GREAT BRITAIN AND THE RUSSIAN UKASE OF SEPTEMBER 16, 1821

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GREAT BRITAIN AND THE RUSSIAN UKASE OF SEPTEMBER 16, 1821

THESIS

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By

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PREFACE

The Russian presence on the northwest coast of America dates from the Behring-Chirikov expedition of 1741 and represents the culmination of a policy of eastward expansion initiated by Peter the Great. Russian exploitation of the region's rich peltries was early challenged by British and Spanish traders, and later by American merchants, who exchanged the furs in Canton for tea, silk, nankeens, and other commodities. In an attempt to halt ruinous competition among rival Russian fur companies and to exclude foreigners, Tsar Paul I in 1799 claimed the northwest coast for Russia, gave the Russian-American Company a semiofficial status, and granted it a trade monopoly. His successor, Alexander I, not only renewed the Company's charter but also issued the famous Ukase of September 16 (N.S.), 1821, which asserted extravagant claims of territorial and maritime jurisdiction. The relation of this decree to the Monroe Doctrine has been unduly emphasized to the neglect of its other historical ramifications.

The affair of the Ukase of September, 1821, evokes such questions as these: What was its real purpose? Was Alexander guilty of aggression in North America or was he only
attempting to solve a domestic problem, viz., smuggling in the Alaskan colony? Why did George Canning negotiate separately with Russia after he had expressed a desire to cooperate with the United States? Did he really believe that Russia would be more impressed by separate negotiations, as Harold Temperley has suggested? Did the tsar deliberately appease Britain in the hope of securing her aid in a Russo-Turkish war, as S. B. Okun and Hector Chevigny have contended, or did he follow a policy of expediency? These questions have not been satisfactorily answered.

The primary sources consulted in preparing this study are Proceedings of the Alaskan Boundary Tribunal, American State Papers: Foreign Relations, Wellington's new Despatches, George Canning and His Friends, Richard Rush's Memoranda of a Residence at the Court of London, The Diary of John Quincy Adams, and The Political Life of the Right Honourable George Canning.

Volumes II, III, and IV of the ABT Proceedings contain a wealth of British, Russian, and American correspondence, both official and private. The ASP and Wellington's Despatches publish the original text of many important documents found only in a condensed version in the ABT Proceedings. George Canning and His Friends contains much private
correspondence of George Canning, Stratford Canning (his first cousin), and Sir Charles Bagot not published elsewhere. Rush's Memoranda sheds light on Washington's policy in the Northwestern Question and Canning's suspicions about American motives. The Adams Diary reveals the great secretary of state's attitude toward Britain and Russia. Augustus G. Stapleton's Political Life of Canning, an account by his private secretary, is valuable for its insight into Russo-Turkish relations, despite its pro-Canning bias.

Of the few secondary accounts which focus on Anglo-Russian relations and the Northwestern Question, Semen B. Okun's Russian-American Company and E. E. Rich's Hudson's Bay Company, both recent monographs, are the most useful. Okun is a Soviet historian whose work is based on exhaustive research in the Russian archives. Hector Chevigny's Russian America, the Great Alaskan Venture is a popularized history of the colony which is full of unique interpretations and insights. Okun, Rich, Chevigny, and Hubert Howe Bancroft, whose History of Alaska appeared in 1886, all furnish background for interpreting primary sources. Harold Temperley's Foreign Policy of Canning, based on extensive use of Foreign Office documents, discusses British diplomacy during the period under study, but gives only a brief treatment of the
northwest coast problem. William Appleman Williams' American-Russian Relations also narrates the triangular rivalry between Russia, Britain, and the United States in Alaska, but without the sensationalism of Okun and Chevigny. While John C. Hildt's Early Diplomatic Negotiations of the United States with Russia and Benjamin P. Thomas' Russo-American Relations, 1815-1867 deal extensively with Russo-American relations on the northwest coast, their coverage of Anglo-Russian and Anglo-American relations is oblique and generally conventional.

During the nineteenth century, the Russian, Old Style calendar was twelve days in arrears of the Gregorian, New Style calendar. To avoid confusion, all old style dates have been converted to new style.
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PROLOGUE

GENESIS OF THE UKASE

In conjunction with the renewal of the charter of the semi-official Russian-American Company, Tsar Alexander I on September 16 (N.S.), 1821, promulgated a famous ukase:

BE IT ACCORDINGLY.

1. The pursuits of commerce, whaling, and fishery, and of all other industry on all islands, posts, and gulfs, including the whole of the north-west coast of America, beginning from Behring Straits to the 51st degree of northern latitude, also from the Aleutian Islands to the eastern coast of Siberia, as well as along the Kurile Islands from Behring Straits to the south cape of the Island of Urup, viz., to the 45th degree 50 minutes north latitude, is exclusively granted to Russian subjects.

2. It is therefore prohibited to all foreign vessels not only to land on the coasts and islands belonging to Russia as stated above, but also, to approach them within less than 100 Italian miles. The transgressor's vessel is subject to confiscation along with the whole cargo.¹

¹Ukase of Sept. 4/16, 1821, Proceedings of the Alaskan Boundary Tribunal (Washington, 1904), II, 25-26 (hereafter cited as ABT Proceedings). The Italian mile is equal to one minute of latitude or 4,860 feet and is therefore 420 feet shorter than the English mile. It is the same as the ancient Roman mile, which Russia still preserved. One hundred Italian miles is approximately thirty marine leagues.
This interdict brought forth a storm of protest not only from Britain and the United States, but also from the Netherlands and other nations which had no interest in trading on the American northwest coast. So great was the furor among the maritime states of Europe that the Russian minister at Naples did not even announce the decree. The St. Petersburg cabinet, finding itself in an untenable position, quickly retreated from the field. Henry Middleton, American minister to Russia, suggested that the ukase was withdrawn because it had been obtained surreptitiously from Alexander, who had approved it in a perfunctory manner. Indeed, Count Joannes Capodistrias, the Russian foreign minister, informed Middleton on July 24, 1822, that the tsar already has had "the good sense to see that this affair should not be pushed too far. We are disposed not to follow it up." To avoid incidents which could embarrass future negotiations, the Russian naval squadron was ordered to confine its operations along the northwest coast to limits recognized by other powers.2

The Ukase of September 16 stemmed directly from the report filed in 1819 by Captain Vasilii M. Golovnin, a naval officer,

after his return to St. Petersburg from an inspection trip to Russian America. Having observed that foreign trade there had reached alarming proportions, Golovnin recommended that steps be taken to protect the colony not only from foreign competition but from imminent seizure by the United States. This warning received support from Pierre de Poletica, Russian minister at Washington, who reported in January, 1821, that Americans frequently asked questions about Russian activities on the northwest coast and displayed an unwholesome interest in the area. He did not believe that the Washington government intended to encroach on Russian territory but feared its attitude might change, especially since Congress was considering a report which urged American settlement of the Columbia River country.3

In August, 1820, over a year before the policy of interdiction received official sanction, the directors of the Russian-American Company had ordered Nicholas N. Muravyev, the new governor, to end foreign trade with the colony. Americans and others were told to leave and warned not to return. From the beginning of the Company's existence in 1799, smuggling,

especially by Americans, had been a serious problem. Foreign merchants paid native hunters higher prices than the Russian company could afford, and they annually carried off between ten and fifteen thousand sea otter and seal pelts. The management of the Company complained to the government, and even to the tsar himself, that Yankee traders bartered firearms to the Indians and taught them how to use them, a practice which threatened the security of the Russian settlements.\(^4\)

Exasperated at the reprehensible activities of American smugglers, Russia had attempted to solve the matter by diplomacy, once in 1808 and again in 1810, but these efforts had failed. On the first occasion, the St. Petersburg cabinet proposed a convention with the United States which would force American traders on the northwest coast to deal exclusively with the Russian-American Company. When the complaint was renewed in 1810, the Russian government suggested that the United States prohibit its citizens, by treaty or statute, from trading with the Indians of the colony, but permit them to visit the Russian establishments. Due to the state of European affairs, the tsarist government could not bring pressure to bear on the Americans for fear of driving them into Napoleon's

\(^4\) Okun, *Russian-American Company*, pp. 74-75, 82; Chevigny, *Russian America*, pp. 174-175.
camp at a time when Russia's post-Tilsit alliance with France was deteriorating. Alexander, moreover, desired friendly relations with the United States, for he saw the American navy as a counterpoise to Britain's seapower. Concomitant with this policy, he retained Benedict Cramer, an American banker, as a Company director for twenty years (1805-1825).  

Although the Russian-American Company had been chartered as a private corporation with authority to govern its Alaskan fief, it functioned as a government monopoly. From the beginning, high Russian officials had served as managers of the Company, while the merchant class occupied a subordinate position. With the formation of the Russian-American Company in 1799 by the consolidation of rival companies, the Alaskan fur trade had been transformed from a semi-piratical commercial venture into a crown enterprise. Tsar Paul and many Russian nobles owned shares in the Company. His

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successor, Alexander, also became a shareholder and took the Company under his protection.\(^6\)

After Waterloo, Alexander, the leading internationalist of his day, focused attention on the Holy Alliance and the establishment of the Congress System, while management of domestic affairs devolved upon Count Aleksei Arakcheev, a Slavophile, who hated foreigners. For two years, however, the politically weak merchant faction maintained control of the Russian-American Company by bribing Arakcheev and other courtiers, but in 1817 the directors yielded to the demand of Navy politicians that the administration of Russian America be transferred to their control in order to give the colony a posture of defense and a more military appearance which would emphasize Russian sovereignty. With powerful Navy support, the directors in 1821 applied for a new charter which stipulated that the governor must be a naval officer, armed with a mandate to exclude foreigners, not a civilian manager like the genial Baranof, who was noted for his hospitality to foreign traders in New Archangel.

\(^6\)Chevigny, Russian America, p. 177; Benjamin P. Thomas, Russo-American Relations, 1815-1867 (Baltimore, 1930), pp. 40-41; Okun, Russian-American Company, pp. 94-99.
The directors, however, succeeded in maintaining the commercial structure of the Company.\(^7\)

The twenty-year charter of the Russian-American Company, due to expire on July 20, 1819, had been extended on an ad hoc basis while the Ministry of the Navy and the directors studied Captain Golovnin's report on conditions in Alaska and prepared their recommendations. The Ukase of September 16, 1821, designed to protect the Company's monopoly from foreign interlopers, was followed nine days later by a second ukase that rechartered the Company for another twenty years, retroactive to July 20, 1819. When the Russian-American Company was granted a monopoly of the Alaskan fur trade in 1799, other nations had not been notified, since the St. Petersburg cabinet regarded the charter as a domestic matter. In addition to commercial interdiction, Russia claimed the northwest coast as far south as 55° N. lat. and encouraged her subjects to make settlements even farther south, to the prejudice of Spain, a nation with which Russia then was at war. Little notice was taken of Russian activity in Alaska because Europe was preoccupied with the Napoleonic Wars during nearly the entire term of the first

\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 105-106; Chevigny, Russian America, pp. 161-164, 179-183; Bancroft, Alaska, pp. 517-518, 530-534.
charter. The two decrees of September, 1821, closely resembled the earlier ukase, and all contained several identical provisions. The extravagant maritime jurisdiction claimed in 1821, however, was a radical departure that converted a domestic issue into an international question. Russia, moreover, claimed territory down to 51° N. lat., which antagonized Britain and the United States, the latter having succeeded in 1819 to the rights of Spain by the terms of the Adams-Onis Treaty. Notwithstanding the international consequences of the ukases of September, 1821, Russia intended them as a solution to the domestic problem of smuggling; they did not signal a change in foreign policy. 8

Fig. 1--Northwest Coast and New Caledonia, 1821-1825
CHAPTER I

THE BRITISH REACTION

The first phase of the negotiations which culminated in the Anglo-Russian convention of February 28, 1825, began in November, 1821, and extended through the Congress of Verona, which ended in early December, 1822. The British Foreign Office protested that the maritime pretensions of the Ukase of September 16, 1821, violated the principle of freedom of the seas. The British whaling industry, however, had a practical interest in the welfare of its operations in the North Pacific Ocean, and the Hudson Bay Company complained that the ukase also endangered the British fur trade in the area west of the Rocky Mountains and north of the Columbia River. During this initial period, the Russian and British governments exchanged notes, but no significant progress toward settlement was made.

