America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

American Trade with Russia and the Baltic, 1783-1812

BY ALFRED W. CROSBY, JR.

Ohio State University Press

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On the twelfth of June, 1783, a ship of 500 tons sailed into the Russian harbor of Riga and dropped anchor. As the tide pivoted her around her mooring, the Russians on the waterfront could see clearly the banner that she flew — a strange device of white stars on a blue ground and horizontal red and white stripes. Russo-American trade had irrevocably begun. Merchants — Muscovite and Yankee — had met and politely sounded the depths of each other's purses. And they had agreed to do business.

In the years that followed, until 1812, the young American nation became economically tied to Russia to a degree that has not, perhaps, been realized to date. The United States desperately needed Russian hemp and linen; the American sailor of the early nineteenth century — who was possibly the most important individual in the American economy — thought twice before he took any craft not equipped with Russian rigging, cables, and sails beyond the harbor mouth. To an appreciable extent, the American economy survived and prospered because it had access to the unending labor and rough skill of the Russian peasant.

The United States found, when it emerged as a free

(Continued on back flap)

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St. Petersburg.

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Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 65-18735

The illustration reproduced on the title page is from "The Naval Chronicle for 1805: Containing a General and Biographical History of the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom; with a Variety of Original Papers on Nautical Subjects" (London: I. Gold, 1805), XIV, facing 224.

Acknowledgments

AN AUTHOR'S DEEPEST GRATITUDE goes to those who had the fortitude to read his work in manuscript and who were kind to its creator. Robert E. Moody and Frank Novac of Boston University examined and offered valuable suggestions about this book when it was still a Ph.D. dissertation. Harry L. Coles, whose scholarly courtesy is one of the warmer attractions of the Ohio State University, read it and helped it toward publication.

I owe a great deal to those who gave me bibliographical help, such as M. V. Brewington of the *American Neptune*, Jack Battick, George Brooks, and Lance Trusty.

I must also acknowledge my debt to the archivists and librarians of the Boston, Harvard, and Ohio State University libraries, the Boston Public Library, the Boston Athenaeum, the National Archives, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Salem Custom House, and the Peabody Museum and the Essex Institute of Salem, Massachusetts—men and women who spun out a million man-hours in preparation for, among other things, that inconspicuous moment when I wrote the first word of this book.

Lastly, let me thank the editors of the *American Neptune* and the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, who have allowed me to use as parts of this book articles of mine that have appeared in their pages.

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Contents

I.	<i>The Beginnings</i>	3
II.	<i>Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The American View</i>	14
III.	<i>Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The Russian View</i>	27
IV.	<i>A New Flag for the Old Trade</i>	40
V.	<i>Making and Learning the Rules</i>	46
VI.	<i>Trade in Time of War</i>	72
VII.	<i>Alliances and Embargo</i>	91
VIII.	<i>Fraudulent Trading</i>	109
IX.	<i>The Danish Problem</i>	125
X.	<i>"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"</i>	150
XI.	<i>Adams in the Ascendancy</i>	170
XII.	<i>The United States, Darling of the Baltic</i>	195
XIII.	<i>The Challenge of 1812</i>	230
XIV.	<i>The Wars of 1812</i>	246
XV.	<i>Postscript: Levett Harris</i>	276
	<i>Appendix: Chronology of Events Affecting American Trade with the Baltic and Russia, 1789-1815</i>	280
	<i>Bibliography</i>	287
	<i>Index</i>	311

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The Beginnings

MY COUNTRYMEN, SIRE," John Quincy Adams, United States minister to Russia, said to Alexander I, Tsar of all the Russias, "are so familiarized with the ocean that they think not much more of crossing it than of going over a river."¹ The date was the eleventh of October, 1810, and Adams and Alexander, their paths having crossed on the mall in front of St. Petersburg's Admiralty building, had stopped to chat and had hit upon the subject of the amazing American bent for travel. The subject came easily to their lips, for in that year more American vessels arrived at Kronstadt, the port of St. Petersburg, than vessels of any other nation, including Russia herself.² And in August of the following year, 1811, Russians would stand amazed on the quays and piers of that seaport and stare out at one hundred vessels moored in their harbor flying the Stars and Stripes.³

But it was not just a bent for travel that brought Americans to Russia. It was a passion for trade. In the years just before the American and Russian wars of 1812, Russia was one of the most important markets of the United States. In 1811, the

