interpreted in the U.S. as an act of hostility towards the Russian Empire, its unity and territorial integrity. Therefore, excusing itself with a quote of the Founding Fathers on not entering into alliances and maintaining friendly relations with everyone, the Department of State responded: "[Our] government finds an insurmountable difficulty in the way of any active co-operation with the governments of France, Austria, and Great Britain, to which it is thus invited."<sup>54</sup>

The American authorities found themselves trapped. They could not confirm the rebelling Poles' right to independence from Russia, if they were already rejecting the right to independence and sovereignty of their own Southern states; a precedent in one case should immediately entail an identical approach in another. But, on the other hand, this stood in patent contradiction to previous American proclamations on liberty and democracy addressed to the subjugated nations of Europe in the times of the Revolutions of 1848, or the support offered to the national aspirations of Hungarians and the affection for Kossuth in the years 1849-1851, which almost led to the break-up of diplomatic relations with the Austrian Empire.

In 1863, no one even thought of breaking relations, and American diplomatic actions were focused on supporting Russia. Seward immediately informed St. Petersburg of the initiative undertaken by the European powers and disclosed the full contents of Washington's response, supplemented with a few personal words from American Minister to Russia Clay: "The undersigned is highly gratified to find his government thus sustaining so fully the sentiments which, indirectly in reference to Poland, he had, upon the occasion of his late reception, the honour

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53 Dudley Mann to J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, Brussels 27 II, 13 III 1863, Henry Hotz to J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, London 14 II, 21 III 1863, John Slidell to J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, Paris 18 VI 1863, *Official Records*, ser. 2, vol. 3, pp. 693, 703, 709, 719, 807.

54 Mr. Seward to Mr. Dayton [in Paris], Washington 11 V 1863, FRUS 1863, vol. 2, pp. 737739.

to express to his Imperial Majesty.” Clay referred there to his second presentation of credentials ceremony, as he was chosen to serve as Minister at Alexander II’s court again after a one-year break. In separate reports, he stressed the unchanging affection and amity he experienced anew from the Tsar himself, his family and the Tsarist government, but was also personally bewildered by this completely new situation which led to a sudden change of roles. Up to that point, the American authorities were the ones to seek support from the Russian Emperor in their struggle with internal issues; this time, it was the Emperor who needed support from the United States. “It was due from us to be grateful”<sup>55</sup> – wrote Clay. Just like the United States was threatened by war with Great Britain after the “*Trent*” incident, Russia now faced the risk of an intervention from Great Britain and France on account of the January Uprising.

For Tsar Alexander II, the United States’ answer given to European powers was of enormous value. “His Majesty the Emperor has been sensibly (*vivement*) moved,” wrote Gorchakov to Clay, “by the sentiments of confidence which the Government of the United States of America places in his views (...) and appreciates the firmness with which the government of the United States maintains the principle of non-intervention.” President Lincoln reacted to these words with unfeigned satisfaction. On request of the Russian Foreign Minister, and with authorisation from Lincoln’s administration, the correspondence of Seward with Dayton and Clay, as well as Clay’s with Gorchakov, were unveiled to the public in Russian media as proof of American support for the Russian Empire regarding the Polish issue<sup>56</sup>.

The culminating point of the friendly relations between Washington and St. Petersburg, not just during the Civil War, but arguably throughout the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, was the supportive expedition of the Russian flotilla, by order of Tsar Alexander II given in July 1863. In the second half of September 1863, six armed Russian vessels, led by rear-admiral Stepan Lesovsky (Степан Степанович Лесовский), moored off the New York coast. The formation comprised: three frigates – “Александр Невский” (“Alexander Nevski”) (fifty one cannons), “Ослябя” (“*Oslibia*”) (33 cannons) and “Пересвет” (“Peresvet”) (forty eight cannons); two corvettes – “Варяг” (“Varyag”) (seventeen cannons) and “Витязь” (“Vityaz”) (seventeen cannons); one clipper – “Алмаз” (“Almaz”). A few days later, another squadron, led by rear-admiral Andrey Popov (Андрей Александрович Попов), moored near San Francisco. Among the vessels were: four corvettes – “Богатырь” (“Bogatyr”) (forty eight cannons), “Рында” (“Rynda”), “Калевала” (“Kalevala”), and “Новик” (“Novik”); and two clippers – “Абрек” (“Abrek”) and “Тайдамак” (“*Gaidamak*”). Until then, all these vessels were in active service on the Mediterranean Sea or the