On November 12, 1821, Russia officially notified Britain of the ukase and warned that no ship departing from European ports after March 1, 1822, or from the United States after July 1, 1822, could legally pretend ignorance of it. This note, delivered by Baron Paul Andreivitch de Nicolay, the Russian first secretary, was a copy of Count Karl Robert
Nesselrode's circular of October 19, 1821. Nesselrode, who shared the foreign ministry with Capodistrias, explained that the ukase was intended to protect the Russian-American Company from the activities of foreigners, a set of vagabonds, who violated the Company's trade monopoly, supplied the Indians with arms and ammunition and incited rebellion, and who displayed enmity toward the Russian authorities. He did not specify the nationality of the "vagabonds."¹

On February 11, 1822, Pierre de Poletica, Russian minister at Washington, informed Secretary of State John Quincy Adams of the tsar's decree. The announcement contained no explanation of the reason for the new regulations and no argument in support of their legality. In contrast to this brief note, that to Castlereagh was conciliatory. Nesselrode evidently anticipated a spirited protest from Britain and wished to placate the London cabinet, since Russia could not ignore British seapower. He suggested to the foreign secretary that the ukase was directed only against smugglers, adventurers, and riffraff. The new regulations, however, made

¹Nicolay to Castlereagh, London, Nov. 12, 1821, ABT Proceedings, II, 95-97; Lieven to Castlereagh, London, Nov. 29, 1821, ibid., pp. 99-100. Capodistrias served as Alexander's chief diplomatic adviser, and Nesselrode directed the office and wrote most of the correspondence.
no distinction between disreputable elements and honest traders and whalers. They prohibited all shipping from approaching the Russian-American Company's territories closer than 100 Italian miles. The mémoire, moreover, contained a fundamental contradiction involving the tsar's right to interdict foreign shipping over so wide an area. After asserting that this drastic action was perfectly legal and would be more efficacious than the milder provisions of the ukase, he did an about-face and admitted that the vast distance between the northwest coast of America and the northeast coast of Asia did not conform to the accepted definition of *mare clausum* and conceded that foreign powers would not authorize the Russian government to exclude their merchants from these waters and coasts. But having admitted that the North Pacific was not a closed sea, Nesselrode reserved the privilege of regarding it as such and suggested that generosity prompted Russia to be content with less than the entire North Pacific, which "the most sacred titles of possession assure to it and which moreover unquestionable authorities confirm." Perhaps the Russian foreign minister believed that the London cabinet would be more likely to accept the maritime provisions of the ukase, if he hinted
that the tsar might declare the North Pacific a Russian lake.2

Since the note did not mention the expanded territorial claim on the northwest coast, the Russian ministry apparently anticipated that the chief British objection would be directed against the ukase's commercial interdiction. The first Russian argument, although equivocal, was that the imperial government was claiming less than it could have; other powers, therefore, should be willing to accept the restrictions of the ukase. Secondly, all maritime powers had more or less restricted foreign shipping in their colonial systems. Thirdly, foreigners had no lawful business in the Russian territories and should be excluded.3

On November 17, 1821, Sir Charles Bagot, British ambassador at St. Petersburg, explained the Russian position to his government. The ukase, he declared, was aimed primarily at the United States, for Nesselrode had assured him that its

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object was to prevent Yankee interlopers from interfering with the trade in sea otter pelts and from selling prohibited articles, especially gunpowder, to the Indians of Russian America. Russia had protested repeatedly to the United States against these culpable activities, but the Washington cabinet had denied responsibility for the deeds of its citizens in such a remote place. The American government had indicated, however, it would not be offended by whatever measures Russia adopted to protect her rights. Bagot did not discuss with Nesselrode the grounds for the expanded territorial claim, but he did learn from him that the provision for confiscating foreign vessels that approached within 100 Italian miles of the Russian coasts was based upon Article XII of the Treaty of Utrecht.  

Upon receipt of the Russian note, Castlereagh consulted the legal officers of the crown and representatives of the whaling industry. On January 18, 1822, he protested to Count Christophe de Lieven, Russian ambassador at London, against the ukase's maritime and territorial pretensions. The next day he forwarded to Bagot a copy of this reply and instructed

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4 Bagot to Castlereagh, St. Petersburg, Nov. 17, 1821, ibid., pp. 101-102.
him to follow its tenor in any negotiations with the St. Petersburg cabinet concerning the ukase.5

The powerful Hudson Bay Company was quick to pick up the gauntlet thrown down by its Russian rival, though Deputy Director J. H. Pelly still thought American encroachment posed the greater threat to its interests. In March, 1822, he reminded Castlereagh of the Company's posts on the Columbia River and of the "large and valuable Establishments to the northward." While the Russian claim descended to 51° N. lat., that of the United States, he observed, extended from the 41st to the 60th parallel. Already a bill was before Congress which provided for the settlement of the Columbia River country and its admission as a state into the Union. Pelly appealed to the Foreign Office for protection of the British fur trade from American imperialism, no less than from Russian.6


When Castlereagh committed suicide (August 12, 1822), George Canning succeeded him in the Foreign Office on September 15. Ten days later, Pelly reiterated to the new foreign secretary the Hudson Bay Company's contention that the ukase threatened its fur trade. In defense of British claims in northwestern Canada, he asserted that Sir Alexander Mackenzie had crossed the Rocky Mountains at 56° 30' N. lat. and had penetrated to the Pacific Ocean in 1793. As a consequence of his explorations, British fur traders had established trading posts in the country west of the Rocky Mountains. According to Pelly, agents of the British Northwest Company had founded additional stations in the same area, then called New Caledonia, but by virtue of the merger of March 26, 1821, the Hudson Bay Company had acquired all the establishments and claims of the Northwest Company.\(^7\)

Pelly took pains to impress Canning with the importance of the Hudson Bay Company's fur trade in the little known region of New Caledonia. He located four principal forts or permanent trading stations of the Company, which were at Rocky Mountain Portage, 56° N. lat. by 121° W. long., on

Stewart's Lake at 54° 30' by 125°, on McLeod's Lake at 55° by 124°, and on Fraser's Lake at 55° by about 127°. By means of these and several minor posts, which changed location as the situation demanded, Pelly claimed that an extensive fur trade was carried on with the Indians who lived in the wilderness between about 60° N. lat. and the mouth of Fraser's River at about 49°. He emphasized that British fur traders had never met foreign agents in this vast territory and that it appeared that no part of it had ever been occupied either by Russians or Americans. 8

Although the Hudson Bay Company used the Peace River east of the Rockies to transport furs from New Caledonia, the possibility of utilizing some river flowing into the Pacific Ocean, Pelly suggested, should not be overlooked. For this purpose, one of these virtually unknown streams could be as good as the Columbia River to the south. The deputy director also emphasized the importance the Hudson Bay Company attached to British control of the Mackenzie River. Canning was sufficiently impressed by Pelly's letter to enclose a copy of it with supplementary instructions to the Duke of Wellington, British plenipotentiary to the

Congress of the Arona, from this forward, the welfare of the Bay of Plenty's fur trade on the northwest coast received high attention. I had anticipated a conference (last November) in which Admiral Lady, likely to attend. It was resolved that as much discussion might be dispensed with slave trade, the ukase of 1821. that the Northwest should send a representative to Vienna. A most important despatch had been received to Wellington, concerning instructions for the congress. 9

On September 14, a week before Wellington left for the Continent, even information that the tsar had


ordered his warships to cruise close to the coasts of the Russian colonies and not to intercept foreign vessels so far out to sea as 30 marine leagues. Since the ukase had become Russian law, the London cabinet regarded its tacit, verbal withdrawal as unsatisfactory, but the tsar's moderation made the necessity for negotiation less urgent. On September 16, the day before the duke's departure, Lieven advised him to bring forward any British territorial claim on the northwest coast in order not to be foreclosed by a Russo-American territorial agreement which could evolve from separate negotiations with the United States.\(^{11}\)

Canning's additional instructions to Wellington of September 27 also enclosed an official outline of Russia's claim to the northwest coast as far south as 51\(^{0}\), based on the Adams-Poletica correspondence of February-April, 1822. These instruments and Pelly's letters were intended to familiarize Wellington with the Northwestern Question. According to Canning, Russia founded her claim on the right of prior discovery and actual occupation by her subjects. The Ukase of 1799, which granted the Russian-American Company its first charter, had authorized the Company to extend its

establishments south of 55°, and this provision had not been challenged by other governments, not even by Madrid, at the time. Notwithstanding that Russia was at war with Spain in 1799, the St. Petersburg cabinet regarded her failure to protest as a tacit admission that she had no claims as far north as the 60th parallel. The Foreign Office, of course, denied the validity of each point supporting Russia's claim, and Canning annotated the counterarguments on the face of the brief given to Wellington.¹²

The foreign secretary instructed the duke to contest the tsar's expanded territorial claim, since it was not based on actual occupation. According to Pelly, the Hudson Bay Company already had establishments within the very area claimed by the tsar's Ukase of 1821. Russia should not receive any territorial concessions that would encroach upon the rights of British subjects. Britain, moreover, could accept nothing less than the emperor's complete disavowal of the novel maritime regulations in the ukase. The article in the Treaty of Utrecht, which allegedly justified the Russian measure, bound only those parties which had agreed to it, not the whole world. In any case, since

Lieven had indicated that the ukase's objectionable maritime provisions would be waived, Canning anticipated that there would be no serious difficulty on this point.\textsuperscript{13}

On November 28, Wellington ruefully confessed to Canning that his discussions with Nesselrode and Lieven and exchange of notes relative to the Northwestern Question had produced no results. On October 17, two days after the duke's arrival in Verona, he had repeated to Nesselrode all of Castlereagh's objections to the ukase and had argued that the British claim to the northwest coast was superior to the Russian, since it was based on actual occupation. To support this assertion, he cited the information supplied by Pelly which indicated that British fur traders had maintained for many years establishments extending westward from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean between 49\degree\textsuperscript{0} and 60\degree\textsuperscript{0} N. lat. Nesselrode waited more than a month before replying that he was not aware of the existence of any of the British posts cited by Wellington. He countered that even the best and most recent English maps did not show any of the aforementioned establishments of the Hudson Bay Company either in the hinterland or on the coast. On the other hand, since the expeditions of Bering and

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 311-312.
Chirikov nearly a century before, the Russians, so early as 1799, had extended their settlements south to the 55th parallel, and the first charter of the Russian-American—granted that same year—had authorized it to make settlements even farther south. The British government, he reminded the duke, had not then protested against this charter, though it had received official publicity. The tsar, however, did not wish to become enmeshed in a web of claims and counterclaims and stood ready to negotiate territorial boundaries on the basis of mutual convenience.14

In a conversation with Lieven on the night of November 27, Wellington objected to Nesselrode's mémoire of the 23rd as unsuitable to form the basis for a negotiation since it restated maritime and territorial pretensions which the British government could not admit. The next day he suggested to Lieven that, if the tsar would declare his readiness "to negotiate upon the whole subject," without restating objectionable principles, the issue could be amicably settled either at London or St. Petersburg. This overture produced the desired result, for on Friday, November 29, Wellington

had another interview with Nesselrode in which the foreign minister accepted the suggestion of negotiating all the questions arising from the ukase on the basis of mutual expediency and proposed St. Petersburg as the seat of the conference. The Russian note of November 23 and the British reply of the 28th were declared "void acts." The tsar, of course, reserved all his claims in North America, "if the result of the negotiation should not be satisfactory to both parties."¹⁵

The Ukase of 1821 was a minor issue at the Congress of Verona, since the powers had more important problems to consider, but it was, none the less, vital to British commercial interests. For this reason, Canning was pleased that

Wellington had achieved the limited aim of placing the dispute in train of negotiation.\textsuperscript{16}

By January, 1823, the issue of conflicting Anglo-Russian territorial claims on the northwest coast had been joined, but by then it was also apparent that the overlapping claims of the United States would have to be considered in negotiating a convention, and this factor complicated and prolonged the settlement of the Northwestern Question.

CHAPTER II

CANNING GOES IT ALONE

Upon communication of the Ukase of September 16, 1821, Britain and the United States each began a demarche to obtain its official withdrawal. Since the Russian interdiction affected the territorial and commercial claims of both nations, Adams proposed that the Washington and London governments hold joint negotiations with the St. Petersburg cabinet. After a long and involved exchange of correspondence, the Anglo-Saxon states suspended attempts to cooperate in negotiating a tripartite convention with Russia, because of conflicting interests and rivalry between themselves. During the time that the negotiation was in abeyance, news of the Monroe Doctrine arrived in Europe and furnished Canning a pretext to go it alone in settling the Northwestern Question.