United States sent one-tenth of all her exports to the shores of Russia.⁴ (And, incredibly, our 1811 exports to Russia exceeded our 1958 exports to the U.S.S.R. by approximately one and a half million dollars.)⁵

Although not of transcendent importance until the first decade of the nineteenth century, Russo-American trade began very early. As was true of so much of colonial trade, the first page of its history is written on a leaf of Virginia tobacco. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, Virginia's tobacco producers found themselves sinking into an economic slough with a modern-sounding name: over-production. In 1681, Governor Thomas Lord Culpeper of the colony wrote, "It is commonly said that there is tobacco enough in London now to last all England five years. . . . Our thriving is our undoing. . . ." An expansion of market would solve the problem, of course, but expansion where? Governor Culpeper suggested: "Free importation into Russia would revive our drooping spirits, for we want nothing but a vent."⁶

Sadly, however, tobacco was forbidden in Muscovy by both the government and the church. Very severe punishment, such as the slitting of the noses of snuff users, had been dealt out to those addicted to tobacco.⁷ In spite of this, the use of tobacco was spreading; but like most other "westernisms," it was making slow progress among the vast conservative and devout majority. It seemed that Virginia would have to look elsewhere for "a vent" unless Muscovy were turned upside down—which is exactly what Peter the Great did in the decades around 1700.

Peter had a profound effect on trade between America and

The Beginnings

Russia. He encouraged Russians to trade with foreigners. He encouraged local industry. He drove through the Swedes to the sea and gave Russia several good ports on the Baltic. The innovation of Peter's which was most immediately apparent to Americans was his admission—yea, even encouragement—of tobacco importation. He had two motives. One was to raise more money for his expanding government, army, and new navy. His father had briefly allowed the use of tobacco and had made the tobacco trade a state monopoly. This seemed a good money-making scheme to Peter, especially with the addition of an excise tax on tobacco. The second motive was to encourage the use of tobacco as a small detail of his life-long campaign to westernize Russia. If Westerners enjoyed an occasional pipe, then it would be best for all if Peter moved through a constantly replenished haze of smoldering tobacco.⁸

On the first of February, 1697, Peter issued an ukase extending his blessing to the importation of tobacco. Imports of British tobacco mounted to 87,000 pounds in 1698, and bounded to a peak of 1,450,000 pounds in 1700.⁹ Trade between America and Russia had begun.

This trade suffered from the beginning from competition with cheap, smuggled Dutch tobacco, but the trade was important enough for Americans to quickly protest to Queen Anne's government in 1705 at the news that Englishmen and English machines were going to Russia to process raw tobacco there. The Americans feared that the Muscovites, once in possession of the skills to transform tobacco from the raw leaf to a smokable product, would use the nearby Circassian or even home-grown tobacco rather than American.¹⁰

Queen Anne's government thought well enough of the to-

bacco trade to Russia to order that all "persons whatsoever forbear to send any persons into Muscovy versed in the mystery of spinning and rowling tobacco or any instruments or materials for the same . . . as they'd tender her Majesty's displeasure and will answer the contrary at their perils."¹¹

All was to no avail. Russian imports of English tobacco fell off sharply after 1700, and by the third quarter of the century Russia was exporting considerable amounts of tobacco herself. In fact, when the American Revolution cut the supply of American tobacco to West Europe, an appreciable amount of the slack was taken up by increased importation of Russian tobacco.¹²

As our colonial era progressed, our exports of tobacco to Russia were supplemented by rice, indigo, tropical goods we picked up in the West Indies, and—incredibly—furs. In 1775, Russia, one of the greatest fur producers in the world, imported 46,460 American beaver skins and 7,143 American otter skins through St. Petersburg. A contemporary English writer said that the motive for this strange Russian yen for American furs arose simply from the fact that they were "far-fetched and dear bought."¹³

In return for these goods, Russia sent us some of our most essential imports: iron, hemp, cordage, sailcloth, and other finer linens. We will hear much more of these products later. In fact, this whole book will be something of a hymn of praise to Russia's iron, hemp, and flax.

This trade between Russia and colonial America was almost always carried on indirectly. An occasional vessel might travel between the two directly,¹⁴ but the vast majority, whether sailing from a Russian or an American port, went to Britain

The Beginnings

and unloaded there. In Britain the tobacco or hemp would have added to its price the fees of the Englishmen who unloaded it, stored it in their warehouses, sold it, resold it, loaded it on other vessels, and sent it on its way. This was the object of England's navigation laws, which obliged the bulk of goods coming into any part of the empire or leaving it to pass through Britain on the way, thus brightening with a bit of gold England's outstretched palms before disappearing into the hands of a colonial or foreigner.

