

# 150th Anniversary of Russian Navy's Arrival in New York Harbor

In his [open letter](#) to the American people published in the *New York Times* on Sept. 11, Russian President Vladimir Putin referenced the history of U.S.-Russian collaboration, especially in World War II. He could have also mentioned Russia's support for the League of Armed Neutrality, which served as an invaluable aid for America in its war for independence, and the alliance between President Abraham Lincoln and Russian Tsar Alexander II, in preventing the British Empire from coming to the aid of its client state, the Confederacy, in the U.S. Civil War.

The LaRouche movement has published extensively on this Lincoln-Alexander alliance, beginning with a piece in *Campaigner* magazine in July 1978. That article was reprinted in large part in [EIR](#), June 26, 1992.

One of the high points of that Civil War alliance between Russia and the United States occurred on Sept. 24, 1863, when the Russian fleet dropped anchor in both the New York and San Francisco harbors. The ports of call were the fruit of a U.S.-Russian alliance which had been forged by U.S. Ambassador to Russia Cassius Clay, and which involved U.S. aid in building up the technological capacity of the Russian Navy, including the construction of ironclad ships.

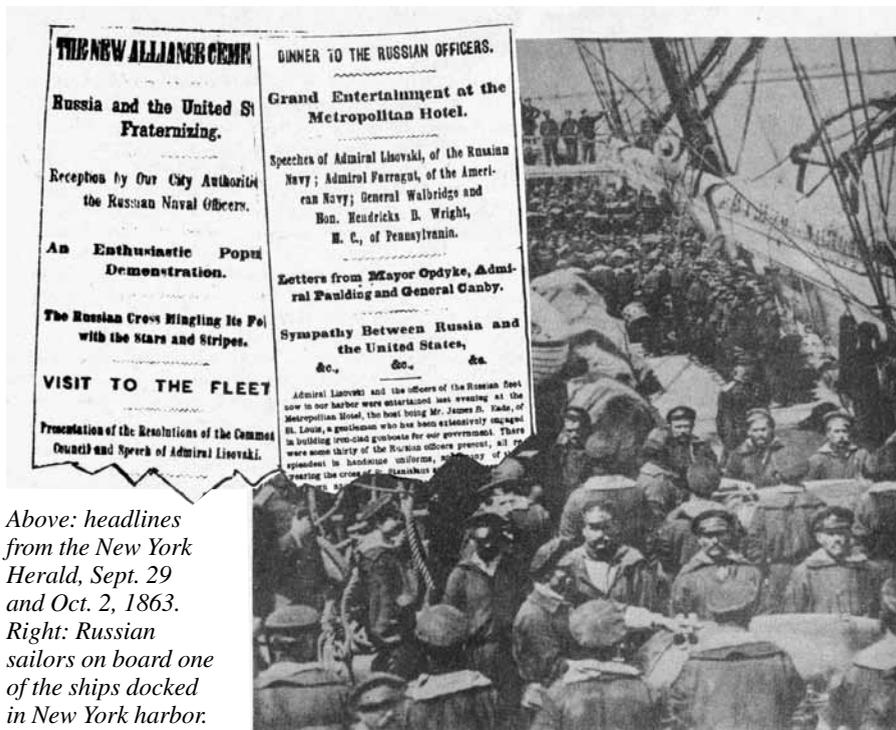
The arrival of the Russian fleets was timed to deal with the danger, discerned by Russian intelligence services, that the British Empire was on the verge of military intervention against the United States. Tsar Alexander II, who had, through his

Foreign Minister Alexander Gorchakov, stated his "most friendly sentiments" and "most cordial sympathy" toward the United States in a message to President Lincoln in July 1861, was determined to do what he could to protect the young nation. Gorchakov's letter, and the collaboration between the two nations over most of the 19th Century, attest to the fact that this alliance was based on a common commitment to technological progress and development, in direct opposition to the imperial designs of their common enemy, the British Empire.

Thus, despite the great differences between the Russia's absolute monarchy and the American Republic, Russia and the United States collaborated for a great good—the preservation of the Union. The strategic significance of this collaboration, as well as its spirit, are writ large in this excerpt from the *Campaigner* article:



*The Russian Navy parades down Broadway in New York City. Harper's Weekly, Oct. 17, 1863.*



Above: headlines from the *New York Herald*, Sept. 29 and Oct. 2, 1863. Right: Russian sailors on board one of the ships docked in New York harbor.

by the Russian compliments and laughs to see us deceived by the sympathy of Muscovy.... But we are not very much deceived. Americans understand that the sympathy of France in our Revolution for us was not for love of us, but from hatred of England. They know, as Washington long ago told them, that romantic friendship between nations is not to be expected. And if they had latterly expected it, England has utterly undeceived them.

“Americans do not suppose that Russia is on the point of becoming a Republic, but they observe that the English aristocracy and the French Empire hate a republic quite as much as the the Russian monarchy hates it; and they remark that while the French

### ‘God Bless the Russians’

On Sept. 24, 1863, the Russian fleet dropped anchor in New York harbor. America exploded with joy. *Harper’s Weekly* took special pride in pointing out the American design of the ships and the armaments on board:

“The two largest of the squadron, the frigates *Alexander Nevsky* and *Peresvet*, are evidently vessels of modern build, and much about them would lead an unpracticed eye to think they were built in this country.... The flagship’s guns are of American make, being cast in Pittsburgh.”

New York City was “gaily bedecked with American and Russian flags,” the fleet’s officers were given a special parade with a United States military honor guard escorting them up Broadway past cheering crowds.

British newspapers began an angry howl, denouncing “Lincoln’s threats of war” against Britain and launching a press campaign “poking fun” at the “Americans, who have been hoodwinked by the Russians.”

*Harper’s Weekly* ran an editorial in reply to this English psychological warfare campaign which expressed the prevailing consensus in the United States:

“John Bull thinks that we are absurdly bamboozled

Empire imports coolies into its colonies, and winks at slavery, and while the British government cheers a political enterprise founded upon slavery, and by its chief organs defends the system, Russia emancipates her serfs. There is not the least harm in observing these little facts. Russia, John Bull will remember, conducts herself as a friendly power. That is all. England and France have shown themselves to be unfriendly powers. And we do not forget it.”

The Russian fleet was to remain in U.S. waters for seven months, departing in April 1864 only after both Russia and the United States had fully satisfied themselves that all danger of war from Europe had passed. Throughout the stay, there were continuous celebrations, festivities, and a daily public outpouring of American gratitude.

The Russian ships stationed off New York sailed in December for Washington, and made their way up the Potomac River, dropping anchor at the nation’s capital. This commenced another round of celebrations. With the unfortunate exception of Lincoln, who at the time was suffering a mild case of smallpox, the entire cabinet and Mrs. Lincoln hosted the Russian officers at gala receptions on board the flagship. The Russians toasted Lincoln, and Mrs. Lincoln led a toast to the Tsar and the emancipation of the serfs.