55 Mr. Clay to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg, 7 V, 2 VI 1863, FRUS 1863, vol. 2, pp. 866867, 870871; J. R. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

56 Reply of Prince Gortchacow to Mr. Seward’s letter to Mr. Dayton, St. Petersburg 22 V 1863, Mr. Seward to Mr. Clay, Washington 2 VII, 13 VII 1863, FRUS 1863, vol. 2, pp. 873875; *The Polish Question; Note from Mr. Seward*, “New York Times”, 17 VI 1863.

Pacific Ocean, and were built around 1860, save for a few from 1856<sup>57</sup>. In spite of the unfavourable opinions and commentaries that surfaced later, the flotilla represented proudly the armed forces of Imperial Russia, quite modern for those times, manifesting their size and power.

The seafaring and navigational qualities of the Russian commanders were also impressive. The smoothly performed manoeuvre, synchronised in time, consisted in the simultaneous arrival of one squadron from Vladivostok, across the Pacific, to San Francisco on the West Coast, and the second one from Kronstadt, across the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic to New York on the East Coast.

The joy displayed by the citizens of the Union on the arrival of the Russian flotilla was authentic, natural and understandable. In the third year of an protracted, bloody and brutal war, they were suddenly receiving support, which reignited hope and self-belief. The feeling of loneliness and helplessness was vanishing, especially that the two most murderous battles of the whole civil war—at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (1-3 July 1863) which ended with the North prevailing (23 000 dead or wounded on both sides), and at Chickamauga, Georgia (19-20 September 1863) which ended with the South's victory (18 000 dead and wounded on one side, 16 000 on the other)—failed to bring a definite conclusion<sup>58</sup>. The Russians were therefore welcomed on American soil and territorial waters as true heroes, allies and friends. In New York, a special welcoming committee held festivities, military and civilian parades (including an impressive parade on Broadway), banquets (including a banquet at city hall with the participation of the Russian diplomat Stoeckl) and receptions, where the anthems of both Russia and the United States were played and numerous toasts for President Lincoln and Tsar Alexander II were raised<sup>59</sup>. The displays of enthusiasm and jubilation were no less exuberant in Philadelphia, Boston and Washington. To honour the guests, President Lincoln held a meeting with officers of the Russian fleet, members of the cabinet, representatives of both Chambers of Congress, judges from the Supreme Court and the diplomatic corps, at his private house<sup>60</sup>.

Some of the plaudits probably soon turned into disappointment when they found out that the impressive Russian flotilla would not take part in war operations, and was only there to demonstrate their presence or to patrol occasionally both coasts

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57 *Our Russian Visitors*, "Harper's Weekly", 17 X 1863, p. 661; P. Laurentz, *Visit of Russian Squadrons in 1863*, „Proceedings Magazine”, U.S. Naval Institute, May 1935, vol. 61; C. Douglas Kroll, *Friends in Peace and War: the Russian Navy's Landmark visit to Civil War San Francisco*, Washington, D.C., 2007.

58 From a strategic point of view, the battle of Gettysburg and the seizing of Vicksburg the following day are considered the pivotal point of the whole Civil War. These events gave the Union control over the Mississippi river and split the Confederate territories into two isolated parts. Nevertheless, the war still lasted for two years after that, with both parties experiencing both victories and defeats.

59 *A Russian Fleet Coming into Our Harbor*, "New York Times", 24 IX 1863; *The Grand Reception of the Rear Admiral and Officers of Russian Fleet*, "New York Times", 1 X 1863; *Honors to the Russian Naval Officers*, "New York Times", 2 X 1863; *The Russian Banquet; The Russian Bear and American Eagle; The Hand Grasp Across the Ocean*, "New York Times", 20 X 1863.

