

Britain's Surrogate War Against the Union, 1861-65

by William Jones

We celebrate this year the 150th anniversary of the start of the American Civil War. But with all the lectures, films, concerts, and battle reenactments that are taking place, the most important aspect of that conflict has been well-nigh forgotten and largely eliminated from the history books, not to mention from today's commemorations. For, as author Allen Salisbury wrote in his ground-breaking book *The Civil War and the American System*,¹ that war "was the second military phase of the political battle which raged between Britain and the United States from the time a formal ceasefire was concluded at Yorktown in 1781."

After Great Britain lost its frontal attack on the United States during the War of 1812, it determined to destroy us from within. The Southern "slave power," which the British slave trade had brought into being, was intended as a wedge to destroy the nation, and to transform the continental United States into two, or more, incessantly quarreling entities, a situation which the British Empire knew well how to manipulate in order to contain any threats to her rule.²

1. W. Allen Salisbury, *The Civil War and the American System, America's Battle with Britain, 1860-1876* (first edition, 1978; second edition, Washington, D.C.: EIR News Service, 1992). Salisbury's book lifts the curtain on the battle between British imperial economics and the American System, and includes invaluable documentation from protagonists of 19th Century.

2. Anton Chaitkin, *Treason in America, from Aaron Burr to Averell*

The absolute determination of President Lincoln to prevent that from happening put an end to those plans, but the British Empire never gave up. In the form of the monetarist system, that very Empire kept its hooks into the United States, through Wall Street, and the dominant international financial system. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was able to checkmate British imperial plans in the 1930s, with a revival of Lincoln's and Alexander Hamilton's American System approach; but since FDR's premature death, the British corruption has increasingly rotted out our republic, bringing us, at present, to the brink of disintegration. Once again, it is a matter of survival for the United States to crush the British Empire.

As we are now engaged in that life-and-death struggle, it would well behoove our citizenry to comprehend the deeper meaning of the present anniversary. With the destruction of the Confederacy, the United States emerged as the most important industrial power in the world, and served as a model, as well as a support, for those nations eager to overthrow their own colonial masters. Today, our victory is the crucial stroke for the survival of civilization, and perhaps the species itself.

Harriman (first edition, 1985; second edition, Washington, D.C.: Executive Intelligence Review, 1999). This book, now out of print, contains a treasure trove of material on the British conspiracy *within* the United States that led to the Civil War.



Library of Congress

Despite the plots of the British, President Lincoln saved the Union and the American System.

Britain and the Southern Aristocracy

As the great American economist Henry Carey warned the South in his 1854 pamphlet “The North and the South,” were the South to secede, the North would continue to grow and prosper based on the protectionist system that had nourished the development of its industries and its labor power, whereas the South, even if it combined into a slave empire with Cuba, Brazil, and perhaps Haiti, as was envisioned by many, would represent a dead-end state, incapable, in the long run, of reproducing itself. The slave-labor agricultural production of the South could only survive as an appendage to the consumer of its primary product, cotton. And the main consumer and beneficiary of that slave-labor production was the British textile industry.

Lawfully, the Southern plantation aristocracy had adopted the worst features of their former colonial mas-

ters, and Anglophilia was rampant in the South. London *Times* reporter William Russell, who traveled throughout the United States, North and South, before and during the Civil War, reported the following from South Carolina: “Their admiration for monarchical institutions on the English model, for privileged classes, and for a landed aristocracy and gentry is undisguised and apparently genuine.” “‘If only we could get one of the royal race to rule over us, we would be content’”—that sentiment, he wrote “varied a hundred ways, has been repeated to me over and over again.”

It is no surprise that the novels of medievalist Sir Walter Scott were an item of popular consumption among the “genteel” plantation society. Not only the Southern plantation owners’ aristocratic propensities pushed them in that direction, but also what they envisioned as their economic interests. While cotton products could be sold in many parts of the world, Britain—and secondarily, France—still maintained a monopoly in its production. Indeed British legislation had forbidden the establishment of textile manufactures even in its own colonies, to assure that the industry remained a monopoly of the “mother country.”

At the same time, Great Britain saw its own peculiar relationship to the Southern aristocracy as the means to destroy the United States, which, under the beneficial regime of a protective tariff, was becoming a major threat to its economic hegemony. As Carey documents in the above-cited pamphlet, it was the influence wielded by the slaveholding Southern states in the U.S. Congress that helped unravel the successful tariffs passed by Congress in 1828, and again in 1842, causing an abrupt decline in U.S. production. The British believed that the decisive blow that might once and for all eliminate the economic threat emanating from America, would be splitting the Republic in two over the issue of slavery.³

3. Great Britain became involved in the slave trade in 1562 and subsequently introduced slavery into its colonies in America and elsewhere. By 1800, there developed in Britain a strong anti-slavery contingent in the British Parliament, led primarily by the Quakers, who were also instrumental in the abolitionist movement in the United States. This led in both countries to legislation in May 1807 abolishing the international



Library of Congress

The Confederate capture of Fort Sumter, in the harbor of Charleston, S.C., was the opening shot of the Civil War.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 on a party platform dedicated to preventing the expansion of slavery into new territories which sought to become states, Southern representatives began to take measures to pull their states out of the Union rather than permit any encroachment on their “peculiar system.” The British fueled these moves with a promise of recognition of the Confederacy, if independence were declared. In London, Russian Ambassador Baron de Brunow reported back to Moscow on Jan. 1, 1861: “The English government, at the bottom of its heart, desired the separation of North America into two republics, which will watch each other jealously and counterbalance one the other. Then England, on terms of peace and commerce with both, would have nothing to fear from either; for she would dominate them, restraining them by their rival ambitions.”