Anyway, a Yankee in need of hemp for his ropewalks, or sails for his bare masts, or linen for his back or his wife's table rarely wanted to sail directly to Russia. In fact, only fifteen vessels claiming British North American colonies as home passed through the Danish Sound and into the Baltic prior to the American Declaration of Independence—and it is unlikely that all of those went to Russia.¹⁶ When he did go to Russia, he usually had to do so as a smuggler, and although he was by no means averse to a bit of maritime skulking, smuggling all the way to Russia just wasn't worth the effort. When he got there, he had little knowledge of the market, nor any connections, nor anyone to give him credit. Moreover, the trade was probably not great enough before our revolution to sustain much direct commerce. To pay the acquisitive English merchant his due, England was the logical entrepôt of trade between America and Russia.

A typical Yankee way to get Russian products before the Revolution was to ship a cargo of fish to Spain, where good Catholics ate good Protestant fish every Friday, and to remit part of the profits to London to pay for hemp, iron, duck, and other Russian goods which had been or were to be shipped to

America. Russian goods were typically part of the cargo of any ship arriving from England.¹⁶

When the American farmers and the British soldiers clashed at Lexington and Concord, it appeared that the little contact we would have with Russia during the war would be with fixed bayonets. In 1775, Catherine the Great seemed inclined to sell the services of some of her troops to George III for use in North America; and although she soon permanently rejected the idea, the rumor that Russian mercenaries were on their way to join the Hessians persisted among Americans.¹⁷

As it happened, Russia's influence on our revolution was much to our advantage. Britain, in her effort to destroy by naval blockade the ability of France and Spain to wage war, declared naval stores to be contraband, and, therefore, legally seizable. Russia, as Europe's chief producer of naval stores, was soon affected. In 1780, Catherine the Great announced that her navy would be used against any belligerent who interfered with her neutral trade, and gathered together the chief neutrals of Europe into a League of Armed Neutrality to protect neutral rights on the high seas. This League obliged Great Britain to accept broader definitions of neutral right on the high seas, and thus weakened Britain's blockade against her enemies. This, plus the fact that the very existence of the League informed Britons that even the neutrals were dangerously anglophobic, may have helped persuade Britain to accept a peace that left the United States independent.

As a result of Catherine's actions of 1780, the fledgling United States put aside its distrust and, in December of that year, the Continental Congress appointed Francis Dana of Massachusetts as minister plenipotentiary to the court of Cath-

The Beginnings

erine the Great. "The great object of your negotiation," Congress instructed Dana, "is to engage her Imperial Majesty to favor and support the sovereignty and independence of these United States." Also, Dana might try to persuade the Tsarina (who, Congress crooned, is always "attentive to the freedom of commerce and the rights of nations") to admit the United States into the League of Neutrality.¹⁸ Just how Congress expected the United States, one of the leading belligerents and chief bone of contention of the whole vast war, to find a place in the world's chief organization of neutrals is hard to guess.

Dana, already in West Europe on diplomatic duty, took the land route to St. Petersburg. His carriage was "overthrown and broke to pieces between Leipzig and Berlin," but neither he nor teen-aged John Quincy Adams, whom he took along as secretary, were injured, and they arrived in good health at St. Petersburg on the twenty-seventh of August, 1781.¹⁹ Here Dana was to suffer total frustration for two long years. The experienced Catherine would not acknowledge the existence of the United States or its representative. She knew such recognition would bring her the enmity of Great Britain and that the nations opposing Great Britain could offer in return little more than the gratitude of thirteen pseudo-nations half a world away.