60 *News from Washington: A Presidential Reception*, "New York Times", 20 XII 1863; *The Russian Squadron*, "New York Times", 10 I 1864, *Banquet to Russian Officers, Boston*, "New York Times", 8 VI 1864.

of the US. After some time, the Russian vessels stationing for eight full months in U.S. territorial waters earned the term “diplomatic fleet”. Clay’s biographer, James R. Robertson, considered it a unique event in the history of diplomacy<sup>61</sup>. The real aim of this visit also began to raise significant controversies and disputes because of its secrecy. Historians have attempted, with mixed results, to settle the myths that have arisen in connection with this event<sup>62</sup>. Nowadays, the extreme, one-sided theories, implying Alexander II’s selfless friendship and altruistic support or, quite the contrary, the egoistic motivation of a ruthless Emperor, are regarded as less convincing. In turn, the debates on the condition of the Russian fleet and its usefulness in American waters or its actual firepower in confrontation with British and French forces, as well as the effectiveness of potential political pacts between the USA and Russia against Great Britain and France, arouse far more emotions; especially that they are fuelled by the diplomatic reticence of the main observers and participants of the events. The Russian Minister in Washington Stoeckl used to dismiss all questions regarding the goal of the Russian armada with a mysterious smile and merely the indication that *it was not hostile*, while Clay, the American Minister in St. Petersburg, just “looked wise” and said nothing<sup>63</sup>. President Lincoln too, remained silent, going as far as to disregard such an important event in all of his annual speeches on the country’s condition, officially devoting more attention to the negotiations between the U.S. and Russia on the construction of a telegraph line connecting Europe and America through Siberia, Alaska and the Northern Pacific. The confidential note from the Department of State to the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, issued during the ratification of the purchase of Alaska, only specified that the visit of the Russian fleet in autumn 1863—initiated by the Emperor of Russia and approved by the American President as a demonstration of mutual respect and good will—resulted in the improvement of mutual understanding<sup>64</sup>.

Without a doubt, such an unusual Russian spectacle in American territorial waters had its roots in the desire to demonstrate mutual friendship and power and manifest cooperation in response to the bilateral sense of threat by a joint Franco-British intervention in the internal affairs of both the U.S. (in support of the Confederates) and Russia (in support of the Poles). It could have also been an attempt of the Union to put pressure on the Confederates or, for instance, to scare them off from marching on Washington; and in turn, it presented an advantageous opportunity for the Russians to withdraw their vessels from the European region threatened by conflict (in case their fleet were too weak to station there) or, which is more probable, to adopt a convenient strategic position and put the European

61 J. R. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

62 T. Bailey, *op. cit.*, chapter *The Russian Fleet Myth*, p. 8194; A. A. Woldman, *op. cit.*, chapter *The Myth of Russian Friendship*, pp. 156166.

63 *The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay: Memoirs, Writings, and Speeches*, vol. 1, pp. 334335.

64 Third Annual Message of President Lincoln, Washington 8 XII 1863; Forth Annual Message of President Lincoln, Washington 6 XII 1864, in: *Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*, vol. 6, p. 179191, 243255; J. R. Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 164165.

powers in check by cutting them off from their overseas possessions (if we assume they were strong enough to do so)<sup>65</sup>.

Both sides could, and apparently did benefit from this experience. Clay confirmed clearly: “Whatever may have been the ultimate purpose, Russia thus made a masterly exhibition, which... prevented foreign recognition of the Confederate States.”<sup>66</sup> Even the most critical researcher, such as Frank A. Golder, who accuses the Russian authorities of trickery, egoism and manipulation of the naivety of the Americans, disguising in fact their actual motivation, had to admit: “It was a most extraordinary situation: Russia had not in mind to help us but did render us distinct service; the United States was not conscious that it was contributing in any way to Russia’s welfare and yet seems to have saved her from humiliation and perhaps war.” At another occasion, he added: “It is, of course, true that the fleet was not ordered to America for our benefit, but this should not blind us to the fact that we did profit by the event as if this had been the case.”<sup>67</sup>