The Russian Ambassador to the United States, Baron Edouard de Stoeckl had sent a similar dispatch the previous year: “The Cabinet of London is watching attentively the internal dissensions of the Union and awaits the result with an impatience which it has

slave trade. In the U.S., legislation went into force on Jan. 1, 1808 forbidding the introduction of slaves into the United States. The institution itself persisted in the Southern states of the Union as well as in the British colonies. Britain abolished slavery in 1833, while in the U.S. it was abolished by the Union victory in the Civil War. After 1833, the British hypocritically used the continued existence of slavery in the U.S. as a means to split the nation that was fast becoming their major rival.

difficulty in disguising.”

The British had learned that the United States could not be destroyed by force. They had attempted this twice and failed decisively. But the internal conflict engendered in the Republic by the slave trade might accomplish that which British military might had failed to achieve.

Blockading Southern Ports

With the fall of Fort Sumter, in South Carolina, to Confederate forces on April 14, 1861, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers for three months of military service to suppress the rebellion. On April 17, Confederate President Jefferson Davis responded by issuing letters of marque which would allow privateers to destroy United States vessels at sea. Two days later, Lincoln declared a blockade of the Confederate coast from South Carolina to the mouth of the Rio Grande. On April 27, with the secession of North Carolina and Virginia, he extended that blockade to their coasts as well.

The blockade declaration was a daring proposal, as the U.S. Navy at the time possessed only 42 ships, and these were dispersed halfway around the world, hardly enough to effectively enforce a blockade on 3,549 miles of Rebel coast. And, according to international law, a blockade must be “effective” in order for other governments to recognize it.

The U.S. Navy called back all its vessels in foreign waters and began to lease other vessels. In addition, with the exit of the Southern Congressmen, Congress was able to pass the new tariff, sponsored by a Carey associate, Rep. Justin Morrill of Vermont, which had been stalled in the Senate by the slave power, and which now would provide the basis for building up the domestic iron and steel industries needed to produce ships. Four months after the proclamation of the blockade, the number of ships in commission had doubled; in ten months the Navy had expanded sixfold. By the end of the war, the U.S. Navy would have 670 vessels of all types, including 22 new monitor-class warships.

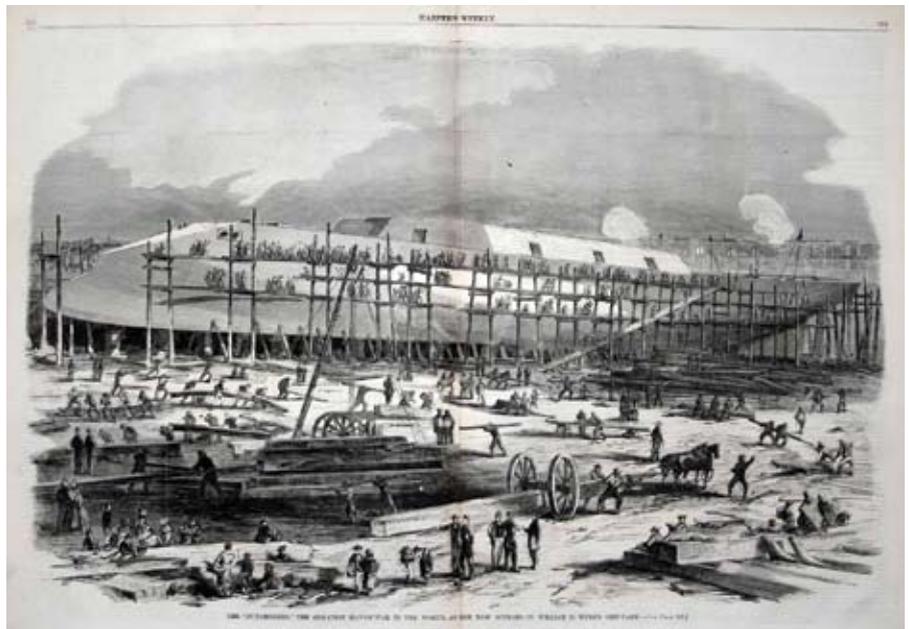
The British Ambassador to Washington, Lord Lyons, warned Secretary of State William Seward that if the blockade “overstepped the mark,” it could lead to British recognition of the Confederacy. The British were

aware that the blockade would cut off their primary supply of cotton from the South. And the Rebel government was doing its utmost to bring its British protectors directly into the fray. Two Confederate envoys, William Yancey and Pierre Rost, were sent to London immediately, in April 1862, arriving even before Lincoln's newly appointed emissary, Charles Francis Adams, the son of John Quincy Adams. British Foreign Secretary John Russell deigned to grant the pair an interview even before Adams' arrival. Secretary of State Seward was furious. "God damn them," he growled to Sen. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. "I'll give them hell."