Catherine's government made extra special efforts to ignore Dana. When a portrait of George Washington was sent to Dana via the Russia minister at The Hague, it was returned to that minister by the Russian government with this curt statement, "With your dispatch came a portrait of Washington to one Dina [*sic*], an American agent here. But as this man is not known to her Imperial Majesty nor her ministers, you are

commanded by her Majesty to return it to the source from which it reached the courier." ²⁰

Dana realized that Russia would never recognize the United States for altruistic reasons. He would have to show that it was to her advantage to do so. Being a Yankee, he naturally turned to the possibilities of commerce between Russia and the United States as a solution to his problem. "I wish this country had a more commercial turn," he mused. "We should then soon see a direct communication between the two countries opened and established, to the great benefit of both." ²¹

Dana knew that there would be an American demand for Russian goods because that demand was already over a hundred years old; ²² the difficulty would be in finding something to exchange for these goods. The Russians were now raising their own tobacco in the Ukraine, ²³ and—anyhow—its import was at that time prohibited. The only other native United States products that Russians coveted were rice and indigo, but these would make too slim a base for any great trade. Dana recognized that the backbone of America's colonial commerce, the triangular voyage from the Continental colonies to tropical and subtropical America and thence to Europe, would also be the backbone of the future trade with Russia. The sugar, coffee and dye woods of the West Indies and Latin America would tempt the Russians where the timber and fish and grain of North America would not. ". . . We must do it by circuitous voyages . . .," ²⁴ said the Yankee peddler come to the banks of the Neva.

This shrewd American also noticed that, as mentioned above, the goods of the West Indies which were brought to Russia by the great maritime powers were, per mercantilistic

The Beginnings

dictates, first deposited in the respective mother countries. This meant a rise in price. Why, thought Dana, couldn't we bring these goods *directly* to Russia? "By such means might we not be able to furnish them here at a cheaper rate than any of the Europeans can do it, and nearly as cheap as if they were our own native productions . . . ?" ²⁵

In the spring of 1783, with England negotiating for peace, it appeared that Dana would be recognized by the Russian government. The United States had given up all thought of wheedling herself into the League of Armed Neutrality—what might have been a shield and buckler in war would only be an "entangling alliance" in peace—but was still interested in a commercial treaty with Russia which would give a legitimate baptism to the trade that Dana foresaw. But all there was ever to be for Dana in Russia was bitter frustration. The British minister used all his considerable influence to assure that the U.S. would not be recognized till the final "i" was dotted on the final ratification of the peace treaties; Catherine was ignoring even urgent public business to sit at the bedside of her favorite, Lanskoï, who had destroyed his health with aphrodisiacs; and the Russian officials with whom Dana was trying to deal demanded enormous sums in semi-official bribes before they would negotiate. Dana was happy to receive instructions in a new tone from a Congress just beginning the century-long swing into isolationism. Congress now decided it was not anxious to "engage extensively in commercial treaties till experience has shown the advantages or disadvantages that may result from them," and that it would rather postpone any treaty with Russia than buy one at this time. Dana embarked for Boston in August, 1783.

Leaving made him happier than had anything else for two years if what he had recently written John Adams is indicative: "I am sick, sick to the heart of the delicacies and whims of European politics."²⁶

Back home, the only delegations to Congress that mourned the end of the mission to Russia were, significantly, Massachusetts', as always interested in naval stores for ships, and South Carolina's, looking for a Russian market for Southern rice.²⁷

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The Beginnings

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Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The American View

THE RUSSIAN GOODS that Americans wanted—hemp, linens, and iron—were prosaic but absolutely essential. Without thousands and thousands of tons of Russian goods every year, the sailing fleets of the United States could not have existed. Until the middle decades of the nineteenth century, most of the transportation within the United States for more than a few miles, and all the trans-oceanic transportation, was by sailing craft. Cotton moved from the wharfs of Savannah to the spindles of Massachusetts, and the works of Fielding and Chateaubriand moved from the presses of Europe to the parlors of Baltimore under pyramids of sail. Our sailing vessels were our strong backs and our eyes and ears.

At the beginning of our national history, we did not raise a fiftieth of the hemp we used, nor did we produce enough flax or iron to fill our needs.¹ Without Russia's hempen hawsers and rope, her flax sails and fittings and fastenings made from

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The American View

her iron, our sailing vessels would have been immobile piles of lumber.

Take, as an example, a forty-four-gun frigate of the "Constitution" class, the only kind of large sailing vessel with which most of us are now at all familiar. She needed two suits of sails, each suit amounting to about three-quarters of an acre in extent.² Fully rigged, she had one hundred tons of hemp rope aboard. Iron? Not counting the anchors or any of the cannon, muskets, or ammunition, a ship of the "Constitution" class needed seventy-five tons of iron.³

Not so vital, but considered necessary to a normally comfortable life, were the thousands of yards of Russia's finer linen textiles that streamed to the ports of America every year. Before our South and England's Midlands taught the world to cast aside linen for cotton, Russia's linens—from rough ravens-duck for a sailor's trousers to delicate diaper for the merchant-prince's silver-gleaming table—were common fabrics in America's ports.