Around the end of April 1864, the Russian Minister of the Navy, vice admiral Nicolay Karlovich Krabbe (Николай Карлович Краббе), was informed by Gorchakov of Alexander II’s plan to end the Russian mission on the American coast. According to the Emperor, there was no further need for the Empire to keep its vessels in the Western hemisphere, as neither war nor an Anglo-French intervention had come to pass. Eventually, the Russian flotilla, both the Atlantic and the Pacific squadrons, left American territorial waters in June<sup>68</sup>. Their return to Russia in August inaugurated a whole series of courtesy meetings of American Minister Clay with members of the tsarist court and government, and naval commanders, with a view to conclude the successful operation and express congratulations and gratitude. Following a formal announcement by Prince Golitsyn, adjutant and chief of cabinet at the Ministry of the Navy, the American Embassy in St. Petersburg was visited by Rear Admiral Lesovsky, commander of the Atlantic squadron, accompanied by Admiral Greig, adjutant of the Grand Duke Constantine. Then, the American Minister visited the frigate “Ослябя” (“*Oslibia*”) stationing in Kronstadt, attended a meeting in Tsarkoe Selo with Grand Duke Nicholas and the officers of the eldest regiment of the Tsar’s guard, and spent a few days in the Tsar palace in Ropsha (Ропша) in the company of top-ranking Russian commanders during large military manoeuvres. Finally, he was granted an audience by Tsar Alexander II at Peterhof Palace<sup>69</sup>.

65 F. A. Golder, *The Russian Fleet and the Civil War*, “The American Historical Review”, vol. 20, no. 4, 1915, p. 801812; E. A. Adamov, *Russia and the United States at the Time of the Civil War*, “Journal of Modern History”, 1930, p. 586602; W. E. Nagengast, *The Visit of the Russian Fleet to the United States: Were Americans Deceived?*, “Russian Review”, vol. 8, no. 1, 1949, pp. 4655; H. I. Kushner, *The Russian Fleet and the American Civil War: Another View*, “Historian”, vol. 34, no. 4, 1972, pp. 633649.

66 *The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay: Memoirs, Writings, and Speeches*, vol. 1, p. 335.

67 F. A. Golder, *op. cit.*, pp. 811812.

68 *Departure of the Russian Fleet*, “New York Times”, 16 VI 1864.

69 Mr. Clay to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 22 VIII 1864, Mr. Clay to Mr. Seward: Sequel to the late visit of the Russian fleet to the United States, St. Petersburg 12 X 1864, FRUS 1864, vol. 3, pp. 288296.

When the Russian flotilla left the shores of America, the Civil War was still raging on, and even though the Confederates seemed far weaker than before, the fate of the whole conflict was still in the balance. General Grant, who took command over all Union armies in March 1864, launched a large offensive based on the “scorched earth” tactic and a coordinated, massive assault into the heart of the South. After conquering the state of Tennessee, General Sherman began his march across Georgia in order to capture Atlanta (September 1) and Savannah (December 22), then in 1865 in the direction of South and North Carolina to capture Charleston (February 17) and Goldsboro (March 23). The battle concluding the Civil War was that of General Grant’s army against General Lee’s at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865, which resulted in the signing of the act of surrender of the Confederate Army. The Confederate capital, Richmond, had been captured a few days prior to that, on April 2. The process of merging all superior authorities, institutions and agendas, as well as the economic structure, was long and painful, and the losses, both material and human, were enormous. Nowadays, the entire war is estimated to have cost the lives of six to eight hundred thousand American citizens. In a private conversation with the American Minister Clay, Grand Duke Constantine expressed concern and fear whether the forced incorporation of the rebel states would not weaken the Union. In the last weeks of the Civil War, the Russian Empire displayed an unchangeably friendly and amiable attitude, though tinged with a little more circumspection than previously. Bearing in mind the inevitable triumph of the North, as well as the constant shrinkage of Southern troops and manpower due to this war of attrition, St. Petersburg refrained from assuming the intermediary role suggested by Secretary of State Seward in the negotiations with Great Britain and France regarding the revocation of the South’s belligerent status<sup>70</sup>.

Abraham Lincoln, elected to a second presidential term in November 1864, did not live to witness the nation’s reconciliation and the reconstruction of the American state. Wounded on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1865 by John Wilkes Booth, actor and staunch supporter of the South, while watching a play at the Ford Theatre in Washington, he passed away the next morning. His death caused shock, grief, sorrow and consternation not only in the United States, but throughout the world. Letters of condolence from heads of state and monarchs flowed into Washington. From the Russian side, condolences addressed to the newly appointed President Andrew Johnson<sup>71</sup> were issued on behalf of Tsar Alexander II, who had just been struck by a personal tragedy, namely the loss of his son and heir apparent to the throne, the 21-year-old Tsarevich Nicholas, and on behalf of His Majesty’s Government, by Prince Gorchakov. Along with expressions of sympathy and grief, complemented by an assertion of mutual

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70 Mr. Clay to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 22 XI 1864, FRUS 18651866, vol. 2, pp. 364365; A. A. Woldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 250.