While the Confederate emissaries knew that the issue of slavery would not win them many friends in the British Parliament, where the abolitionist forces of William Wilberforce had made open support for slavery something of a "third rail" for British politicians, they sought instead to play up the Southern secession as a revolt against the "oppressive northern tariff," an issue which was a burr under the saddle to the British elites. British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston would comment to August Belmont, the pro-Confederate New York representative of the Rothschild interests. "We do not like slavery, but we want cotton, and we dislike very much your Morrill tariff." Nevertheless, seeking to avoid a direct conflict with the United States, Palmerston kept the Confederate emissaries cooling their heels.

At the same time, Confederate operative Capt. James Bulloch, a former lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, and the uncle of, and role model later, for later President Theodore Roosevelt, was sent to England to buy ships capable of running the blockade, bringing much-needed supplies to the South, and taking out the cotton for sale in the British market. The Confederate emissaries received a friendly reception from Russell, but received no firm commitments of any sort.

A few days later, on May 13, 1862, Great Britain, still not inclined to directly confront the United States, declared its neutrality in the conflict. At the same time,



Library of Congress

Union shipbuilding in the Civil War. The caption reads: "The Dunderberg, the Greatest Man-of-War in the World, As She Now Appears in William H. Webb's Ship-Yard." Starting from a mere 42 ships when Lincoln imposed the blockade on Confederate ports, the Union Navy grew to 670 vessels by the war's end.

Russell sent out a notice to British ships to be wary of privateers from either of the warring parties, and sent more warships to Canada and to the Gulf of Mexico. Lincoln had made no threat to enlist privateers, but retained the right to do so.

The very declaration of neutrality by the British government, while falling short of recognizing the South, was in itself an important boost for the Confederacy, since it awarded them "belligerent rights." This meant that the Confederacy could conduct its trade with private businesses in England on the same footing as the United States, that England would recognize the Confederate flag on the high seas, and would grant her ships of war and commerce the same privileges in neutral ports as were accorded to the ships of the Federal government.

What the British really wanted was not a direct conflict with the United States—that might well end up costing them Canada—but rather to make the split in the Union a permanent one. Rather than direct recognition of the South, the British Foreign Secretary picked up on an idea that had been proposed by the French envoy to Washington, Henri Mercier, of a joint British-French attempt at "mediation" in the conflict. France at the time was ruled by "Little Napoleon" Bonaparte, the

third of that ilk, who, like his more famous uncle Napoleon I, was largely a British puppet.

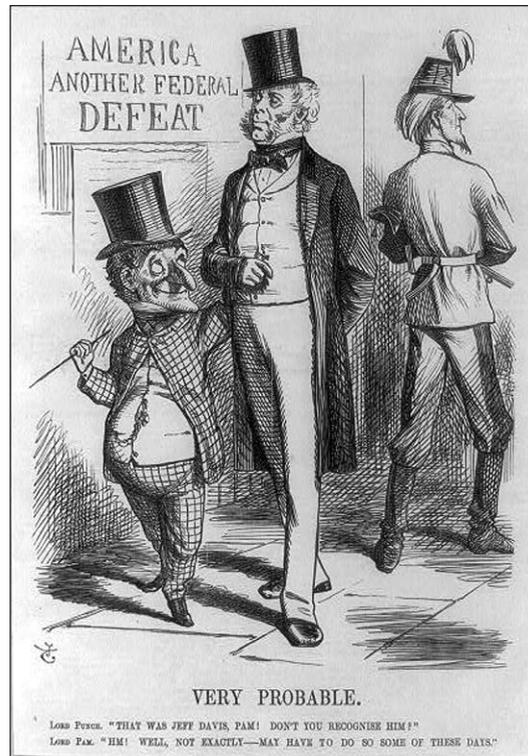
Russell recommended this move to Lord Palmerston in a letter on Oct. 17, 1861: "There is much good sense in Mercier's observations. But we must wait. I am persuaded that if we do anything, it must be on a grand scale. It will not do for England and France to break a blockade for the sake of getting cotton. But, in Europe, powers have often said to the belligerents: Make up your quarrels. We propose to give terms of pacification which we think fair and equitable. If you accept them, well and good. But if your adversary accepts them and you refuse them, our mediation is at an end, and you may expect to see us your enemies."

One of the more egregious examples of early British perfidy brought to Lincoln's attention was the case of the British

consul in Charleston, S.C., Robert Bunch, who was in direct contact with Confederate authorities and negotiating terms for them to sign the Declaration of Paris.