Hemp and flax, of course, grew all over the world, but it was Russia that produced more of each than any other nation.⁴ As for quality, no other hemp seemed quite so worthy in the eye of the sailor as Russian, and while—say—Silesian linen might be more noted for beauty of workmanship, all agreed that no flax was superior to Russia's and no linens sturdier than hers.⁵ Furthermore, a piece of linen may have been manufactured outside Russia, but that was no reason to believe that its flax hadn't once tossed its blue flowers in a Muscovite breeze. Russia's exports of raw flax supplied the linen industries of several European nations.⁶

Russia had no monopoly on the mining and manufacture of iron, either, but the great iron-producing ages of Western Europe and the United States were still in the dim future. So backward was Britain in iron production that, at the opening of the American Revolution, even the thirteen colonies were producing more iron than Britain. Britain had tried to encourage colonial American production of pig and bar iron for export to Britain, but the colonies used most of the little iron they produced themselves and no significant amounts reached the British Isles.⁷ What iron Britain did produce herself was termed "coarse, hard and brittle."⁸ The British Empire, America included, got its quality iron from Sweden and Russia. These two produced the most and best iron in the world.⁹

The reasons for the dominance of this field by these two countries, usually thought of as on the periphery of the industrial revolution of the last decades of the eighteenth century, lie in the fact that the industrial revolution had not yet taken hold of iron-making. Charcoal was still necessary for the smelting of iron, and the primitive techniques then used would produce quality iron only from the very highest grade ore. These facts made it essential to have large forests near very rich mines if you wanted good iron in any quantity. Sweden and Russia were among the few places on earth that combined these two characteristics.¹⁰

The American iron mines thus far discovered were near the seacoast, where all the forests had been razed, and their ore was not of high quality, anyway. And any American iron coming from the interior was hard put to compete with Baltic iron because of the appalling condition of American roads. They were so bad that Daniel Webster claimed, during the debates

about the tariff of 1824, that freight costs from Philadelphia to a point fifty miles inland were no less than from the Baltic to that port. He added that Russian and Swedish wages were very much lower than American wages, with the result that the price of their iron was low. All this meant that, for practical purposes, Philadelphia was fifty miles away from an area where she could buy iron cheaper than she could in the United States.¹¹

Cables woven of iron wire would in the 1880's replace rope for bracing American masts, but meanwhile our masts stood on straining angles of hemp. America was, for most purposes, completely dependent on Russia for this rope fiber. Manila fiber from the Philippines was not yet popular. In fact, even after the introduction of manila, Russian hemp—strong and inelastic—was nearly as common aboard our lofty clippers in the 1850's as on our dumpy merchantmen of the 1780's.¹² In any case, our early imports from the Philippines were not rope fiber, but sugar, indigo, and coffee.¹³

Hemp had become essential to Great Britain as early as the sixteenth century, and, as she never raised enough for her own use, she had expected her colonies to supply her with it. At the establishment of Jamestown, hemp was in the list of goods recommended for production there. In New Plymouth, in 1639, a law was passed requiring each householder to plant a minimum amount of hemp.¹⁴ In 1681, when our Governor Culpeper complained of tobacco overproduction in Virginia, the British government suggested he encourage the growth of hemp instead.¹⁵ All in all, the British government and ten of our thirteen colonies offered, at one time or another, bounties for every ton of American hemp; but even at the time when the

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

bounties were most tempting, little hemp went from America to Britain. On the contrary, the colonies were importing hemp from abroad.¹⁶ Hemp, a crop that requires considerable labor in harvesting and preliminary preparation of the stalks by the farmer, was too time-consuming in labor-hungry America.¹⁷ Per man-hour, grain or rice or tobacco brought in more profit.

In the decades following the Revolution, some Americans thought that they might be able to raise their own hemp and perhaps even undersell the Russians on the world market, but this remained an idle dream. Hemp imports (all cordage imports aside) amounted to about 3,400 tons a year before 1800 and rose to a peak of 5,000 tons a year in the 1820's and 1830's.¹⁸ Americans making rope for maritime use employed Russian hemp nearly exclusively until long after the War of 1812.