Early in 1823, the Russian ministry decided that it would be more expeditious for Britain, the United States, and Russia to negotiate a tripartite convention in St. Petersburg. Simultaneous negotiations in Washington and London would be very cumbersome owing to the slowness of
communication. Long delays would be inevitable in event further instructions from St. Petersburg became necessary. Russian interests, moreover, would be better served if one Russian plenipotentiary in St. Petersburg dealt with both western powers. From the tsar's point of view, parallel discussions at Washington and London had one great disadvantage: neither Russian envoy would be aware of the concessions offered or obtained by his colleague across the ocean.¹

On January 31, 1823, pursuant to the Verona entente, Lieven suggested to Canning that the British ambassador at St. Petersburg be empowered to negotiate the Northwestern Question "on the sole principle of mutual expediency." The foreign secretary agreed and on February 25 transmitted full powers to Bagot. The British position remained the same as that outlined in Wellington's instructions for the Congress of Verona.²


Two months later, Baron de Tuyll, the new Russian minister at Washington made a similar proposal to Adams. On April 24, he requested that Henry Middleton, American minister at St. Petersburg, be instructed to negotiate on the basis of mutual convenience all of the differences between the two nations that had arisen from the Ukase of September, 1821. He added that Bagot already had received full powers to negotiate there. On May 7, Adams accepted the Russian proposal.\(^3\)

The idea for Anglo-American cooperation in negotiating this issue seems to have originated with Adams, probably as a logical extension of the Russian suggestion for talks with one imperial plenipotentiary. Just as the tsar saw the advantage of having one minister deal with both Britain and America, Adams apparently wanted the American minister present at Anglo-Russian discussions. After Adams had received the note from Tuyll, he apprised Stratford Canning, British minister at Washington, of the Russian proposal. On May 3, 1823, 

\(^3\) Tuyll to Adams, Washington, Apr. 24, 1823, ASP, V, 435; Adams to Tuyll, Washington, May 7, 1823, ibid., pp. 435-436. For almost a year after the departure of Pierre de Poletica on April 24, 1822, there was no Russian minister in Washington. His successor, Baron de Tuyll van Serooskerken, presented his credentials on April 19, 1823. Elissen, the legation's chargé d'affaires, handled Russian interests during the interval.
Stratford reported to his cousin, George Canning, that Adams had suggested a joint Anglo-American negotiation vis-à-vis Russia, since both nations had a similar grievance against the ukase.  

The Englishman understood from Adams' remarks that the United States had no territorial claims as far north as the 51st parallel, but, none the less, denied the validity of the tsar's claim. The American secretary especially objected to the interdiction of trade between American citizens and the Indians of Russian America, and the seizure of foreign vessels thirty leagues from the coast. Adams also believed that the United States and Britain could act in concert, since the Russian decree encroached upon the interests of each.  

It appears, however, that Adams was not entirely frank with Stratford Canning concerning American territorial ambitions on the northwest coast. Although the secretary respected this minister as a diplomat and conceded to him the virtue of sincerity, he also considered him a "proud,

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high-tempered Englishman, of good but not extraordinary parts; stubborn and punctilious, with a disposition to be overbearing." Adams complained, moreover, that Stratford Canning annoyed him more than any other member of the Washington diplomatic corps. The minister reciprocated the secretary's dislike, denounced him as an Anglophobe, and contemptuously referred to him as "Squintz." Such personal antipathy not only prevented candor between them but also contributed to subsequent Anglo-American misunderstanding. Adams, however, was no more confidential with Tuyll. When the Russian minister attempted on July 17 to learn the purport of Middleton's instructions, the secretary told him only so much as he thought prudent.6

On July 22, 1823, Adams authorized Middleton to negotiate the settlement of the Northwestern Question and suggested that the conflicting claims of the United States, Britain, and Russia could be resolved by a tripartite convention. He reminded Middleton that, by the Treaty of Washington (February 22, 1819), the United States had

acquired the claims of Spain to the northwest coast between 42° and 59°, and that Article III of the Anglo-American convention of October 20, 1818, had provided for the joint occupation of the Oregon Territory westward of the Rocky Mountains for a period of ten years. A similar article, Adams thought, should be included in the projected Anglo-Russo-American treaty. With regard to the territorial question, the secretary proposed the 55th parallel as the southern boundary of Russian America. All of these objectives were incorporated into a draft treaty which he enclosed with his instructions to Middleton.7

Adams' instructions to Richard Rush, American minister at London, are also dated July 22. Despite the similarity between the two dispatches, they differed in one important respect: Adams wanted to negotiate the territorial question separately with the London cabinet. He instructed Rush to propose to Canning an arrangement that would confine British settlements on the northwest coast to the area bounded by the 51st and 55th parallels. Canning considered the suggestion of an Anglo-Russian boundary at 55° gratuitous and presumptuous, since this issue was properly one to be settled

by Britain and Russia. Adams' proposal to fix the Anglo-American boundary at 51° was, moreover, premature, since the Convention of 1818 concerning the Oregon country still had five years to run. It appears, indeed, that the Secretary of State regarded the negotiations inspired by the Russian ukase as an opportunity to obtain an advantageous settlement of the Oregon Question. Since Adams had empowered Middleton to negotiate questions arising from the ukase jointly with Russia and Britain, it seems inconsistent that he should instruct Rush to discuss the same issues separately with the London government, but the hypocrisy is more apparent than real. He merely wished to use the North-western Question as a stalking-horse to gain Russian assistance in settling the American boundary dispute with Britain.  

When Canning received Stratford's dispatch of May 3, which contained Adams' proposal for joint Anglo-American negotiations with Russia, he assumed that the American secretary wanted the Anglo-Saxon powers to act in concert only

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on the maritime question, since no entente existed between them on the Oregon boundary. Notwithstanding Harold Temperley's assertion that "Canning seems to have doubted whether it was wise to co-operate, as Russia was likely to be more impressed by single and separate negotiations," the foreign secretary welcomed cooperation with the United States on the maritime question as "peculiarly advantageous." Since the tsar already had tacitly withdrawn his commercial interdiction, Canning did not want to humiliate him. He shrewdly observed that Britain and the United States would "be satisfied jointly with smaller concessions than either power could accept singly;" thus the chance of offending Alexander would be lessened.9

At the end of August, 1823, when Rush proposed to the London cabinet Anglo-American cooperation in the pending negotiations, Canning "eagerly caught at the proposition." But, as aforementioned, his willingness to cooperate with the United States applied only to the issue of maritime jurisdiction, not to settlement of the territorial dispute, which he believed could be resolved only by separate negotiation. On July 12, he instructed Bagot to propose the 57th parallel as

the southern boundary of Russian America. Canning's conversations with Rush and correspondence with Bagot clearly indicate that he suspected the Yankees of harboring designs on the northwest coast that conflicted with those of Britain.¹⁰

In July, 1823, neither Britain nor Russia knew the true extent of American territorial claims on the northwest coast. In talks with Stratford and Tuyll, Adams had deliberately been vague on this question. The Middleton and Rush instructions set forth a strong American claim to 51° N. lat. and cite that of Spain as far north as 59°, a claim to which the United States had fallen heir in 1819. The 55th parallel, proposed by Adams as the boundary between Russian and British territory, was two degrees farther south than the tsar, Canning thought, had any legitimate title. According to Stratford, the United States had never asserted a claim north of 51°, but that of Russia extended south to the same line. Clearly, the United States had a sharper territorial dispute with Britain than with Russia, since the American claim entirely overlapped the British.

¹⁰Middleton to Adams, No. 29, St. Petersburg, Sept. 19, 1823, ASP, V, 448; Canning to Bagot, No. 12, Foreign Office, July 12, 1823, ABT Proceedings, II, 123-124; Rush, Memoranda, pp. 423, 467-473.
At the end of August, 1823, Bagot informed Nesselrode that he and Middleton probably would cooperate, at least on the maritime question, in the forthcoming negotiation. Far from objecting, the Russian foreign minister declared that it was the most agreeable way to approach the matter. But serious discussions did not begin for more than two months because early in September Nesselrode departed with the tsar for a rendezvous at Czernovitz with the Emperor Francis I of Austria and did not return to St. Petersburg until the middle of November. Meanwhile, Poletica, now a counselor of state, represented the imperial government in talks with Bagot and Middleton, which served only to prepare the way for the definitive adjustment of differences, since he had no authority to settle anything in the absence of Alexander and Nesselrode.11

In a second interview with Nesselrode before he left St. Petersburg, Bagot suggested that the southern boundary of Alaska could be fixed without consulting the United States, since the Washington cabinet had waived all territorial claims north of 51°. Although Britain's claims, indeed, extended to 59°, the Ministry, he thought, would accept the

57th parallel. Bagot's maps did not give the precise latitude of New Archangel (Sitka), located on Baranof Island, but he realized that the boundary probably would have to be adjusted to include this important settlement in Russian territory. The foreign minister's equanimity toward the proposed line, none the less, encouraged the ambassador to press the demand.¹²

Middleton's instructions did not reach St. Petersburg until the middle of October. Poletica, meanwhile, frequently inquired if he had received authority to commence negotiations. Finally, on October 16, Christopher Hughes, the American charge d'affaires at Stockholm, delivered the long awaited instructions.¹³

After waiting a month for Middleton to receive instructions, Bagot and Poletica initiated a separate démarche on the territorial question. On October 14, two days before Middleton's instructions arrived, Bagot called at Poletica's office to begin negotiation of the Alaskan boundary dispute. At this time, both diplomats believed that the United States


¹³ Bagot to Canning, No. 48, St. Petersburg, Oct. 29, 1823, ibid., p. 129; Middleton to Adams, No. 29, St. Petersburg, Sept. 19, 1823, ASP, V, 448.
was interested only in contesting the ukase's commercial interdiction.¹⁴

Before conferring with Bagot, Poletica consulted with Privy Councillor Count de Lambert, whom the Minister of Finance had appointed to represent the Russian-American Company. Lambert emphasized the necessity of barring agents of the Hudson Bay Company, already established on the Mackenzie River, from encroaching upon the Russian preserve. The Company's spokesman advised Poletica that Russian interests would be protected by drawing the southern boundary at 54° and the eastern boundary at whatever meridian would leave the Mackenzie River outside Russian territory. Lambert stressed that the Russian-American Company would not accept an arrangement which permitted commerce or navigation by British or American traders within its territory. Acting on this advice, Poletica on October 14 proposed the 54th parallel, and Bagot countered that any Russian claim south of 60° N. lat. would have to be very recent, since certain correspondence in his possession indicated that Russia in 1790 had recognized the right of Spain to the northwest coast from California to the 61st parallel. Bagot, however, assured Poletica that the London cabinet would not resort to

¹⁴Poletica to Nesselrode, St. Petersburg, Nov. 15, 1823, ABT Proceedings, II, 137-139.
abstract principles of law in its quest for a territorial settlement, since such an approach usually led to interminable discussions. He proposed to resolve the question on the basis of mutual convenience. Standing before a map, the British ambassador pointed to the 57th parallel and declared that here was the boundary that would satisfy his government. Unmoved by these arguments, Poletica rejoined that, even if the imperial cabinet, in the interest of conciliation, agreed to a line drawn at $55^\circ$, as stipulated in the first charter of the Company, he saw no chance of moving it farther north than the latitude regarded by Russia as her frontier since 1799. He urged Bagot to accept the 55th parallel as the boundary that would satisfy moderate people and thus silence the extreme views of the opposition party in England, which was haranguing the public in the press and in Parliament about the "unbounded ambition of Russia."\textsuperscript{15}

As the interview ended, Bagot reiterated that Britain intended to make common cause with the United States on the question of maritime jurisdiction, but he affirmed his conviction that "the territorial question did not concern the Americans in the least." Both he and Poletica believed,

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., pp. 137-140, 140-141; Bagot to Canning, No. 48, St. Petersburg, Oct. 29, 1823, ibid., pp. 130-131.
however, that the Yankees would insinuate the right of navigation and commerce in the area claimed by Russia. The Russian counselor thought, too, that his defense of the tsar's case had impressed the ambassador.16

In London, meanwhile, George Canning, influenced by Stratford's interpretation of Adams' views and perhaps by wishful thinking, erroneously assumed that the United States had no desire to participate in the territorial negotiations and so notified Bagot. Soon after Middleton received his instructions, however, he revealed to his British colleague that the Washington government was, indeed, interested in the boundary question, and Bagot on October 29 informed Canning of this new development. The United States, he reported, posing as the successor to the rights of Spain on the northwest coast, not only asserted a superior claim to those of Russia and Britain as far north as latitude 61°, but also demanded the right to participate in any démarche that had as its objective the location of the Russo-Canadian boundary, which Poletica wished to draw at the 55th parallel. The American government, moreover, wanted the three powers involved to grant one another the reciprocal right of fishing

16Poletica to Nesselrode, St. Petersburg, Nov. 15, 1823, ibid., p. 42. This initial interview lasted two and a half hours.
and trading with the Indians along the coast for some limited period, which could be renewed at the option of the parties. As a consequence of these unexpected American pretensions, Bagot suspended discussions with Poletica and requested new instructions.17

This important dispatch, which reached London on November 17, contained still another surprise for Canning: the news that Hughes had brought Rush instructions on the Northwestern Question, a fact unknown to the foreign secretary. Acting on this intelligence, Canning asked Rush the tenor of these instructions and found to his amazement that the American minister also had authority to negotiate the Northwestern Question in London. Rush, however, did not intend to seek negotiation there if the British wished to proceed at St. Petersburg.18

Canning, of course, could not send Bagot new instructions until he had a clearer understanding of American policy. On December 12, he inquired further concerning the territorial ambitions of the United States on the northwest Pacific coast.


18 Ibid., p. 129; Canning to Bagot, No. 2, Foreign Office, Jan. 15, 1824, ibid., p. 144.
Five days later, Rush called at Gloucester Lodge and found Canning in bed suffering from an attack of gout. The minister spread a map before the secretary and indicated the territory claimed by the United States. Canning remarked that the American claim was greater than he had anticipated and asked Rush to leave with him for study a brief, informal memorandum of the claim. This the diplomat did. That afternoon (the 17th), Canning's servant brought Rush a note requesting clarification of the memorandum. The secretary understood that the United States would agree to make no settlement north of 51° N. lat. on Britain's promise to make none south of that line, but the words that troubled him were "or north of fifty-five." What does this mean, Canning questioned?