71 According to the U.S. Constitution, should the President pass away, the Vice-President (Andrew Johnson in this case) is sworn in and serves as President until the end of his late predecessor’s term. A similar situation occurred after Franklin D. Roosevelt’s death (12 IV 1945), when Vice-President Harry Truman was sworn in without an election for a whole 4-year term.

friendship, cooperation and understanding, the message carried the hope that the late president's efforts towards rebuilding and reuniting the nation would be pursued. Words of sympathy were also expressed by the Grand Duke Constantine and other members of the Tsar's family via the American mission in St. Petersburg. The Russian press, too, was generous in its praise of the American President<sup>72</sup>.

By astounding coincidence, the first anniversary of President Lincoln's death was marked by an unsuccessful attempt on the Tsar's life, the first of a series, which occurred in the Summer Garden in St. Petersburg on April 16, 1866. The assailant, Dimitri Karakozov, the son of an impoverished nobleman, aimed his pistol at the promenading Tsar's head, but missed when a bystander instinctively brushed his hand away. The hero to whom the Tsar owed his life turned out to be Osip Ivanovich Komissarov, a recently emancipated serf, later rewarded with a noble title for saving the monarch. Following the incident, the Americans, still affected by the tragic loss of their own President and grateful for the advent of the Russian flotilla on the US coast, promptly offered their congratulations and expressed their relief<sup>73</sup>.

A remarkable act of solidarity with the Russian Empire took place at the Capitol. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Thaddeus Stevens, a Republican congressman from Pennsylvania, proposed a House Joint Resolution (H.R. 133) expressing the regret of the American nation over the attempted assassination of the Russian Emperor by an opponent of his reforms, to salute the Tsar and the Russian people, and lastly to congratulate the twenty million emancipated serfs, whose liberator's life had just been spared by Providence. The resolution was passed the very same day by the House of Representatives, after its first and second reading, by a vote of 124 for, none against, and 59 abstentions. The document was then submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs for further review, underwent several stylistic changes and was supplemented with a passage obligating the President to acquaint Tsar Alexander II with the substance of the resolution. Once amended and adopted by the Senate, and then anew by the House of Representatives, the resolution was sent for approval to President Johnson on May 14, which he signed two days later<sup>74</sup>. The haste that marked the whole legislative process (concluded in less than two weeks) proves the great importance that Americans attached to reassuring Alexander II of their friendship and sympathy at such a critical moment of his life. It was an exceptional, unprecedented act. Never before in the history of the United States and their diplomacy, had a document of similar content been so amended and carefully polished.

President Johnson's administration promptly proceeded to fulfil its duty to inform Tsar Alexander II, as requested by Congress. Gustavus Vasa Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy under Abraham Lincoln, was delegated to perform the glori-

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72 Mr. Hunter to Mr. Clay, Washington 16 V 1865, FRUS 18651866, vol. 2, p. 380; Prince Gortchacow to Mr. de Stoeckl, St. Petersburg 1628 V 1865, Prince Gortchacow to Mr. Clay, St. Petersburg 1628 V 1865, Mr. Clay to Mr Seward, St. Petersburg 4 V 1865, FRUS 18651866, vol. 4, pp. 523525.

73 Mr. Clay to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 22 IV 1866, FRUS 18661867, vol. 1, p. 412413.

74 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1st Session, 4 V, 8 V, 10 V, 14 V, 17 V 1866 "Congressional Globe", pp. 2384, 24432444, 2462, 2546, 2573, 2654.

ous and responsible task of conveying, on behalf of the American nation, a copy of the Congress's declaration all the way to St. Petersburg and handing it to the Tsar. At the same time, the American minister in St. Petersburg, Cassius Clay, was instructed to obtain as soon as possible an audience with the Tsar, in order to congratulate him personally and notify him of the decision taken by Johnson's administration. The Tsar received Clay on June 11<sup>75</sup>.