Hemp used in rope manufacturing in Salem, Massachusetts, was so exclusively Russian that James Duncan Phillips, the Salem historian, tells us the story that in that port

St. Catherine's Day, the twenty-fifth of November, was the gala day of the rope maker. Little they knew about the saints in the Roman Catholic Calendar, but the idea that St. Catherine was the saint of spinsters, and that Catherine was the Empress of Russia, where most of the hemp then came from, got all mixed up and made November twenty-fifth a good day for rope spinners to celebrate. Russian and American flags were hung out, a procession paraded around the Common, the owners round about kept open house for their friends, and the tables were spread on the walks on the Common where the workmen celebrated with food and drink, song and story, late into the night.¹⁹

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The American View

Our dependence on Russia did not stem from an inability to raise hemp in the United States. Hemp could be grown practically anywhere in America, and the strands of American hemp were potentially as strong and durable as Russian. But when Congress asked the Secretary of the Navy in 1824 why our navy did not use more American hemp, the Secretary answered bluntly that "cables and cordage manufactured from it . . . are inferior in color, strength and durability to those manufactured from imported hemp, and consequently are not as safe or proper for use in the navy."²⁰

Experiments on board the "U.S. Constellation" in the 1820's proved that, at best, American hemp was perhaps as good as Russian for rigging, but similar experiments with two cables (or hawsers) made of American hemp aboard the "U.S. North Carolina" showed that common opinion was correct, that American hemp exposed to water did quickly lose a frightening proportion of its strength. When first brought on board, these cables were as strong or stronger than equivalent Russian cables. And after eighteen months the two cables looked sound, "but, on unlaying the rope and drawing the yarns," it was found, after trying twenty yarns of each separately, "that the yarns would not withstand on average a pull of over eighteen pounds apiece, although, when new, the yarns of either would have suspended at least 125 pounds."

American hemp was of poor quality because of the way it was processed. In hemp the valuable fibers are bound to each other and to the woody core of the stalk by a viscous gum, which must be dissolved before the fibers can be removed. In Kentucky, where most of American hemp was raised, and

nearly everywhere else in the United States, this gum was removed by dew-retting. In Russia hemp was water-retted (as, incidentally, it was in Connecticut, where, unfortunately, only insignificant amounts were raised).²¹

In dew-retting the hemp stalks, as soon as they are harvested, are spread on the ground thinly and left there three or four weeks, untended except for an occasional turning, exposed to all the vagaries of the weather. This does evaporate and leach away the objectionable gum, but it also weakens the hemp fibers and leaves them in a state that prevents effective impregnation of yarns made from them with tar. Ineffectively water-proofed rope is of little use and dangerously untrustworthy for maritime use. Dew-retting also leaves the staple rough, which slows its manufacture into rope. To these negative qualities was added the slovenly and unsorted state in which the Kentucky farmers sent their hemp to market.²²

Protectionists put a tariff on imported hemp in 1789 and, later, led by that Kentucky hemp farmer, Henry Clay, raised it as high as sixty dollars a ton, but seafarers were not persuaded to settle for American hemp²³ (and the attitude characterized by such tariffs kept the states' rights pot bubbling in New England until she turned from shipping to manufacturing for her main livelihood). In answering the congressional inquiry mentioned above about American hemp, the Navy Department quoted "a gentleman of experience" as saying, "I would not use cordage made from Kentucky yarn or hemp, even if I could procure it at one half the price of cordage made from Russia."²⁴

In Russia the harvested hemp was treated with great deference. Even in drying immediately after harvesting the stalks

were not permitted to lie on the ground but were hung on racks. After two days, unless the weather was warm enough to dry the stalks with no artificial help, the stalks were placed in a kiln. In either case, after three days the stalks were placed to ret or steep in a stream or pond, with weighted frames on top to insure that they would stay completely immersed. The clearer the water, the brighter and silkier would be the hemp.

After sufficient retting—about three weeks in warm water and five weeks or more in cold—the hemp was taken out and dried for no less than two weeks, followed by twenty-four hours in the kiln, or for as long as a whole winter, depending on the kind of finished product desired. Then the stalks were broken on a hand mill, the husk beaten off, and the remainder drawn through a wooden comb to unravel the fibers. The hemp was then stored in sheds, ready to be sorted.

The Russian processing of hemp was so slow and meticulous that much of it didn't reach the Russian ports to await West European customers until two years after it was sown. Russia's two great resources were cheap labor and patience.