Our northern question is with Russia, as our southern with the United States. But do the United States mean to travel north to get between us and Russia? And do they mean to stipulate against Great Britain, in favor of Russia, or reserve to themselves whatever Russia may not want?¹⁹

Rush explained that the United States proposed that Britain should make no settlements north of the 55th parallel on the assumption that she then had no posts north of that line and believed that it was indeed the southern boundary of Alaska, as stipulated in 1799 by the first charter of the

¹⁹Rush, Memoranda, pp. 466-469.
Russian-American Company. In a disarming display of frankness, Rush admitted that the United States wanted to draw the Canadian-American boundary at 51° in order to retain possession of the entire course of the Columbia River. The Washington government, moreover, did not intend to surrender its right to trade with the Indians above the 55th parallel. Canning replied that he would take the American minister's explanation "like the wise and wary Dutchman of old, ad referendum, and ad considerandum." The secretary, in short, did not object to the American proposal that Russia should grant Britain and the United States permission to fish and trade with the Indians of Russian America, but he did question Adams' motive in trying to confine British territory on the Pacific to a narrow corridor of only four degrees width.20

When Rush returned to Gloucester Lodge on January 2, 1824, he found Canning in a state of anxiety over President Monroe's message to Congress of December 2, 1823, a copy of which had just arrived in London. What is the meaning of "this extraordinary doctrine," the secretary asked? The minister replied that he had not heard from his government

since Congress convened and thus had no instructions concerning the president's speech. He could only offer his personal opinion that the doctrine was not directed at Britain but was intended as a counterpoise to the maritime pretensions of the tsar's ukase.21

Adams' instructions to Rush of July 22, 1823, it will be recalled, contained the concept of the non-colonization clause of the Monroe Doctrine, and during the Rush-Canning interview of December 17--before either man had heard of Monroe's famous message to Congress--the minister had declared: "The United States no longer regarded any part of the coast as open to European colonization, but only to be used for purposes of traffic with the natives and for fishing in the neighboring seas." Thus Canning knew of the Washington government's non-colonization principle, but he apparently ignored it until news of the president's speech reached England. On January 5, Canning confessed to Rush that he found it difficult to cooperate with the United States in settling the Northwestern Question with Russia because of the president's non-colonization doctrine. In

response to this admission, the minister announced his acceptance of the principle of separate negotiations, a diplomatic withdrawal which gave the secretary the independent initiative he sought. But Rush never doubted that Canning's decision to negotiate without American assistance had arisen primarily from Adams' insistence that the American continents were no longer "subjects for future colonization by any of the European powers—a principle to which Great Britain does not accede." Notwithstanding Rush's opinion, Canning was more upset by the recently revealed territorial pretensions of the United States, which gave the question of Anglo-American cooperation "a new and complicated character." The foreign secretary and the minister already had reached an impasse before news of Monroe's message arrived in England. When it became apparent that Adams intended to limit Britain's Pacific frontier to a corridor only four degrees wide, Canning recognized a trap and began looking for a way out. He used the Monroe Doctrine as an excuse to renounce cooperation with the United States.

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Canning confided to Bagot that he regarded Monroe's "extravagant doctrine" as a counterclaim directed at the equally extravagant pretensions of the tsar's Ukase of 1821. Rush and Canning both believed that Monroe had been emboldened to make his declaration by knowledge of British opposition to the reconquest of Latin America, which the secretary had disclosed to the American minister in August, 1823, during their discussions of a joint declaration against the European Alliance. In defiance of the Monroe Doctrine, Canning emphasized that Britain regarded any part of North America which had not already been discovered and settled by another power as open to her future colonization. 24

The Anglo-American flirtation, which had blossomed in the spring of 1823, ended in disenchantment in the winter of 1824. The United States, with its stubborn independence and expansionist ambitions, promised to be an unsatisfactory partner for Britannia. In his instructions to Bagot of January 15, 1824, Canning announced his decision to negotiate separately with Russia. His reasons for taking this course seem well founded, except for his assumption that the United

States and Russia were guilty of collusion. He observed that both Nesselrode and Adams had suggested the 55th parallel as the most equitable line of demarcation between British and Russian territory and contended that this circumstance indicated "either a foregone understanding between Russia and the United States, or a disposition on the part of the United States to countenance and promote what they know to be the desire of Russia." This contention, however, ignores the fact that since 1799 the tsar had claimed the 55th parallel as the southern boundary of Alaska. It seems only logical, therefore, that Russia and the United States should prefer this line as most acceptable. Canning's suspicion of conspiracy, moreover, is not supported by the "arm's length" character of Russo-American negotiations during 1823, especially Adams' reserved interview with Tuyll in July and Middleton's brusque discussion with Poletica in November. Finally, a contradiction appears in Canning's thought. Notwithstanding his assertion that the Washington government had conspired with the St. Petersburg cabinet "to gratify Russia at the expense of Great Britain," he argued that Monroe's "extraordinary doctrine" was so manifestly anti-Russian that Britain could scarcely afford to associate herself with one of the parties to such a hopeless
disagreement—strange behavior, indeed, for partners to a collusion. 25

Though these "reasons" for going it alone are strained and unconvincing, Canning's other arguments have much to recommend them. He observed that the United States probably intended to inject the Oregon Question into the negotiations, which would compel Britain to settle at the same time her northern boundary with Russia and her southern boundary with the United States. She would be caught in a nutcracker negotiation between aggressive neighbors on the northwest coast. Such a démarche could not proceed on a uniform principle or a common understanding. Canning also thought the questions in dispute between Russia and Britain could be settled without arbitration; thus there was no reason to call in an arbiter like the United States, a power he distrusted. Pleased with this turn of events, Canning on January 22 indulged in self-congratulations. 26

Having explained his policy to Bagot, he confided: "I hope you will admit that I have done you a benevolent turn in ridding you of your Yankee colleague in the N. W. Coast

26 Ibid., pp. 144, 146.
negotiation." He admonished his friend, however, to remain on good terms with Middleton and quoted Titania:

> Be kind and courteous to that gentleman,  
> Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes,  
> Feed him with apricocks and dewberries.  

Convinced that his diplomacy soon would bear fruit, he boasted: "The effect of the ultra-liberalism of our Yankee co-operators, on the ultra-despotism of our Aix-la-Chapelle allies, gives me just the balance that I wanted."  

Stratford Canning picked up his cousin's tune and wrote Bagot familiar refrains reflecting on the honor of the American government.

> I see that you are about to plunge into your North-Western negotiations, and I congratulate you most heartily on having at least to swim in that element without an attendant Yankee offering a cork-jacket, and watching his opportunity to put your head under water.  

Although the documents do not reveal bad faith either by the United States or Britain, Canning clearly suspected Adams of conspiring with the tsar against British interests.

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28 Ibid., pp. 217-218. According to Canning, the United States had become a part of the European system without knowing it.

29 Stratford Canning to Bagot, Foreign Office, Jan. 23, 1824, ibid., p. 221.
on the northwest coast. The evidence does indicate, however, that the United States and Russia each wished to use the other as a counterpoise to British influence in this area.

Adams feared that Spain's lost colonies might fall into the hands of Britain through default, if not by overt act. Since he hoped that Texas and Cuba eventually would desire to annex themselves to the United States, he found it necessary for this and other reasons to refuse to join with Britain in a declaration guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the former Spanish American colonies. Such a manifesto would tie the hands of the United States in case Texas and Cuba became available. The words of John Quincy Adams, which were spoken by James Monroe, enjoining further colonization in the Americas by any European state was a clever alternative that served the purpose of obtaining for the United States part of the credit for a laudable British project and, at the same time, of bolstering American self-esteem at no cost and little risk.  

Canning, of course, perceived the Yankee ingenuity involved in this maneuver and decided to use it as a pretext to negotiate separately with the ministers of Alexander—"that "shifty Byzantine," as Napoleon had called him—rather than accept the Byzantines on the Potomac as his partners. His real reason for separate negotiation, however, was rivalry with the United States over the northwest coast and other issues, which made cooperation impossible.
CHAPTER III

THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION OF 1825:

APPEASEMENT OR REALPOLITIK

Within a year after the promulgation of the Ukase of September 16, the directors of the Russian-American Company came to realize that the policy of commercial interdiction was a mistake. Not only did it evoke vigorous protests from Britain and the United States, but also it created trade and supply difficulties that threatened ruin to the Russian American colonies. The directors, therefore, did an about-face and urged the tsar to withdraw the very measure they had so recently pressed him to adopt. In April, 1824, Alexander acquiesced.

Soon after Canning's decision in January, 1824, to negotiate separately with the Russians, Bagot resumed talks with Nesselrode and Poletica, but their discussions did not bear fruit until February 25, 1825, nearly ten months after the conclusion of the Russo-American convention (April 17, 1824). These treaties fixed the boundaries of Russian America, provided limited reciprocal trade concessions, and guaranteed
free navigation of the Pacific Ocean. Despite the hardships suffered by Russian colonists in Alaska during the embargo on foreign trade, the Company directors now complained that the conventions went too far.

The difficulties encountered by the Company in provisioning the colonists while attempting to enforce the ukase is illustrated by the cruise of the Apollo. In October, 1821, this frigate, one of three dispatched to patrol the North Pacific, had sailed from Kronstadt in the Gulf of Finland. A year later, it reached its destination and began to cruise along the coast of Russian America to intercept foreign ships that violated the ukase. Approximately one year was required for the round-the-world trip from Kronstadt to Russian America, and the average cost of such a voyage was £12,000. As a practical matter, however, the Russian colonies were dependent upon foreign trade for their very existence, and the tsar's decree did not alter this economic fact. Between 1818 and 1822, when supplies were comparatively abundant, the Russians made large purchases of goods, mainly provisions, from American and British merchants who carried the commodities at their own risk and expense. The Russians, moreover, could not sell their furs at Canton, except through the agency of the Americans. Since Canton was
a seaport, it was more profitable for the Russians to send pelts there on American vessels than to take them in Russian ships to the coast of Siberia and thence overland for hundreds of miles to the border town of Kiaakta, the recognized Russo-Chinese mart.¹

On January 20, 1824, Count N. S. Mordvinov, a manager of the Russian-American Company, indicated to Nesselrode that the ban on foreign trade had placed the Company in an awkward position. The difficulty and great expense of importing supplies from Russia threatened to exhaust the Company's funds, ruin the fur hunters, and arouse the ire of the natives, who were required to obtain all of their necessities from the Company, which, however, could not supply the Indians' needs. A revolt by the resentful Indians, especially the Tlinket tribes who were accustomed to purchase merchandise from foreign traders, constituted a real danger to the Russians. To avert disaster, Nicholas N. Muravyev, governor of Russian America, had called for the immediate delivery of supplies and for reinforcements. Ironically,

¹Middleton to Adams, No. 33, St. Petersburg, Dec. 13, 1823, ABT Proceedings, II, 64; Middleton to Adams, No. 35, St. Petersburg, Apr. 19, 1824, ibid., p. 77; Okun, Russian-American Company, p. 82; Bancroft, Alaska, pp. 538-540; Chevigny, Russian America, p. 181; Hildt, Early Diplomatic Negotiations, pp. 157-158.
instead of obtaining benefits from the prohibition of foreign trade, the Russian-American Company reaped only trouble, while Yankee smuggling with the Indians became rife.  

During the period of the interdiction, several supply ships sailed from Kronstadt to relieve the colonies, but the goods sent barely met the needs of the inhabitants. Two of these ships, the Rurik and the Elizaveta, encountered a storm while rounding the Cape of Good Hope. The Elizaveta lost several sails and sprang a leak, necessitating putting in at Simon Bay in Cape Colony for repairs for which most of the cargo of the two ships had to be given in payment. Upon putting to sea again, the Elizaveta still leaked and had to return to Simon Bay. When the Rurik finally arrived at New Archangel (Sitka), Muravyev commandeered her for use in a search for provisions. The governor also dispatched ships to the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands and to the ports of California in a race to find supplies in time to avert starvation in the Russian colonies.  