The Declaration of Paris of 1856 was an international agreement, signed by the major powers after the Crimean War, which designated the rules of a blockade. It warranted that a blockade, in order to be binding, must be effective, that is, capable of preventing access to the coast of the enemy. The Declaration also outlawed privateering outright. The United States, which was not a signator to the Declaration, now indicated a willingness to sign it, but only on condition that the European powers recognize Confederate privateers as pirates, and act accordingly. The British were not willing to do this, and even wanted to include a clause that would effectively prevent Britain from acting against Confederate privateers, on the flimsy pretext that this was an internal affair for the United States, the Confederacy not being recognized as a country!

While the U.S. was engaged in somewhat fruitless discussions on this point with the British and the French,



In this British cartoon, Aug. 27, 1864, Lord Punch (left) tells Lord Pam (Palmerston): "That was Jeff Davis, Pam! Don't you recognize him?" Lord Pam: "Hm! Well, not exactly—may have to do so some of these days."

British consul Bunch was conducting secret negotiations to get the *Confederate* government to sign the Declaration, but without the clause that forbade privateering. This act would serve to bring the Southern insurgency into an international agreement, a step towards ultimate recognition. When Seward's vociferous protest over Bunch's activities as a violation of U.S. law was ignored, the United States took unilateral steps to withdraw his accreditation.

'One War at a Time'

By the Fall of 1861, Jefferson Davis was prepared to send two other commissioners to Britain and France, heavy-hitters, to put pressure on the British government to recognize the Confederacy. These were James Mason, a rural aristocrat and master of Selma Plantation in Virginia, and John Slidell, a

former member of Congress from Louisiana. Both had been involved in choreographing secession as members of the U.S. Senate. Slidell had helped overturn the Missouri Compromise (1820), which had prohibited slavery north of 36°30", except in of Missouri. Both had been instrumental in passing the Fugitive Slave Act (1850), mandating the return of escaped slaves who had fled to the North. President Davis felt these two might succeed where Yancey and Rost had floundered. Leaving Charleston under cover of darkness, with all lights extinguished, the envoys were able to slip through the blockading force and made their way to Havana.

While they were being feted and lionized by the Havana elites on their way to London, Union Navy Capt. Charles Wilkes, who had been the leader of the U.S. Exploring Expedition to Antarctica in 1838, dropped anchor at Cienfuegos, Cuba. Learning of the whereabouts of the Confederate envoys, Wilkes grew curious. Slidell he had known as a youth; they had quarreled over a woman. He didn't like him then, and he liked him even less now. Wilkes worked his way around

to Havana. Although U.S. naval vessels were already waiting for the envoys expected to leave on a Confederate vessel to London, where they hoped to pick them up at sea, Wilkes learned that the envoys were in fact traveling on a British mail steamer, the *Trent*, by way of St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies, hoping thus to use the protection of the British flag to make their way to London.

Wilkes lay in wait for them. He knew that arresting the men off a British steamer might cause some diplomatic turmoil, but Wilkes, no milquetoast diplomat, felt that he must not let them pass. When the *Trent* had put out to sea, Wilkes, aboard the *U.S.S. San Jacinto*, forced it to halt and boarded it. Finding the two envoys on board, he arrested them and their two secretaries, and placed them in the brig.

The British were outraged, and demanded that the prisoners be released to them. Perhaps at no other time during the conflict were the United States and Britain so near to a declaration of hostilities. The British Admiralty gave orders to the North Atlantic squadron to prepare for action, sending 6,000 additional soldiers to Canada. Lincoln was also taken by surprise, and had to

mull over the situation before making a decision.

It was not an easy call. Wilkes became a hero overnight, and Congress passed a resolution thanking him for his service as did Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. Everyone was gearing up for a war with Great Britain, many looking forward to it. Lincoln was not so confident that this was a wise policy at that moment. The Union Army had yet to win a single major victory in suppressing the rebellion. "One war at a time," he had told Seward, when Seward, at the beginning of the Administration, had recommended starting a war with Britain or Spain in order to unite the country in a patriotic fever and forestall the rebellion.

On Christmas Day 1862, the Cabinet met to discuss the issue. As the meeting was ongoing, the French Minister came with a request that they release the prisoners and thereby prevent war. Senator Sumner came with letters from prominent Union supporters in England, John Bright and Richard Cobden, calling on Lincoln to release the prisoners, assuring the President, somewhat overconfidently, that England would stop its meddling in American affairs thereafter. After leaving the meeting, Lincoln was asked by his friend Orville Browning if a decision had been reached. "Yes," said Lincoln, "but the cabinet agreed not to divulge what had occurred." Lincoln then paused. "But there will be no war with England."