Meanwhile, on June 5, Fox departed from Newfoundland on his special mission aboard the armoured monitor "Miantonomoh", escorted by the steamer USS "Augusta" and the gunboat USS "Ashuelot". A journey overseas on a modern, yet lightweight vessel, used so far only for patrolling coastal waters, constituted a hazardous, experimental endeavour. The ship's appearance in Europe awoke surprise, astonishment and curiosity. Having reached the Irish coast in merely 11 days, Fox took pride in telling about his exploit while staying in England, France and Denmark. He was given a private audience by Napoleon III in the Tuileries Garden, introduced to Queen Victoria's entire family in Buckingham Palace, and hosted by King Christian IX in Copenhagen. He never missed an opportunity to converse with representatives of the Admiralty and the Navy<sup>76</sup>.

Fox finally arrived at Alexander II's court in August. Under these circumstances, his mission acquired a much wider, all-European character. The welcoming ceremony for the noble guest took place on the outskirts of the Russian Empire, namely in Helsinki, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland, where the local authorities held a banquet in his honour on August 4<sup>th</sup>. The next day, a Russian flotilla of eleven ships presented itself to escort "Miantonomoh" and "Augusta" in parade formation to Kronstadt. Among the many dignitaries greeting the American guests in the harbour, were Rear Admirals Lesovsky and Popov<sup>77</sup>.

On August 8, at an official audience with Tsar Alexander II at the Peterhof Palace, in the presence of Minister Gorchakov and the American Minister Clay, Fox read a copy of the Congress's resolution aloud, then handed it to the monarch. The Tsar concluded his short response, emphasising the friendly relations between Russia and the United States, with words of gratitude for the cordial reception the Russian squadron experienced in American territorial waters in 1863. The banquet was held at Monplaisir, a summer palace from the time of Peter the Great. The next day, the Tsar was greeted with full honours aboard both American vessels, which he reciprocated by inviting his American guests onto the deck of the imperial yacht „Александрия”, accompanying them in their visit to the Peter and Paul Fortress,

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75 Mr. Seward to Mr. Clay, Washington 28 V 1866, Mr. Seward to Mr. Fox, Washington 28 V 1866, Mr. Clay to Mr. Seward, St. Petersburg 31 V 1866, FRUS 18661867, vol. 1, p. 413415; Mr. Welles, Secretary of Navy to Mr. Fox, Washington, 26 V 1866 [in:] *Narrative of the Mission to Russia, in 1866, of the Hon. Gustavus Vasa Fox, from the Journal and Notes of J. F. Loubat*, J. D. Champlin, Jr. ed., [henceforth: *Narrative of the Mission to Russia, in 1866*], New York 1873, pp. 1819.

76 *Narrative of the Mission to Russia, in 1866*, p. 3668.

77 *Narrative of the Mission to Russia, in 1866*, p. 6985; Mr. Fox to Mr. Welles, Kiel, Prussia, 30 IX 1866, FRUS 18661867, vol. 1, p. 422423.

and showing them the Russian fleet, including the battery “Не тронь меня” (“Ne Tron Menia”) and the armoured monitor “Перун” (“Perun”)<sup>78</sup>. Fox met with the Tsar a few more times during his journey to Russia which spanned several weeks, until September 17, 1866. One prominent date was August 22, when he was invited by the imperial couple to a banquet in honour of the American mission at Peterhof, followed by a ball in the company of the Tsar and numerous members of the imperial household, and concluded with an overnight stay at the palace. On September 10<sup>th</sup>, during the farewell ceremony in Tsarskoe Selo, Fox was entrusted by the Tsar with a personal letter to President Johnson, in which he expressed his sincere gratitude and affection<sup>79</sup>.

Fox spent the rest of his journey attending successive social gatherings, sumptuous receptions with sophisticated menus, gala banquets and balls to which he was invited by members of the Imperial family such as the Grand Duke Constantine’s wife, representatives of the most noble Russian princely houses (Dolgorukhovs, Galitsyns), politicians such as Gorchakov, military personages such as Krabbe, municipal authorities, clubs and trade associations. He visited historic and architectural sites, and introduced to the achievements of local music, art and history. Aside from Kronstadt and St. Petersburg, where he admired the Hermitage, Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Nevsky Prospect, the Mining Institute, and the Imperial Academy of Arts and Sciences, he also visited Moscow (the Kremlin, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Kazan Cathedral), Krasnoye Selo (military manoeuvres), the Kostroma shipyard on the Volga river, Rybinsk, Uglich and Tver. He attended spectacles in theatres and operas, accepted honorary citizenships of cities (Kronstadt, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kostroma) and commemorative medals. The farewell reception for the honourable guest followed the same pattern as the welcoming event: festivities in the harbour of Kronstadt with gun salutes and an honorary escort by the Russian fleet through the Gulf of Finland. Fox then pursued his journey to Sweden, where he was received by King Charles XV, and to Prussia, where he met with Prince Adalbert<sup>80</sup>.