The shareholders of the company, realizing that the very existence of Russian America, as well as their profits,
were threatened by their ill-conceived policy, petitioned the government to reopen the port of New Archangel to foreign shipping. On April 7, 1824, ten days before the signing of the convention with the United States, Alexander relaxed his prohibition and allowed the resumption of trade with foreigners at New Archangel.\(^4\)

On February 17, 1824, Middleton informed Adams that he had just learned that Britain intended to negotiate separately with Russia on all questions resulting from the tsar's ukase, but he did not think this decision would hurt the parallel American demarche. Three weeks later he happily announced that the Russo-American convention would follow closely Adams' draft treaty of July 22, 1823. Middleton suspected that it had been insinuated to the tsar that the non-colonization clause of the Monroe Doctrine was directed primarily against him. Canning, indeed, had instructed Bagot to give the president's speech an anti-Russian construction in St. Petersburg. None the less, after three preliminary conferences with Nesselrode and Poletica, Middleton was so encouraged by their moderation that he concluded British collaboration was unnecessary to the negotiation of a mutually

\(^{4}\)Ibid., p. 541; Okun, *Russian-American Company*, pp. 86-87.
acceptable treaty. This reasonable attitude, he thought, was due to the American navy, which made it impossible for Russia to dictate terms. Though the imperial cabinet did not approve of Adams' Latin American policy, it liked Canning's even less.\(^5\)

Fearing that Britain would conclude a territorial settlement with Russia before he could do so, Middleton warned Nesselrode and Bagot that any such agreement concluded without his approval would be unacceptable to the United States. The American minister considered recognition of free trade on the northwest coast as a more important demand than the territorial claims of the United States, but he intended to use the latter in bargaining for the free trade principle. Thus an early settlement of the Anglo-Russian boundary dispute would deprive him of a counterclaim. Middleton, therefore, pressed for the Russo-American convention without waiting to receive further instructions from Adams.\(^6\)


\(^6\) Middleton to Adams, No. 35, St. Petersburg, Apr. 19, 1824, ibid., pp. 70-71.
The series of conferences that led to the Russo-American treaty of 1824 began on February 21 at the home of Nesselrode. As a preliminary, the foreign minister suggested that the discussions be conducted upon the basis of mutual convenience and the existing situation rather than on abstract principles of right. Despite Middleton's tendency to be contentious, he agreed to follow this course but emphasized that the United States had nothing to fear from an examination of its claims. When Nesselrode inquired if Middleton had prepared a draft convention, the American presented two instruments: a note stating the question from the American point of view and a proposed treaty text. The foreign minister promised to submit these documents to the emperor and to notify the American minister when the discussion could be renewed.7

On March 3, Middleton, Nesselrode, and Poletica had a second conference. The latter, who seemed to have a penchant for nettling Middleton, opened the talks with a lecture on the very abstract principles that Nesselrode wanted to avoid, and Middleton responded by presenting sundry legalistic arguments in support of the American case. The foreign minister, however, brought this fruitless discussion to a close by handing the American minister a counter-draft, which

7Ibid., pp. 71-72.
was a French translation of Middleton's own proposed treaty with some insertions and amendments.\(^8\)

Describing this instrument unsatisfactory, Middleton informed the Russians that he must obtain two points before discussing a third. First, the maritime provisions of the ukase must be officially revoked, and secondly, the treaty must contain the commercial principle embodied in the Anglo-American convention of 1818, or some similar formula. If these points were accepted, then a provision fixing the boundary between future Russian and American settlements at 55° N. lat. could be discussed. Poletica, in what appeared to be a rehearsed charade to obtain better terms from the United States, declared solemnly that he would never sign an instrument which permitted the free access of American ships to Russian coasts, no matter what Nesselrode thought. Piqued by Poletica's haughty attitude, Middleton replied that, unless he changed his tone, their discussions would come to nothing. Russia, moreover, could keep her ukase while other nations resorted to whatever means they thought necessary to continue the northwest trade despite the interdiction. Nesselrode, however, took no part in this heated exchange. The conference ended with Middleton's promise to

\[^8\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 72-73.}\]
study the Russian counterdraft and the agreement to meet again in three days.\textsuperscript{9}

At the third conference of March 6, Nesselrode suggested that the line of demarcation be fixed at $54^\circ\,40'$ instead of $55^\circ$ so that Prince of Wales Island would be left entirely within Russian territory. Middleton rejoined that to agree to this would violate his instructions, but that he would take it under advisement. He again insisted that the Russians accept a proviso that would permit American traders free access to the coast north of the boundary. Although he saw that they were reluctant to permit free trade in any form, Middleton persisted until Nesselrode agreed to take the proposition under consideration. The American minister believed that Russia must pay this price for the advantage it would derive from having a recognized boundary.\textsuperscript{10}

After an interval of two weeks, Middleton on March 20 met again with the Russian plenipotentiaries. The American minister, meanwhile, had accepted $54^\circ\,40'$ as the southern border of Alaska. After commenting that very little now remained to bring their projects together, Nesselrode proposed

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., pp. 73-74.
that the language pertaining to commerce with the natives of the country should be deleted and that the ten-year period during which free navigation and fishing along the coast would be allowed should be shortened to five years. Middleton replied by handing Nesselrode an instrument which stated that the United States recognized no dominion which was not based on actual occupation, that Americans regarded navigation, fishing, and trading upon such unoccupied coasts as a natural right, that American traders had frequented the northwest coast since the time of independence, and that they could not be deprived of their right to do so, except by their own act or by a convention. This blunt language seems to have had the desired effect on Nesselrode, for he then suggested that there was a way to resolve their differences on the question of free trade with the natives. But before stating the proposition he had in mind, he must ascertain if the emperor would accept a stipulation of free trade for ten years. The concession the foreign minister contemplated was the grant of free trade privileges in exchange for an American prohibition of the sale of firearms and ammunition to the Indians. Middleton protested that English, Dutch, Portuguese, and Mexican merchants would simply replace American suppliers of these commodities, since the demand was
great. Such a prohibition, he argued, could not be enforced and would only lead to Russian harassment of American commerce.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 74-75.}

In rebuttal Nesselrode contended that his government had ways of intercepting the firearms and ammunition smuggled by foreign merchants. The United States, moreover, need have no fear that enforcement of the prohibition would be capricious. Russia, he affirmed, would be satisfied with making representations to the Washington government in case of infractions by American citizens, if this procedure were reciprocal; thus there would be no question of search or arrest. Middleton replied that nothing in his instructions covered this issue, but that he was bound to consider any proposal that the Russians offered. The discussion ended on this note of compromise, with further conferences to be arranged.\footnote{Ibid., p. 75.}

On April 3, Poletica called at Middleton's home and left for his consideration a new projet which made the prohibition of firearms and ammunition to the natives a *sine qua non* to Russian acceptance of the free trade principle. The emperor,
Poletica asserted, wished also to exclude all kinds of spirituous liquors. Debate on this article continued until the 17th, when Nesselrode and Middleton agreed to the final draft. The treaty of April 17, 1824, fixed the southern boundary of Russian America at 54° 40', established freedom of navigation and fishing in the North Pacific area, as well as in the inland waterways of all Russian possessions for a period of ten years, and granted reciprocal free trade with the natives of the northwest coast. Sale to the natives of firearms, other weapons, gunpowder, munitions, and liquor was proscribed. The contracting parties also agreed that their ships would not call at each other's establishments upon the northwest coast without permission of the local authorities, except in emergencies.¹³

Although much attention was given to fixing a boundary during the Anglo-Russian negotiations, the most important British objective, though not the most difficult to achieve, was the official withdrawal of the tsar's commercial interdiction. Canning on January 15, 1824, had outlined a flexible

¹³Ibid., pp. 75-76; Russo-American Treaty of April 5/17, 1824, ibid., pp. 10-11. Middleton reported to Adams that he had not recognized exclusive Russian jurisdiction north of 54° 40' but only a sphere of influence. See Middleton to Adams, No. 35, St. Petersburg, Apr. 19, 1824, ibid., pp. 78-79.
pattern for the settlement of the northwest boundary question but insisted that Russia disavow the maritime pretensions of the ukase. He preferred, however, that the Russians themselves suggest the formula, since he did not wish to appear to dictate to them. 14

Regarding the location of Russian settlements in the disputed territory, Canning relied upon information furnished by J. H. Pelly, deputy governor of the Hudson Bay Company, and accepted his recommendations for safeguarding the Company's trading posts along the Mackenzie River and in the Rocky Mountains. Since the precise location of settlements, stations, and physical features was largely unknown, Canning was obliged to write complicated instructions containing alternatives designed to meet situations that might arise. 15

According to Pelly, the southernmost Russian settlement was New Archangel, located on the western shore of Baranof Island at latitude 57°, but which Tuyll fixed at latitude 57° 3'. Baranof Island, the westernmost of the King George Archipelago, is separated from the mainland by a bay


punctuated by other islands. Chatham Strait lies between Baranof and these islands to the east, and between them and the mainland is Stephen's Strait.\(^\text{16}\)

As a first choice, Canning suggested a boundary that would be far enough south to include Baranof Island in Russian territory. The line then would run northward up Chatham Strait and hit the mainland near Mt. St. Elias at 139° west longitude. If it were determined that the Russians had settlements on the islands to the east of Baranof, then the line could pass up Stephen's Strait to the mainland near Mt. St. Elias. If the Russians balked at a point as far west as Mt. St. Elias, he would agree to the line's striking the mainland at the head of Lynn Channel at longitude 135°. In case the Russians objected to a line passing up either of these straits, Canning proposed that it be drawn from east to west north of the northernmost post of the Northwest Company until it struck the coast, and thence it could descend to whatever latitude would be necessary to take in Baranof Island. But from the point where any of the proposed lines intersected the coast, the boundary should be carried directly northward to the Arctic Ocean.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 145; Tuyll to Nesselrode, Liverpool, Nov. 2, 1822, ibid., p. 113.

All of these alternatives restricted Russian territory to the coastal islands north of the southernmost point of Baranof Island and west of either Chatham Strait or Stephen's Strait. They also would leave to Russia the mainland area lying to west of the longitudinal line agreed upon, actually the Alaskan Peninsula. Canning cautioned Bagot not to agree to the extension of Russian territory at any point eastward as far as the Rocky Mountains, for such expansion would disrupt contact between the posts in the Mackenzie River country and the Pacific Ocean. In order to avoid interference by the United States in the Anglo-Russian discussions, he emphasized the importance of concluding the negotiations quickly and stipulated that the Anglo-Russian treaty should not prejudice the claims of the United States as the successor to the rights of Spain. 18

While the Russo-American negotiations progressed, Bagot met separately with the Russian plenipotentiaries. Upon receipt of Canning's new instructions, Bagot on February 16 began a series of talks with Nesselrode and Poletica. As in the American démarche, both parties agreed to conduct negotiations on the basis of mutual accommodation without regard to abstract principles of right or national dignity. By the

18 Ibid., pp. 147-149.
conclusion of the preliminary conversations of August 11, most of the issues had been joined, yet another six months of discussions and diplomatic correspondence ensued before differences could be settled. Although it apparently did not hinder the negotiations and may have helped, Stratford Canning replaced Bagot as British plenipotentiary at the end of January, 1825, and it was he who signed the convention. 19

The most vexatious problem, though not the most important in Canning's view, was the boundary issue, which arose primarily from the lack of precise information about the geography of the northwest coast. Bagot hedged in negotiating the boundary for fear he would give away more than he intended. So far as the line of demarcation between the coastal islands was concerned, he proposed latitude 55°, a substantial deviation from his original instructions, since Canning had enjoined him to obtain a boundary passing south of Baranof Island or latitude 57°. The Russians, however, objected to drawing the line between the coastal islands at the 55th parallel, since the two southern points of Prince

19 Bagot to Canning, No. 23, St. Petersburg, Mar. 29, 1824, ibid., p. 154; Bagot to Canning, No. 41, St. Petersburg, Aug. 12, 1824, ibid., pp. 190-195; George to Stratford Canning, No. 1, Foreign Office, Dec. 8, 1824, ibid., p. 208. Stratford Canning arrived in St. Petersburg on Jan. 29, 1825, and left on April 17.
of Wales Island projected below that latitude. They wanted the whole island, not just nine-tenths of it. On July 12, 1824, Canning accepted the 54° 40' line as the southern boundary of Alaska, since the recent Russo-American convention had forced his hand, but on the rest of the question he remained firm.20

On February 16, 1824, Bagot proposed a line which passed up Chatham Strait to the head of Lynn Channel at about 59°, thence northwest to the 140th meridian, and along it to the Arctic Ocean. He explained that Britain's chief object was to protect the interests of the Hudson Bay Company by assuring that its posts would have free access to all rivers and streams emptying on the northwest coast and control of the entire course of the Mackenzie River.21

At a second meeting eight days later, the Russians countered with a proposal that the line pass up the center of Portland Channel to its head, where it touched the mainland at 56° and extended inland to the coastal mountains. The line then should continue along the crest of this range parallel

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20 Bagot to Canning, No. 23, St. Petersburg, Mar. 29, 1824, ibid., pp. 158, 161; Canning to Bagot, No. 26, July 12, 1824, ibid., pp. 181, 183.

21 Bagot to Canning, No. 23, St. Petersburg, Mar. 29, 1824, ibid., p. 154.
to the coast to the intersection of $60^\circ$ N. lat. and $139^\circ$ W. long. and thence northward along this meridian to the Arctic Ocean. Their object was to obtain a narrow strip of the mainland opposite their offshore islands extending from the 56th to the 60th parallel. They argued that, if the British obtained this coastal corridor, American traders would have the right to settle the area by virtue of the Anglo-American treaty of 1818. The Russians considered their possession of this mainland territory essential to the support and solidity of their island establishments. They offered, however, to permit the British to navigate the rivers and streams crossing this strip so that the Hudson Bay Company posts would not be cut off from the Pacific Ocean. Since Britain would lose control of certain inlets and bays by this arrangement, Bagot suggested at the conference of February 24 that the line should strike the mainland at $56^\circ 30'$ and thus leave all of Portland Channel to Britain. But on July 12, 1824, Canning withdrew this demand and acceded to the Russian request that the line touch the mainland at the head of Portland Channel.  