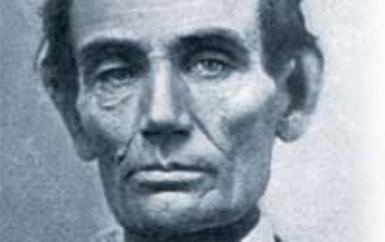
The prisoners were quietly delivered to a British man-of-war at Provincetown, at the tip of Cape Cod. But Seward wrote a response to Britain essentially justifying Wilkes' actions. Lincoln himself was not entirely happy about his decision. When asked to explain, the President said, "It was a pretty bitter pill to swallow, but I contented myself with believing that England's triumph in the matter would be short-lived, and that after ending our war successfully we would be so powerful that we could call her to account for all the embarrassments she had inflicted on us." Lincoln then related a story about two old foes who had to make up, as one of them was dying, but where the old fellow, on his death-bed at the end, commented, "But, see here, Brown, if I *should* happen to get well, mind, that old grudge stands!"

The Mexican Flank

Some of the British fleet sent to Canada during the *Trent* affair had been on their way to Mexico, as a part of another provocation being drummed up by the British to assist the South. On Oct. 31, 1861, a "London

An LPAC-TV Video

Life, Liberty, And the Pursuit of Happiness



*In honor of
Abraham Lincoln
on the
150th anniversary
of the beginning of
the Civil War.*

Before the the American Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, there was the brilliant project of the 15th-Century genius Nicholas of Cusa to found a new world, away from the imperial oppression of the European oligarchy. The result was the founding of the American Republic and its long struggle against British Empire, through the victory in the Civil War under Lincoln, and today's battle to defeat the Empire and its puppet President Obama.

www.larouchepac.com/node/18653

Conference” had been held which decided to launch a joint naval action by Britain, France, and Spain against the Republic of Mexico, allegedly to collect a debt accrued during Mexico’s three-year civil war. They were to seize the Mexican custom-houses. The actual purpose of the mission, however, was to overthrow the republican government and impose on it a European monarch, the Habsburg Prince Maximilian, who could then bring Mexico into an alliance with the Confederacy.

Although the U.S. had no naval forces to spare to fend off this mischief, Lincoln was nevertheless prepared to issue a warning. In a letter dated March 3, 1862, bearing the signature of Secretary Seward, Lincoln made it clear that the United States would oppose any attempt to overthrow the legitimate government of Mexico.

“The President,” Seward wrote, “deems it his duty to express to the Allies, in all candor and frankness, the opinion that no monarchical government, which could be founded in Mexico, in the presence of foreign navies and armies in the waters and upon the soil of Mexico, would have any prospect of security or permanence. . . . It is sufficient to say, that, in the President’s opinion, the emancipation of this continent from European control, has been the principal feature in its history during the last century. It is not probable that a revolution in a contrary direction would be successful in an immediately succeeding century, while population in America is so rapidly increasing, resources so rapidly developing, and Society so steadily forming itself upon principles of Democratic American government.”

From his assumption of the Presidency, Lincoln was determined to improve relations with his Latin American neighbors, particularly Mexico. He had appointed as envoy to Mexico, former Congressman Tom Corwin, who had been the leader of the Congressional opposition to the Mexican War (1846-48) of which Congressman Lincoln had also been a part. Corwin’s major collaborators in Mexico were the republican circles around Benito Juárez, who had taken power after the civil war there. Lincoln was even prepared to lend Mexico the money to pay off its debt in order to block the planned flotilla. But Congress never gave its approval to such a measure.

Lincoln’s letter, coming at a time when Gen. Ulysses S. Grant had started racking up some Federal victories in the West, gave the British pause. They also looked askance at some of Emperor Napoleon’s more grand-

iose plans for a French, rather than a British, Empire in South America. “The only thing to do,” Palmerston wrote Russell, “seems to be to lie on our oars and to give no pretext to the Washingtonians to quarrel with us, while, on the other hand, we maintain our rights and those of our fellow countrymen.” Instead of intervening directly, the Palmerston Cabinet saw to it that aid to the South would flow through private hands, with the government looking the other way, at least until an appropriate occasion arose for more direct involvement by the government itself.

Arming the Confederacy.

By mid-1862, such private initiatives were already proceeding apace. Confederate Captain Bulloch was busy negotiating with British shipbuilders for the construction of blockade-runners and privateers. British ships were supplying the South with arms. Using British possessions Bermuda and Nassau as way-stations, sleek British steamers ran the cargo into Southern ports like Wilmington or Charleston on the Atlantic coast or Mobile and New Orleans on the Gulf of Mexico.

Receiving a protest from Seward over the ships intended for the Confederacy, which Seward clearly considered a violation of the British Foreign Enlistment Act (which made it a misdemeanor for anyone without a special license to equip, furnish, fit out, or arm vessels for a belligerent, or to knowingly assist in doing so), Lord Russell simply shrugged and said that British shipbuilders would probably, “if money were to be made by it, send supplies to Hell, at the risk of burning their sails.” American naval authorities took the British response as a spur to tighten up their own efforts to deal with such “adventurers.”

Bulloch would outfit the blockade-runners at the shipyards in Liverpool and Glasgow, recruit British seamen for the service, and then run the vessels out to sea. He himself, in the Fall of 1861, had gone with the first blockade-runner, the *Fingal*, into Savannah harbor, with weaponry that allowed Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard to extract the remaining Confederate troops from the bloodbath at Shiloh, Tenn. This breach of the Union blockade was also a great propaganda victory for the South, which used it to characterize the blockade as ineffective.