When reflecting on the traditional Russian hospitality and amity which marked the reception of the American delegation, Captain Alexander Murray, Commander of the USS “Augusta”, noted later: “We were the victims of a hospitality which I did not believe existed outside of America and... of a generosity which does not often fall to the lot of navy officers anywhere.”<sup>81</sup> Fox’s mission was to be the final accord in the friendly relations between Washington and St. Petersburg of the Civil War

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78 *Narrative of the Mission to Russia, in 1866*, p. 8690, 97100; Mr. Fox to Mr. Welles, Kiel, Prussia, 30 IX 1866, FRUS 18661867, vol. 1, pp. 423424.

79 *Narrative of the Mission to Russia, in 1866*, p. 201204, 361362; Mr. Fox to Mr. Welles, Kiel, Prussia, 30 IX 1866, His Majesty the Emperor to the President of the United States, Peterhof 17 VIII 1866, FRUS 18661867, vol. 1, pp. 416, 425, 427.

80 *Narrative of the Mission to Russia, in 1866*, until 418; Fox to Mr. Welles, Kiel, Prussia, 30 IX 1866, FRUS 18661867, vol. 1, pp. 424429.

81 *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, J. L. Mooney ed., Washington, Navy Dept., 1969, vol. 4, p. 384

era. Never again were their mutual relations to be that amicable and warm. Indeed, the often stressed community of interests evaporated with time, leaving room to the element of rivalry that became especially apparent after the Russian-Japanese war and the establishment of the Entente, i.e. the alliance of Russia with France and Great Britain.

### American-Russian relations during the American Civil War (1861-1865)

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 in the building of the State Archives of the Russian Federation in Moscow there was officially opened exhibition titled *The Tsar and the President: Alexander II and Abraham Lincoln – Liberator and Emancipator*. It was made on initiative of American-Russian foundation to cultural cooperation, exhibited in the years 2008-2009 also in the United States; it gained a large circle of enthusiasts. The element linking both figures were reforms they introduced: imperial decree on enfranchisement of peasants (1861) and presidential proclamation on the liberation of slaves (1863) as well as identical dramatic assassination – Lincoln in 1865, Alexander in 1881.

Although they had never met, they provided help and support to each other in those difficult times. Lack of competition (America headed west in its expansion, Russia – east), the attempts to maintain balance of powers in the world and the mutual rivals – Great Britain and France – created the bases for unusual cooperation. The times were special and extraordinary for both. In the USA, southern states revolted against unity of the republic (civil war 1861-1865), in Russia, Polish subjects revolted against unity of the Empire (the January Uprising of 1863). In both cases, Great Britain and France being in favour of both confederates and Poles, threatened the Union and Russia with an intervention or war. It brought Washington and St. Petersburg even closer.

From the beginning of the Civil War Russia supported unity of the Union and similarly to other countries it was neutral towards the blockades of ports, yet it rejected confederates' claims (Gorchakov's declaration of July 1861). It was also firmly supporting the idea of not acknowledging agents and commissioners of the South. Appointed to St. Petersburg, the commissioner of South L. Q. C. Lamar (November 1862), before arriving at Tsar's court he was dismissed due to unfavourable international circumstances caused by the uprising. Russia did not join a mediatory action suggested by Great Britain and France between the North and the South aimed at acknowledging confederates' independence (Russian note of November 8<sup>th</sup> 1862) while Americans rejected British-French suggestions to interfere the January Uprising (American note of May 1863).

The culmination point was sending Russian flotilla to the USA coasts (1863-1864). Such demonstration of power was supposed to stop Paris and London from interfering with internal affairs of the USA and Russia, frighten confederates and give Tsar a better strategic position in case of war. The ending highlight was Fox mission, who in 1866 went to Tsar with the Congress resolution and congratulated him on not being assassinated (April 16<sup>th</sup> 1866).

It is not possible to determine which party gained more. It seems that each gained in its own way and later researchers' critical evaluations concluded from the changing bilateral American-Russian relations – from friendship to hostility and cold war.

*Translated by Jakub Perliński*