The St. Petersburg cabinet also wanted the line to run from the head of Portland Channel along the mountains and

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22 Ibid., pp. 158-163; Canning to Bagot, No. 26, Foreign Office, July 12, 1824, ibid., p. 181.
parallel to indentations of the coast until it intersected
the 139th meridian. This demand troubled Canning because he
did not know how far the mountains went inland; consequently,
he instructed Bagot on July 12 to draw the eastern boundary
of the mainland strip at the seaward base of the mountains,
but no farther from the coast than ten marine leagues (about
thirty miles), preferably less. Lieven's reaction to Canning's
draft convention of the 12th was predictable; he
protested that the fixing of a boundary at the base of a
mountain range was contrary to all custom. In response to
this objection, Canning on the 24th agreed to substitute the
word "summit" for the phrase "seaward base" of the mountains,
if the Russians insisted. But later, when the Russians pro-
posed a boundary that would be ten marine leagues from the
coast, without reference to mountains, Canning held them to
their original proposal that the line should follow the
mountains, except for the stipulation that it extend no far-
ther inland than ten marine leagues. 23

23 Bagot to Canning, No. 23, St. Petersburg, Mar. 29,
1824, ibid., p. 158; Canning to Bagot, No. 26, Foreign Office,
July 12, 1824, ibid., p. 181; Lieven to Nesselrode, London,
July 25, 1824, ibid., pp. 186-187; Canning to Bagot, No. 29,
Foreign Office, July 24, 1824, ibid., p. 187; Bagot to
Canning, No. 41, St. Petersburg, Aug. 12, 1824, ibid., p. 194;
George to Stratford Canning, No. 1, Foreign Office, Dec. 8,
With this decision, the only boundary question remaining focused on which meridian to follow northward to the Arctic Ocean. Bagot had proposed the 140th degree of west longitude, but the Russians had countered with the 139th meridian, a suggestion which Canning accepted in July to the delight of Count Lieven. His joy, however, was premature, for by December the foreign secretary had changed his mind. The 141st meridian, he now contended, would be a better boundary since it fell so close to Mt. St. Elias.\(^\text{24}\)

The draft convention of July 12 was the work of Lord St. Helens, who had settled the Nootka Sound dispute with Spain in 1790 but whose mind had lost none of its cunning. The document had been submitted to Pelly and to Samuel Enderby, a spokesman for the whaling industry, for their study—"the furry and the finny tribes," as Canning called them.\(^\text{25}\) Enderby had suggested to the Board of Trade on February 7 that it demand free navigation through the Bering Strait, since it was too narrow to permit the fixing of boundary lines which extended very far out to sea. His recommendation apparently

\(^{24}\)Bagot to Canning, No. 23, St. Petersburg, Mar. 29, 1824, ibid., pp. 154, 158; Canning to Bagot, No. 26, Foreign Office, July 12, 1824, ibid., p. 183; Lieven to Nesselrode, London, July 25, 1824, ibid., p. 186.

\(^{25}\)Canning to Bagot, Foreign Office, July 29, 1824, Bagot, Canning, II, 265-266.
carried weight, for Canning on July 29 insisted that Bering Strait and the adjacent waters be declared open seas. Although he cited the interest of science, a stronger motive was provided by the desire to protect whaling rights. Indeed, he admitted to Bagot that he had heard that there was very good "bobbing for whale" in these regions. Article I of the draft treaty, therefore, specifically mentioned free navigation of Bering Strait and the seas beyond.26

St. Helens' convention contained three provisions to which Nesselrode objected: (1) the right of British subjects to hunt, fish, and trade forever with the natives of the mainland strip and the adjacent islands between the 56th and 60th parallels; (2) the reciprocal privilege of each power to visit other parts of the northwest coast for a term of ten years, an arrangement which would permit British subjects to exploit the resources of the Alaskan Peninsula between the 60th parallel and Bering Strait for a decade; and (3) the permanent opening to British merchants of the port of New Archangel.27

26Enderby to Board of Trade, Feb. 7, 1824, ABT Proceedings, II, 151-152; Canning to Bagot, Foreign Office, July 29, 1824, Bagot, Canning, II, 266.

27Nesselrode to Lieven, Penza, Sept. 12, 1824, ABT Proceedings, II, 201; Bagot to Canning, No. 41, St. Petersburg, Aug. 12, 1824, ibid., p. 190.
On September 12, addressing himself to the first point, Nesselrode argued that to grant anyone the perpetual right to hunt, fish, and trade with the natives of the mainland strip and the adjacent islands would violate the very idea of sovereignty. He offered, however, to grant British subjects the perpetual right to navigate the rivers and streams that crossed the strip and to allow them to hunt, fish, and trade with the natives along the coast for ten years. The British ultimately yielded to the Russians on this point. The proposal that each power should enjoy for a decade the reciprocal right to visit other parts of the northwest coast for the purpose of fishing and trade was new to the negotiations, and Nesselrode utterly refused this novel British proposition.28

To secure Britain's recognition of Russian sovereignty over the mainland strip, the St. Petersburg cabinet in March, 1824, had offered to open the port of New Archangel to her merchants, but had neglected to state how long the port should remain open. Since Canning regarded this offer as compensation for British recognition of Russia's claim to the Alaskan panhandle, he contended that New Archangel should remain open forever to British subjects. Nesselrode admitted that the

28 Ibid., pp. 190-191; Nesselrode to Lieven, Penza, Sept. 12, 1824, ibid., pp. 201-203; Anglo-Russian Treaty of Feb. 28, 1825, ibid., p. 16.
Russians indeed had made such an offer to Bagot, but he could not now endorse any such arrangement. As a compromise, he suggested a guarantee of ten years. Again, Canning retreated from his original position and accepted the offer.  

The British found it difficult to obtain a satisfactory treaty because of the boundary question, and it was not until February 28, 1825, that the Anglo-Russian convention was signed. With the exception of its boundary provisions, the language of this treaty largely paraphrased the articles of the Russo-American convention. Britain, however, obtained the right to trade at New Archangel for ten years, a privilege specifically waived by Adams. The treaty also guaranteed British subjects the right to navigate forever the streams and rivers which crossed the mainland corridor granted to the Russians.

Russia received more territory than Canning had envisioned in his instructions of January 15, 1824, and Britain had to accept the same southern boundary of Alaska conceded by the United States: 54° 40', which left all of Prince of Wales Island to Russia. After passing below this island, the

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29Bagot to Canning, No. 23, St. Petersburg, Mar. 29, 1824, ibid., p. 158; Canning to Bagot, No. 26, Foreign Office, July 12, 1824, ibid., p. 152; Nesselrode to Lieven, Penza, Sept. 12, 1824, ibid., p. 203; Anglo-Russian Treaty of Feb. 28, 1825, ibid., p. 16.

line ascended northward along Portland Channel until it struck the mainland at latitude 56°. Thence the border followed the summit of the mountains parallel to the coast until it intersected the 41st meridian, thus confining Russian territory to a shoreline strip approximately thirty miles in width. When the line reached 141° W. long., it followed this meridian north to the Arctic Ocean. The treaty also guaranteed free navigation in any part of the Pacific Ocean and confined Russia's maritime jurisdiction to two marine leagues from the coast, a provision which left Bering Strait open to navigation. 31

While the Anglo-Russian debate ensued, the Russian-American Company assumed an ambivalent attitude toward the negotiations on the Northwestern Question. Despite the directors' desire to have the tsar's commercial interdiction lifted, because of the dependence of the Alaskan colonies on foreign shipping, they vigorously protested against Anglo-American territorial pretensions. On March 3, 1824, Mordvinov, a director of the Company, urged Nesselrode to resist their demands. Russia's claim to the mainland between the coast and the Rocky Mountains, he asserted, was solid and

unquestionable. Observing that the proposed British concession of a narrow panhandle was of small value to Russia, he warned against giving away a vast area of wild territory before its true value could be assessed. Mordvinov reminded Nesselrode of the mistake Russia had made in leaving to China the land between the Yablonoi Mountains and the Amur River before she discovered that the region controlled the only navigable river flowing out of Siberia to the Pacific Ocean. He argued, too, the Russian seabornd establishments would be dependent upon the products of the "fields and forests, plains and mountains" to satisfy their needs, an inference that agriculture was possible in the hinterland about to be ceded. Finally, he lamented the fate of the inhabitants of the region, who had been converted to the Russian Orthodox faith and would be abandoned to the English. 32

The provision in the Anglo-Russian treaty which permitted British subjects to navigate the streams and rivers that crossed the mainland strip also vexed the directors. D. I. Zavalishin, one of the managers, complained that this concession compromised Russian territorial sovereignty and made a mockery of the claim of dominion. He predicted, moreover,

that allowing Americans to visit the Russian colonies would destroy Russian hegemony over the area. 33

K. F. Ryleyev, another manager, warned that ratification of the treaties would mean the ruin of the Company by foreign competition. Not only would smugglers return, but swarms of others, who never before had considered such an enterprise, would join them. Contact with foreign traders would "contaminate" the "savages" by making them dissatisfied with their dependence upon the Company. 34

After presenting Mordvinov's letter to the tsar, Nesselrode answered the director's assertions, occasionally quoting Alexander's own words. Mordvinov's solicitude for the sons of the Russo-Greek Church, who allegedly were abandoned, especially appealed to the tsar's religious idealism, but Nesselrode denied that there were any Christians among the savages of the northwest coast. He also assured Mordvinov that the country was sterile and unsuitable for raising crops to support the colonists, the only useful products being marine animals. While admitting that Russia had made certain territorial concessions, he argued that she had obtained for

33 Ibid., pp. 91-92.
34 Ibid., pp. 90-91.
the first time political recognition of her colonies on the northwest coast. It was better, moreover, that the Americans should carry on their pursuits of fishing and trading with the permission of the Company than for them to do so illegally, as they had done with impunity for many years, especially since the United States had stipulated that Russia would have the absolute right to prohibit such trade in the whole area after ten years. The Americans, he observed, had also accepted prohibition of the trade in liquor and weapons to the natives, a concession which would go far toward halting the disorders, quarrels, and bloodshed that plagued the region. Nesselrode assured Mordvinov that the tsar was aware of the noble exploits of bold mariners, who had made discoveries of islands and coasts in America, and that he would not forget their sacrifices.\footnote{Nesselrode to Mordvinov, St. Petersburg, Apr. 23, 1824, \textit{ABT Proceedings}, II, 166-169.} He continued:
But while endeavours to protect interests laboriously established, and even secure new advantages by all allowable means, it must not be forgotten that there exist other most important necessities and interests of State which impose very grave duties on the Government. To you, Sir, as a man acquainted with every branch of the science of government, I consider it superfluous to explain that the greater or smaller utility of desirable acquisitions cannot serve as a guide in political negotiations. What the Ministry . . . will tenaciously follow is the principle of right, and . . . where it cannot with accuracy be recognized or defended without inordinate sacrifices in its entirety, it is necessary to take into consideration not only the degree of mutual demands, but also . . . the possibility of attaining the objects of the same without any dangerous strain of strength.36

S. B. Okun, a Soviet historian, cites these words to support his contention that the tsar made important concessions in America for the sake of his interests in Europe.37 Alexander, he asserts, intended to use the Greek Revolution as a pretext for an invasion of Turkey to seize the Straits. Under these circumstances, it would be impolitic to alienate Britain and the United States, powers that opposed a Russo-Ottoman war, by quarrelling with them over possession of a wilderness in America. After concluding treaties that sacrificed the interests of the Russian-American Company, Okun argues, Britain, supported by Austria, refused to "allow"

36Ibid., p. 166.

37Okun, Russian-American Company, pp. 92-93.
the tsar to wage war against the Porte. Hector Chevigny, an American historian, also theorizes that Alexander hoped for British aid in gaining Constantinople and that Canning made good use of this desire in negotiating the Northwestern Question. He does not, however, reveal the evidence for this conclusion.38

By contrast, Augustus G. Stapleton, Canning's secretary and biographer, maintains that at the Congress of Verona Alexander was decidedly averse to a Turkish war. The tsar, he contends, wanted to hold his army in reserve in case it was needed to assist the French in overthrowing the Spanish constitutional regime. Canning, however, feared that Alexander would turn his army against Turkey after its use in Spain had proved unnecessary. The tsar's pacific disposition toward the Ottoman Empire could change, if the Porte continued to refuse to redress Russian grievances. He, therefore, directed Lord Strangford in July, 1823 "to press upon the leading Members of the Ottoman Council the dangers which they would incur by a much longer delay."39 Okun's thesis that the tsarist government sacrificed the interests

38 Ibid., pp. 82, 83, 85; Chevigny, Russian America, pp. 185-186.

of the Russian-American Company to obtain British neutrality in a Turkish war appears forced and erroneous. Not only did Alexander's attitude toward the Porte remain pacific, but also Canning would have demanded far more than concessions on the northwest coast of America for such collaboration.