This trade was very profitable, as two loads of cotton run through the blockade would well pay for the cost of a captured ship; but it was risky business. Union forces

had early in the war occupied the Cape Hatteras islands off the Carolina coast, which provided an ideal base for the Atlantic Blockading Squadron. In addition, the U.S. Navy had, by the start of 1863, doubled in number, thanks to Navy Secretary Welles' gunboat construction program. The Navy's success in capturing the speedy blockade-runners also provided the Union with excellent vessels with which to police the blockade. By the end of the war, they had either captured or destroyed over 1,500 Confederate ships.

Bulloch was also busy outfitting ships that could serve as privateers attacking U.S. commercial vessels. U.S. spies were meanwhile keeping a close watch on all this activity at British yards, and Ambassador Adams launched a complaint to the British government again, noting that such activity violated the Foreign Enlistment Act. When confronted on this issue in a reply to a motion by Richard Cobden in Parliament, Lord Palmerston defended his position: "I hold that on the mere ground of international law belligerents have no right to complain if merchants—I do not say the Government, for that would be interference—as a mercantile transaction, supply one of the belligerents not only with arms and cannon, but also with ships destined for warlike purposes."

While the ships would be produced in the British docks ostensibly for peaceful uses, and often enough for dummy clients, they would then be run out to sea or to other foreign ports, where they would be equipped with the necessary armaments. Six such privateers, the most famous being the *C.S.S Alabama*, were produced in British docks. By the end of the war, they had sunk 150 U.S. commercial vessels.

More seriously, the success of John Ericsson's *U.S.S. Monitor* had sparked Confederate interest in creating iron-plated rams that could destroy U.S. naval vessels conducting the blockade, and could even threaten Washington, D.C. Bulloch succeeded in getting the British John Laird & Sons Company to begin construction on two such craft.



Portrait by Nikolai Bogatsky, 1876
Russian Foreign Minister Alexander Gorchakov

Russia Tips the Scales

But the Lincoln government was not without its friends in Europe. Most decisive in this respect was Russia. Already at an early stage, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Gorchakov let it be known that Russia was in favor of a united and strong United States, and supported Lincoln's efforts to restore the Union. In July 1861, Gorchakov wrote on behalf of Tsar Alexander II (who had himself liberated Russia's serfs four months prior): "For the more than eighty years that it has existed, the American Union owes its independence, its towering rise, and its progress, to the concord of its members, consecrated under the auspices

of its illustrious founders, by institutions which have been able to reconcile union with liberty. This union has been fruitful. It has exhibited to the world the spectacle of a prosperity without example in the annals of history. It would be deplorable if, after so conclusive an experience, the United States should be hurried into a breach of the solemn compact which up to this time has made their power."

Lincoln was deeply moved by the Tsar's message, calling it "the most loyal," and saw to it that it was publicized throughout the North.

By the Fall of 1862, new plans were being hatched by England and France for another direct intervention into the conflict. In August, Palmerston and Russell were prepared to bring that Anglo-French combination together to present a proposal to mediate a peace—with separation. Being advised on the issue, Queen Victoria recommended that Russia, Prussia, and Austria be consulted. Russell agreed on the need for Russia to participate in order to give the venture a less hostile appearance in American eyes. Palmerston, even more skittish, wanted to wait for a major Southern victory before launching the intervention. But the Union victory at Antietam on Sept. 23, 1862 placed a hold on British machinations.

But it was not only Antietam that came into play. Russia had indeed been approached on the issue of me-



Russian Archives, www.rusarchives.ru

In February 2011, the Russian government held an exhibition in Moscow commemorating the collaboration between President Lincoln (“the Emancipator”) and Tsar Alexander II (“the Liberator”). The statue is a modern work by A.N. Burganov (the two leaders never actually met). The painting shows serfs listening to a reading of the Tsar’s proclamation giving them their freedom, 1861, from a 1907 original by B.M. Kustodiev.

diation. Speaking to U.S. envoy Bayard Taylor on Oct. 27, Gorchakov had said: “Proposals will be made to Russia to join some plan of interference. She will refuse any invitation of the kind. . . . You may rely upon it, she will not change.” The entire conversation with Gorchakov was relayed to Lincoln, who was greatly relieved by it. A resolution of Congress ordered a report of the entire discussion to be published and distributed throughout the nation. This put a definite hold on any intervention plans. “We ought not to move at present without Russia,” Russell wrote dejectedly to Palmerston.

The U.S.-Russia discussions were, however, of more than of a mere tactical nature. There were also long-term plans for the post-Civil War situation, in which it was intended that Russia and the United States would become close collaborators. Already plans were being made to lay a telegraph line through the Russian Far East to the Kamchatka peninsula, linking that with a line on the North American side of the Bering Strait. Lincoln would later refer to these developments in his 1864 Annual Message to Congress. Discussions were afoot regarding building railroad connections through the Russian Far East.