Contrary to the dire predictions of the directors that the treaties with Britain and the United States would ruin the Company, its fortunes improved immediately. Instead of a loss of nearly £14,000 sustained in 1822 and 1823, the Company, during the next two years, paid the highest annual dividends since 1821: over seven pounds per share. Although profits from the various hunting grounds decreased over the next two decades, about £370,000 in dividends were paid to the shareholders between 1821 and 1841, an amount nearly double that paid during the term of the first charter, 1799-1821. 40

Alexander apparently had no dream of territorial aggrandizement in North America. The ukase owed its aggressive tone to the pressure of Company politicians at court and did not represent the tsar's attitude. Count Mikhail M. Speransky, governor-general of Siberia and a member of the committee

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which drafted the decree, informed Middleton shortly after its publication that its purpose was to "secure to the Russian American Fur Company the monopoly of the very lucrative traffic they carry on," an interpretation which Nesselrode supported. There seems little reason to doubt that the tsar wished only to protect the interests of the Company, as he himself asserted in the preamble to the ukase.  

Considering the weakness of Russia's bargaining position, she obtained a remarkably good settlement of the Northwestern Question. As Middleton shrewdly observed, the imperial cabinet could not dictate terms, since the United States had a navy, and Britain, a stronger one. Neither of these nations gave much weight to foreign territorial claims which were unsupported by actual occupation, and Russia's territorial pretensions were based only on discovery, except for her scattered island establishments. Since Britain and the United States also had claims to the area based on discovery, the contracting parties wisely waived discussion of abstract principles of right.

— Poletica to Adams, Washington, Feb. 11, 1822, ASP, IV, 857; Middleton to Adams, No. 23, St. Petersburg, Aug. 8, 1822, ABT Proceedings, II, 42; Bagot to Castlereagh, No. 56, St. Petersburg, Nov. 17, 1821, ibid., p. 101; Bagot to Canning, No. 23, St. Petersburg, Mar. 29, 1824, ibid., p. 154; Williams, American-Russian Relations, pp. 10-11.
In the opinion of Middleton and Adams, the most important American interest on the northwest coast was the fur trade with the Indians. They claimed territory north of 55°, therefore, only to have a bargaining point in the negotiations. Alexander was willing to retract his own territorial claims, but not those of his father. Middleton, indeed, considered the 55th parallel as a barrier not to be crossed, but for practical reasons he yielded to the tsar on this point. While the Russians granted the Americans and the British permission to trade with the natives along the coast for ten years, they proscribed the selling of weapons and liquor, two items that the Indians were eager to obtain. In pressing Britain's territorial claim, Canning, too, was motivated by interest in the fur trade, but his primary concern was to obtain a disavowal of the tsar's extravagant maritime jurisdiction in the North Pacific. Despite the pretensions of the ukase, the real Russian objective was not territorial aggression but to protect the Russian-American Company from foreign interlopers and to obtain a recognized boundary for its Alaskan colony. Although concessions were made, Russia also received substantial compensation. The treaties concluded with Britain and the United States bear the stamp of expediency, not appeasement.
CHAPTER IV

BRITAIN AND THE RUSSIAN UKASE:

A RETROSPECT

On September 16, 1821, the Russian-American Company, confronted with the problem of declining profits, obtained from Emperor Alexander I a ukase which interdicted foreign trade in Alaska and claimed extensive maritime and territorial jurisdiction. Britain and the United States immediately challenged this decree and attempted to cooperate in settling what became known as the "Northwestern Question," but their rivalry doomed this project. After the British declined to participate in a tripartite negotiation, Russia and the United States quickly arrived at a separate convention, signed in St. Petersburg on April 17, 1824, a result promoted by the traditional tsarist policy of supporting the American republic as a counterpoise to British seapower. Difficulty in resolving the complex boundary issue postponed the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian treaty until February 28, 1825.

In retrospect, this study concludes that (1) the tsar hoped the Ukase of 1821 would solve a domestic problem--
smuggling in the Alaskan colony—and did not intend to initiate a policy of aggrandizement in North America; (2) that Russia desired recognition of her sovereignty in Alaska and a stipulated boundary; (3) that Alexander did not sacrifice the interests of the Russian-American Company to obtain British neutrality in a Russo-Turkish war, as S. E. Okun has claimed, or to secure British help in seizing Constantinople, as Hector Chevigny has suggested; (4) that the conventions of 1824 and 1825 do not indicate Russian appeasement of the United States and Britain, but political and economic expediency; (5) that Canning wanted especially to obtain Russia's disavowal of her maritime pretensions in the North Pacific and welcomed American cooperation in achieving this objective, notwithstanding the opinion of Harold Temperley to the contrary; (6) that the foreign secretary did not wish to cooperate with the United States in negotiating territorial questions because of Anglo-American rivalry on the northwest coast and in Oregon, not because of indignation prompted by the Monroe Doctrine; (7) that pressured by the Hudson Bay Company, he sought to protect the British fur trade by restricting the boundaries of Russian America; (8) that Britain's territorial dispute with the United States was greater than that with Russia on the northwest coast, since the American claim
entirely overlapped the British; (9) that the United States and Russia were not guilty of collusion against Britain's interests on the northwest coast, as Canning thought, though each desired to use the other as a counterpoise to England in the Oregon territory; (10) that Adams considered the fur trade with the Indians, not the boundary issue, to be his nation's most important interest on the northwest coast.

As will be seen in the Epilogue, the conventions of 1824 and 1825 did not solve the Northwestern Question. Canning, Nesselrode, and Adams had been too preoccupied with fixing boundaries and drafting regulations for the protection of fur traders to anticipate problems that would arise when the northwest coast became populated with permanent settlers. It remained for future generations to deal with the awkward situation of the Alaskan panhandle which separates much of Western Canada from the sea and to correct its imprecise boundaries.
EPILOGUE

THE TWILIGHT OF RUSSIAN AMERICA

Nesselrode, of course, could not grant the Russian-American Company's demand for interdiction of foreign trade with the Alaskan Indians—especially by Americans—until the expiration of the treaties of 1824 and 1825, but he regarded these conventions as a step toward the final solution of this problem. Before his long-range strategy could bear fruit, however, the rapid expansion of the aggressive Hudson Bay Company changed the situation and forced the governor of Russian America to risk violating the Anglo-Russian convention to meet this threat. ¹

After merging with its rival, the Northwest Company, in March, 1821, the Hudson Bay Company became a formidable instrument of British policy in North America. The Company, under the leadership of Sir George Simpson, planned to dominate Oregon and drive first the Americans and then the

Russians from the northwest coast by undercutting their prices. By 1829, its canny Scotch agents, who had all but supplanted American traders in the area, offered to collaborate with the Russian-American Company in suppressing what remained of the troublesome Yankee traffic in arms, ammunition, and liquor. Aware that the Russians were dependent upon the Americans for provisions and perforce were hampered in taking effective measures against them, Simpson offered to supply the Russian-American Company with English goods at cost. But Baron Ferdinand von Wrangell, a capable Estonian German who became governor of Russian America in 1830, viewed this offer with skepticism, for he saw clearly that the British company intended the Russian fur trade as its next victim. To meet Anglo-Saxon competition, Wrangell warned the directors that the Company must abandon its "extreme avarice" and win over the Indians by offering them trade goods of real utility instead of beads and gewgaws. His opposition to British imperialism, however, culminated in the Dryad affair, the turning point of Anglo-Russian rivalry on the northwest coast.²

By 1831, the Hudson Bay Company had established a post at Naas on Observatory Inlet adjacent to the Anglo-Russian boundary at Portland Channel. In that year, a British party from Naas explored the Stikine River, the most important route used in trading with the Tlinket tribes, to locate a site for a post just far enough from the coast to avoid violation of the 1825 convention. Wrangell foresaw that the British intended to injure Russian commerce by intercepting beaver and land otter pelts brought downstream from the interior. Since fur-bearing animals no longer inhabited the Russian coastal strip, the Indians living there obtained pelts for resale from the inland tribes. The projected British settlement on the Stikine, therefore, threatened not only the profits of the Russian-American Company but also the welfare of its savage wards. This circumstance caused the Tlinkets to form an alliance with the Russians against the Hudson Bay Company.  


Wrangell, meanwhile, provoked a confrontation with Britain. Vexed by the treaty provision which permitted English traders to cross Russia's mainland strip, he resorted to force to prevent their ascending the Stikine until the issue could be settled by negotiations. In August, 1833, he dispatched the Chichagoff, an armed merchant brig, to Point Highfield at the mouth of the Stikine, there to construct a redoubt. Pursuant to these orders, Lieutenant Dionysius Zarembo, commander of the Chichagoff, built a blockhouse, named it Fort St. Dionysius, and established friendly relations with the Indians. His efforts were timely, for on June 18, 1834, the Dryad, a Hudson Bay Company brig, loaded with settlers and supplies for establishing a post upstream, entered the river. As she approached Point Highfield, Russian officers, who spoke no English, intercepted her in rowboats. 4

Since neither party fully understood the other during the eleven days the Dryad remained at Point Highfield, the incident produced some humorous results. One Russian officer

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brought along an Indian interpreter, while another produced a Russian-Spanish linguist of doubtful competence. Even a Swedish crewman on the English brig tried to interpret, and when all else failed, each side resorted to pantomime. The subtlety and accuracy of such a translation can be imagined. None the less, Peter Skeen Ogden, chief trader at Naas and commander of the British expedition, insisted that Lieutenant Zarembo, "who understands a few words of English," had declared that he would use force to keep the Dryad from ascending the river and that "my instructions are to prevent you, and by these and not by the treaty shall I be guided," which is surprisingly good diction under the circumstances. Captain Duncan and Surgeon Tolmix of the Dryad, who visited Fort St. Dionysius and saw the Chichagoff anchored in the harbor, did not doubt that this was the purpose of Zarembo's mission.⁵

Notwithstanding that the Dryad's armament almost equaled that of the Chichagoff, Ogden contended that the Russians would have blown his ship out of the water, had he disregarded their warning; consequently, he sailed away to New Archangel to protest directly to Wrangell. The wily governor denied

that he had authorized Zarembo to use force and explained that the English merely had been warned that, by approaching a Russian settlement without permission of the commandant, they had violated the convention of 1825. As a result of this affair, the Hudson Bay Company claimed in damages the exaggerated sum of £22,150 against the Russian-American Company. During the course of the litigation, Nesselrode admitted that the Russian officers may have resorted to some unauthorized saber-rattling, but Ogden, he argued, should have realized that they were only bluffing. Any loss sustained by the British company, moreover, was due to the Englishman's excessive prudence and lack of competent interpreters. The foreign minister asserted—and some of the people aboard the *Dryad* admitted—that the real reason the British abandoned the projected settlement on the Stikine was not Russian opposition but Indian hostility experienced during the stay at Fort St. Dionysius. While Wrangell, indeed, intended to "hinder the British by force," he apparently planned to use his Indian allies, not Russian ships and river forts, to implement this policy.

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6 Wrangell to the directors, No. 190, May 10, 1834, *ABT Proceedings*, II, 267; Ogden's report, *ibid.*, pp. 267-270; Captain Etholine to Lieutenant Zarembo, New Archangel, June 25 and 26, 1834, *ibid.*, pp. 270-271; Wrangell to the
In the summer of 1836, Baron Wrangell returned to St. Petersburg, became a member of the Board of Directors of the Russian-American Company, and eventually its chairman. The directors relied on his advice in matters of commercial policy, but Nesselrode decided diplomatic questions, since the Company was virtually a state enterprise. When three years had passed without a settlement of the Dryad affair, Simpson and Pelly of the Hudson Bay Company took matters into their own hands. In the fall of 1838, they went to St. Petersburg to discuss directly with their Russian counterparts not only this issue but the larger question of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Alaska. Although initially frustrated by their ignorance of the Russian language and Nesselrode's absence from the capital, they finally contacted Wrangell and discussed terms of compromise, something the diplomats had been unable to do in more than three years of correspondence. Realizing that the Hudson Bay Company could throttle the fur trade in Alaska's panhandle by establishing posts in

the interior, Wrangell switched from a policy of opposition to one of collaboration to secure what advantages he could. Simpson and Pelly offered a form of partnership which was essentially the same as that suggested nine years earlier: To rid the northwest coast of "birds of passage," the Hudson Bay Company would furnish Russian merchants with supplies and trade goods; each company could then conduct its business without disruptive competition from each other or outsiders. But even after agreement in principle had been reached, the negotiations broke down in haggling over prices, and the Englishmen prepared to go home. On the eve of their departure, however, Wrangell, to their surprise, made a unique proposal: the lease of Russia's mainland strip to the Hudson Bay Company, the rent to be paid in land otter pelts. This unexpected about-face becomes intelligible only in terms of the Second Egyptian Crisis which brought Britain, Russia, and France to the brink of war in 1839.7

By October, 1838, Mohammed Ali, pasha of Egypt, had conquered Arabia to the Persian Gulf and had threatened to declare