There were also discussions regarding the possibility of Russia selling Alaska to the United States, creating thereby a transportation grid stretching over two continents, centered on the Asia-Pacific region. At present, however, the primary task was to win the war. While Great Britain with its fleet largely controlled the Atlantic, the Pacific Ocean remained largely free.

A New Birth of Freedom

Antietam also provided the opportunity for a measure that Lincoln had long been preparing: issuing a declaration of emancipation of the slaves who lived in the states that were in rebellion against the Union. While Lincoln strongly opposed slavery, the ultimate resolution of that issue lay with Congress, the only body that could alter the Constitution in which slavery had been allowed to stand. Secondly, he had to keep the border states—Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware—in the Union, if the Union were to prevail, and these states were slave states. The Emancipation Proclamation would therefore only free the slaves in the states in rebellion against the Union, and that, only at the point that Union forces were there to set them

free. But it was the first decisive step toward abolishing slavery, and everybody knew it.

The Emancipation Proclamation was greeted with jubilation in Europe, including in Great Britain, where the friends of the Union had long hoped that such a measure would be taken. The cause of the Union was now unequivocally the cause of human freedom. This made any attempt to save the Confederacy equivalent to depriving 3.5 million slaves of their chance for freedom, and thus represented a political obstacle to Palmerston's plans.

Lincoln was not slow to utilize this important development. He dispatched Henry Ward Beecher, a noted abolitionist, to England to speak in churches and other public forums, mobilizing public opinion in favor of the Union, where it was already strong, especially among the working class. Even among the textile workers, hardest hit by the Union blockade, pro-Union feeling was high. Lincoln himself wrote a letter to the workmen of Manchester, England, who had held celebrations in honor of the Proclamation.

In July 1863, with the simultaneous Union victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, the tide had definitely turned militarily, making any British moves toward intervention a very dangerous undertaking. In September 1863, Ambassador Adams sent a warning to Secretary Russell about the Laird Rams being prepared in the Merseyside yards, demanding that they not be allowed to leave their docks. "It would be superfluous in me to point out to your lordship that this is war. No matter what may be the theory adopted of neutrality in a struggle, when this process is carried on in the manner indicated, from a territory and with the aid of the subjects of a third party, that third party to all intents and purposes ceases to be neutral."

At the same time, the Senate passed legislation allowing Lincoln to outfit privateers. The message to London was that the United States would begin disrupting British commerce on the high seas if Britain didn't prevent these rams from leaving the English



Library of Congress

"The Russian Fleet, Commanded by Admiral Lisovski, Now in New York Harbor," was the headline of Harper's Weekly in 1862.

shipyards. The Palmerston government stopped the rams from leaving the docks, and later impounded the ships.

The Confederacy's purchase agent, Bulloch, then moved his operations to France, where he hoped for greater cooperation. When a British parliamentarian again called for Britain to join with France in recognizing the Confederacy, Palmerston made a cynical comment about not pulling Napoleon's "chestnuts out of the fire." Britain was now prepared to jettison the "Little Emperor."

Also, in a surprise move in October 1862, Tsar Alexander II had sent two naval squadrons to visit the United States for several months. One, from the Baltic Fleet, under the command of Adm. Stepan Lesovsky, went to New York and Washington, and the other, from the Pacific Fleet, under the command of Adm. Andrei Popov, appeared in San Francisco.

The naval deployment had several purposes. On the one hand, France and England, which had joined together against Russia during the Crimean War, were again planning an intervention against Russia in Poland. The Russians were well advised to take their ships out of their home ports and prepare them for possible action. Sending them to the U.S. ports would also send a clear signal to the British and French that the United States would not be without allies, if European powers sought

to intervene in support of the Southern insurgency.

The visit of the fleets, which remained in the United States for the entire Winter, was met with jubilation wherever they went. In New York and Philadelphia, the Russians had an opportunity to discuss with leading industrial interests the possibility of U.S. manufacturers helping with Russian railroad construction and producing equipment for the Russian Navy.

Lincoln was overjoyed at the visit. His Emancipation Proclamation had been received with great fanfare in the nation where the Tsar Liberator Alexander II had abolished serfdom. While the two men never met, the measures served to tighten the bonds between them. When the Russian Atlantic squadron docked in Alexandria, Va., First Lady Mary Lincoln went to toast the Russian fleet, her husband being ill in bed. Lincoln told Bayard Taylor, who had served briefly as envoy to St. Petersburg, to prepare a public lecture in Washington on serfs and serfdom, in order to give people a sense of the significance of the great reforms launched by the Russian Tsar.

The Tasks Remaining

The war would continue for another year and a half, with some of the bloodiest fighting still to come in the long campaign to destroy the Confederate Army and retake Richmond. The picture looked grim going into the November 1864 elections, as the country was growing tired of war. Gen. William T. Sherman's successful march through Georgia and the Carolinas, and the vote of the soldiers, however, assured Lincoln's election victory.