7 Governor Simpson to the manager of the Russian-American Company, Fort Vancouver, Mar. 20, 1829, ABT Proceedings, II, 259-260; Forsyth to Dallas, No. 2, Washington, Apr. 19, 1837, ibid., p. 249; Chevigny, Russian America, p. 191; Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, III, 650-651.
himself independent of the Ottoman Empire. If the pasha attacked his suzerain, Sultan Mahmud II, the tsar would be obligated by the Treaty of Unkia Skelessi (July 8, 1833) to come to Turkey's assistance, a situation which might provoke war with Britain and France. At the very time that Simpson and Pelly were in the Russian capital, moreover, Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia and Afghanistan increased tension between the two cabinets. The tsar was unwilling at this juncture to aggravate relations further by quarreling with Britain over Alaska. Leasing the mainland strip also had the advantage of obviating any further explanation to the United States of Russia's refusal to renew trading privileges in the area. Raison d'etat, of course, was not the prime mover of an Alaskan entente--since Simpson, Pelly and Wrangell had begun private talks without the knowledge of their respective governments--but it did contribute to their success. On October 27, 1838, Nicholas ordered the Russian-American Company to reverse itself and settle the Dryad affair. Soon thereafter, Nesselrode, who had staunchly defended the Company, confessed that upon reappraisal he had come to realize that his own arguments lacked merit and that the Company was, indeed, guilty in the Dryad case. The directors obediently and quickly reached a compromise with the Hudson Bay Company,
though they themselves never admitted their guilt. This
timely concession, however, had little to do with promoting
Anglo-Russian cooperation in the Middle East in 1839-1840;
the Egyptian threat to the two most important trade routes
to India—the Isthmus of Suez and the Euphrates Valley—con-
stituted a far stronger motive for a rapprochement. 8

Simpson and Wrangell met again in Hamburg at the end of
January, 1839, and signed a convention on February 6 by which
the Hudson Bay Company received a ten-year lease beginning
June 1, 1840, on the Alaskan panhandle north of 54° 40′ and
south of a line drawn from Cape Spencer at Cross Sound to Mt.
Fairweather. In return for the lease, the Hudson Bay Company
agreed to pay an annual rent of 2,000 land otter pelts, to
relinquish its claim resulting from the Dryad affair, and to
supply the Russian-American Company with foodstuffs and trade
goods at stipulated prices. The Russian-American Company
withdrew its agents (about 400) from the leased area and

8The directors to the chief manager of the Russian-
American Colonies, Captain Ivan Antonovich Kupreyanoff,
No. 230, Apr. 17, 1839, ABT Proceedings, IV, Pt. II, 6-7;
Nesselrode to Kankreen, Minister of Finance, St. Peters-
burg, Dec. 21, 1838, ibid., II, 307-308; Nesselrode to Kan-
kreen, St. Petersburg, Jan. 16, 1839, ibid., p. 312; Directors
to Kankreen, No. 1596, Jan. 1, 1839, ibid., pp. 309-311;
Chevigny, Russian America, p. 192; Rich, Hudson's Bay Company,
III, 652-654; Okun, Russian-American Company, pp. 218-220.
turned its posts, including Fort St. Dionysius, over to the Hudson Bay Company. This agreement, renewed several times, remained in effect until Alexander II sold Russian America to the United States in 1867.  

Meanwhile, the ten-year period of reciprocal free trade stipulated in the Russo-American convention, Article IV, had expired on April 17, 1834. Wrangel accordingly informed two American captains, whose ships then were at New Archangel (Sitka), that they could no longer trade with the Indians in Russian territory. The captains, however, ignored his warning, claiming that their own government had not officially informed them of the expiration of Article IV. On May 31, 1835, Baron Krudener, Russian minister at Washington, called the matter to the attention of the State Department and requested that American citizens be notified of the prohibition. Secretary of State John Forsyth hesitated to publish such a notice, since he assumed that an agreement could be reached to extend the free trade principle for another term. When Krudener declined to comment on this possibility, Forsyth

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published the requested notice in the Washington Globe and
directed William Wilkins, American minister at St. Petersburg,
to obtain an extension of Article IV.10

When Wilkins discussed the issue with Nesselrode on
November 4, 1835, the foreign minister pointedly observed
that Americans had violated the convention by selling prohib-
ited articles to the Indians. He declined, moreover, to give
the American minister a final answer without conferring with
the directors of the Russian-American Company, an ominous
response. Convinced that Nesselrode would refuse the exten-
sion of Article IV, Wilkins reminded Forsyth that the United
States had never really recognized Russian sovereignty north
of 54° 40', and the secretary adopted this policy in August,
1836, after a Russian cruiser had forced the Loriot, an Amer-
ican brig, away from the northwest coast. In concluding the
Russo-American convention of 1824, the negotiators themselves
apparently had reached no understanding of what interpretation
should be placed on the treaty after the expiration of

10Severin to Kankreen, No. 1181, Dec. 8, 1834, ABT
Proceedings, II, 232-233; Krudener to Dickens, Washington,
May 31, 1835, ibid., p. 236; Forsyth to Krudener, Washington,
June 24, 1835, ibid., p. 237; Krudener to Forsyth, Philadelphia,
July 11, 1835, ibid., p. 238; Forsyth to Krudener, Washington,
July 21, 1835, ibid., p. 238; Krudener to Forsyth, New York,
July 26, 1835, ibid., p. 239; Forsyth to Wilkins, No. 4,
Washington, July 30, 1835, ibid., pp. 239-240; Globe, (Wash-
ington), July 22, 1835, p. 2; Thomas, Russo-American Rela-
tions, pp. 94-96.
Article IV. Nesselrode at the time had assured the directors that he had obtained recognition of Russian sovereignty north of $54^\circ 40'$, subject to ten years of reciprocal free trade. Middleton, however, had reported to Adams that the plain language of the treaty was misleading and that he had intended only to recognize a Russian sphere of influence on the northwest coast, not a claim of sovereignty. According to Middleton, the ten-year limit mentioned in Article IV was of little significance, since Article I specified that American citizens had the right to visit unoccupied points north of $54^\circ 40'$ for the purpose of trading with the Indians. In advancing this sophistry, Middleton conveniently overlooked the fact that Article I was subject to "the restrictions and conditions determined by the following articles," among them being the ten-year limit imposed by Article IV. If this had not been the case, there would have been no reason for Article IV.\footnote{Russo-American Treaty of April 5/17, 1824, \textit{ABT Proceedings}, II, 10-11; Middleton to Adams, No. 35, St. Petersburg, Apr. 19, 1824, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 78-79; Nesselrode to Mordvinov, St. Petersburg, Apr. 23, 1824, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 168-169, Thomas, \textit{Russo-American Relations}, pp. 92-94; Williams, \textit{American-Russian Relations}, p. 17.}

Citing Article I of the treaty, Forsyth on August 27, 1837, vigorously demanded compensation for the Loriot's...
owners, and six months later, George M. Dallas, the new American minister at St. Petersburg, presented the American note. As might have been expected, Nesselrode rejected both the demand for compensation and Forsyth's interpretation of the 1824 convention. Although Forsyth's tone became more insistent, and Dallas even recommended the use of force, the Washington cabinet had no intention of going to war to obtain Russia's disavowal of exclusive jurisdiction north of 54° 40'. Astute diplomat that he was, Nesselrode called Forsyth's bluff: on March 21, 1838, he refused to extend Article IV, and on May 9, he confirmed Wrangell's order of 1834 which had prohibited American trade in Russian America. Thus confronted, Forsyth reluctantly backed down, partly because the foreign minister remained adamant and partly because American trade in Alaska had become inconsiderable. The Washington government and the American public generally, of course, resented the Hamburg Agreement, but this posture relaxed when it became clear that the transfer really was a lease and not a sale. Britain, moreover, made no attempt to extend the ten-year term of free trade stipulated in Article VII of the Anglo-Russian convention, since beaver and otter, so scarce
along the coast, were still plentiful in the hinterland which she controlled.\textsuperscript{12}

Though the lease of the Alaskan panhandle solved one problem (the commercial), it created another by undermining Russian sovereignty and setting in motion a train of events which culminated in the sale of Alaska to the United States. During the crisis which preceded the Crimean War, the Russian-American Company sought to protect its interests by making a fictitious transfer of assets to a business group in San Francisco known as the American-Russian Company. The Washington government, however, argued that such a subterfuge would be of no avail against Russia's enemies and implied that the only recourse was actual sale of Alaska to the "friendly" United States. Upon learning that the Yankees were blackmailing Russia with the British fleet, the London cabinet hastened to prevent the sale of Alaska to the United States by guaranteeing territorial neutrality to the Russian-American Company. Nicholas reciprocated with regard to the Hudson Bay Company. Although the scheme of transfer to the

United States thus was nipped in the bud, rumors about it caused Americans to believe that Alaska might be available to them. The tsar knew, of course, that the aggressive American republic, having recently annexed a large part of Mexico, now coveted Alaska. British settlers in Western Canada also clamored for annexation of the Russian colony.

Although the Crimean War did not directly affect Alaska, the debacle of Russian arms in that conflict dealt the moribund Russian-American Company the coup de grâce. With defeat came self-doubt and criticism of outmoded institutions. Reformers regarded the Company as an antiquated state monopoly and urged its liquidation. During its period of youth, which ended in 1821, there had been freebooting wastefulness, but plenty of pelts. Between 1821 and 1838, the Company's middle age, more order and accountability had been established, but

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not a policy of conservation. The predictable result of this folly was serious decline in the animal population and consequently of profits. Moreover, a terrible smallpox epidemic, which lasted from 1836 to 1839, decimated the Alaskan Indians. After 1838, there was perfect order and bankruptcy. With the hard lesson of the Crimean War fresh in mind, Alexander II, the new tsar, despaired of defending the colony in time of war or even of preventing the peaceful penetration of hoards of adventurers who would surely flock there in response to the widespread rumors that gold had been discovered. Finally, the treaties of 1824 and 1825, by closing the door to further expansion, had made of Russian America a cul-de-sac. The occupation and development of recent gains in Asia, which then absorbed most of Russia's human and material resources, seemed to the emperor a more attractive venture.\(^1\)

As early as January, 1857, Baron Edouard de Stoeckl, Russian minister at Washington, (perhaps intimidated by Secretary of State William Marcy and Senator William Gwin of California) had recommended to his government that it sell Russian America to the United States. Although Stoeckl informed

\(^{14}\)Ibid., pp. 143-146; Okun, Russian-American Company, pp. 225-226, 234, 242-249; Bancroft, Alaska, pp. 560-562, 590-591; Chevigny, Russian America, pp. 223-235; Williams, American-Russian Relations, pp. 21-22.
the Washington cabinet at the time that such a deal was out of the question, he never forgot the conversation with the secretary and the senator. In the minister's opinion, the Americans eventually would seize Alaska; it would be wise, therefore, to relinquish it gracefully and obtain compensation. This view was shared by Grand Duke Constantine Nikolaevich, the tsar's brother, who in turn pressed it upon Foreign Minister Prince Alexander Mikhailovich Gorchakov, a stern, uncompromising nationalist. While on leave in St. Petersburg in 1858, Stoeckl discussed the question with Gorchakov and found him still unconvinced that it was necessary to sell the colony. Upon the minister's return to Washington in 1859, Senator Gwin renewed the offer to purchase Alaska, purportedly at the insistence of President Buchanan. But due to Gorchakov's disposition to haggle and basic unwillingness to sell, the negotiations dragged on until the outbreak of the American Civil War, when they were suspended. Late in 1866, however, the financial collapse of the Russian-American Company revived for the last time the question of Alaska's sale to the United States. On March 29, 1867, Stoeckl and Secretary of State William Seward signed a treaty which stipulated the purchase of Russian America by the United States for $7,200,000. Congress, however, did not
appropriate the money until July, 1868, after some complicated transactions tainted by corruption.  

Soon after acquiring Alaska, a boundary controversy arose between the United States and Canada, which continued until 1903, when a tribunal sitting at London finally litigated it. The line described in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1825, with its imprecise geographical references, had never been properly defined. Although there were seven points in dispute, the most important issue was whether the treaty of 1825 had, in fact, provided for a continuous strip of mainland territory extending around the head of all salt water inlets. This question was decided in the affirmative in favor of the United States. Since the tribunal awarded two islands claimed by the United States to Canada and two islands claimed by Canada to the United States, neither party scored a clear-cut victory in regard to the water boundary. American and British tribunal members signed the award, but the two Canadian envoys declined on the grounds that the court's judgment was injudicious, i.e., contrary to the national interests of

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15 Ibid.; Thomas, Russo-American Relations, pp. 143-166; Chevigny, Russian America, pp. 233-245; Okun, Russian-American Company, pp. 242-244, 257-272; Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, III, 779. The Russians allegedly offered their colony to the Hudson Bay Company for $5,000,000, first in 1860 and again in 1864, but this report cannot be confirmed.
Canada. But bound by this award, Canada reluctantly accepted it; thus in 1903 Britain and the United States finally ended the long controversy known as the Northwestern Question.\textsuperscript{16}

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