When Lincoln, at the end of the war, visited Grant and his generals at City Point, Va., after viewing the ruins of Richmond, the President began reminiscing about Great Britain and the *Trent* affair. "England will live to regret her inimical attitude toward us," he said. "John Bull will find that he has injured himself much



National Archives

Confederate Secretary of War Judah Benjamin destroyed all the files of Confederate covert operations, before returning to his native England after the war.

more seriously than us. His action reminds me of a barber in Sangamon County in my State."

Lincoln then related a story about a barber who was trying to give a customer a much too close shave. Using his finger to press out the hollow of the man's cheeks, the barber poked a hole through the fellow's closely leveled cheek and cut his own finger. "There, you lantern-jawed cuss, you've made me cut my finger!" the barber exclaimed. "And so England will discover that she has got the South into a pretty bad scrape by trying to administer to her, and in the end she will find that she has only cut her own finger."

The war left the United States as the greatest industrial power in the world. When Grant sent Gen. Philip Sheridan down to the Mexican border with a division of seasoned Union soldiers to assist the forces of Juárez, the French decided it was time to abandon their plans for a Habsburg monarchy in Mexico. Grant was also prepared to move his battle-hardened veterans into Canada in order to pull that country out of the British orbit, but was reined in by a timid Seward. While no one can be certain of Lincoln's plans in this respect, is it any wonder that the elites in London were shaking in their boots at the sight of a revitalized United States?

We may never have all the details of what went into the British plot that led to Lincoln's assassination, since Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, in the words of U.S. political leader James Blaine, the "Mephistopheles of the Rebellion," and the spider in the web of Confederate covert operations, destroyed all the files of the Confederate Secret Service before returning to his native England, where he became a Queen's Counsel, celebrated by the extensive pro-Confederate circles in that town.⁴

At Lincoln's death, a subscription was circulated for

4. For a review of the British role in the assassination of Lincoln, and other U.S. Presidents, see *EIR*, Dec. 2, 1994.

a great monument to be raised at his tomb, and all the countries of Europe were asked to contribute. Queen Victoria made her contribution, in what was no doubt intended to be a final insult to a foe she feared and detested, by sending a tuft of down that had fallen from one of her swans!

Although the death of Lincoln, like the death of Franklin Roosevelt, set back the broader plans of transformation envisioned by the fallen leader, and thrust the nation into a period of uncertainty and confusion, the emergence of the United States soon after that war as the main industrial power in the world, would give the world hope of escaping the yoke of British hegemony.

Writing a “Review of the Decade” in 1867, Henry Carey drew the conclusions of the Union victory for the British Empire:

“The ‘balance’ of material power is no longer in Britain’s hands. That what yet remains of moral influence must speedily pass away will be obvious to all who reflect on the fact that the moral feeling of the world has been and is now being daily more and more offended

“By the spectacle of overgrown wealth at home side by side with a destitution the most complete;

“By the pro-slavery tendencies of a system that at home produces a necessity for cheapening labor, and has elsewhere led to advocacy of negro slavery as the only mode by which to obtain cheap cotton;

“By the spectacle of a neighbor nation [i.e., Ireland], one that in the past had given to Britain her ablest statesmen and most distinguished soldiers now passing rapidly out of existence;

“By the tyranny over hundreds of millions of Asiatics, feeble as they are, that is daily exercised, and recently so well described by Earl Grey in the passage that has above been given;

“Of all, however, that has occurred throughout the decade, there is nothing that, equally with the alliance



Henry C. Carey, the great economist of the American System, advisor to Lincoln, and opponent of British free trade. Portrait by Charles Leslie.

between the governing portion of the British people and that portion of the American one which was engaged in the effort to establish a slave republic, has tended to destroy that moral force which constitutes so essential a portion of the capital of an individual or a nation.”

Indeed, the British imperial financial empire still today represents a policy of slavery, one that now threatens to decimate all mankind in the vain attempt to save the bankrupt imperial system. And it falls to the United States, once again, to break this imperial power—this time with the Glass-Steagall legislation and accompanying measures which the patriotic movement led by Lyndon LaRouche represents.

It is not in reenactments or wreath-layings or memorial tributes that we will honor and cherish the memory of the Civil War, and of those who fought and died to maintain this Union and its “new birth of freedom,” but rather, in dedicating ourselves to that “unfinished work” of finally ending the financial dictatorship of the City of London and their Wall Street lackies and of rededicating this nation to that higher purpose for which it was created.

References

- Ephraim Douglass Adams, *Great Britain and the Civil War*, 2 volumes (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958)
- Konstantin George, “The U.S.-Russian Entente That Saved the Union,” *The Campaigner*, July 1978, New York. Reprinted in *EIR*, June 26, 1992.
- Brian Jenkins, *Britain and the War for the Union*, 2 volumes (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1974-1980)
- David Hepburn Milton, *Lincoln’s Spymaster: Thomas Haines Dudley and the Liverpool Network* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2003)
- A. Tyrner-Tyrnauer, *Lincoln and the Emperors* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc, 1962)
- Albert A. Woldman, *Lincoln and The Russians* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1952)