Why did not the Kentuckians try to compete with the Russians? Water-retting certainly was not too intricate a technique, and the difference between the price of American dew-retted and Russian water-retted hemp must have been provocative.²⁶ Of course, water-retting in ponds and streams killed all the fish and any livestock that might drink there. And the steep water did stink like rotten eggs, which was considered unhealthy for slaves and twice as bad for whites. But the main explanation is probably that there just wasn't any demand for American water-retted hemp. Most American hemp went for rope to bind cotton bales. Since dew-retted hemp was good

enough for this, Southern planters would certainly pay no more for water-retted. As for producing water-retted hemp for the maritime market, sailors preferred Russian hemp to any and all American hemp, a centuries-old habit which would have taken unprofitably long to break.²⁶

If Russia's hemp could perhaps be called the sinews of America's ships, then Russia's linen sails, which caught and held the energy of the wind, were their indispensable and untiring muscles. The colonial history of flax in America and its manufacture into sailcloth (duck) is similar to that of hemp. The cultivation of both was artificially stimulated. In 1639, in New Plymouth the raising of flax, as well as of hemp, was required. And Governor Culpeper was urged to raise flax as well as hemp.²⁷

In maritime-minded New England, the manufacture of flax into sailcloth was greatly desired. For instance, in 1734, Connecticut promised a bounty of twenty shillings for every bolt of "well-wrought canvas or duck, fit for use . . . made of well-dressed, water-retted hemp or flax."²⁸ The colonial production of canvas, however, was never of any importance.²⁹

Soon after the Revolution, New England was again trying to subsidize the domestic production of sailcloth, but with no more than the usual results. A Boston canvas manufactory in 1791 did not earn 1 per cent profit above the bounty received from the state. Similar factories existed about this time in Exeter, Haverhill, Salem, Yarmouth, Strafford, Stamford, and Springfield in New England, but they all, Boston's included, had failed by 1795. Not for another generation would there be a viable American sailcloth industry.³⁰

The inability of the United States to produce its own duck

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The American View

and other linen textiles stemmed chiefly from the poor quality of its flax. Americans processed their flax in the same way as their hemp, separating the useful fibers from the gumminess of the stalk by dew-retting. When American flax was water-retted, again as in parts of Connecticut, its quality was equal to the best water-retted from abroad. Such methods, however, were the rare exception in the United States. When the Navy Department inquired why more American flax was not used in the making of its sails, it was told that "it appears to be the universal opinion of experienced men that the process of dew-retting flax diminishes its value and its weight, injures its color, and impairs its quality and strength."³¹

All of which left Americans importing their duck and finer linens. The young nation's clumsy processing of its flax served to reinforce the century-and-a-half-old habit of buying its linens overseas.

America's greatest source of linen was Russia. For example, in 1801, she imported from St. Petersburg alone 32,997 pieces of duck, 33,820 pieces of ravenstuck, 34,224 pieces of flem, and 860 pieces of drill.³²

Of the other goods imported from Russia, cordage, especially the great cables half a foot and more in diameter, was the most important. In 1800, for instance, we imported 11,883 hundred-weight of cordage from Russia, an amount impressive enough to imply that America was significantly dependent on Russia for finished cordage. Tallow and tallow candles were another important product brought from Russia. In the decade before the War of 1812, American tallow and soap makers used 600,000 pounds of foreign tallow a year. Between 1820 and 1830, imports of tallow rose to 1,100,000 pounds yearly. Tal-

low candles made in Russia and candles made in America from Russian tallow formed a noticeable part of our own exports. Bristles were yet another significant import from Russia. The hogs of Russia were the main foreign source of raw material for our brush makers. In the 1820's, our importation of bristles averaged 100,000 pounds a year, and rose to 500,000 pounds a year in the 1850's.³³

Other common entries in the manifests of ships returning from Russia were feathers to stuff the pillows of the wealthy; mats woven of the bark of the lime tree; eiderdown gathered by fishermen from what they called the Down Islands off the coasts of Greenland and Nova Zembla; animal skins; and linseed oil.³⁴

Young America, more than we have ever realized, was economically tied to Russia. In 1800, the average American blacksmith used either Swedish or Russian iron if called on to make anything finer or stronger than horseshoes or andirons; and the American sailor, possibly the most important individual in our young economy, thought twice—and twice again—before he took any craft without Russian rigging, cables, and sails beyond the harbor mouth. To an appreciable extent, the American economy survived and prospered because it had access to the unending labor and rough skill of the Russian muzhik.

1. John Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States* (London: J. Debrett, 1783), pp. 36-37, 52-53.

2. Source is conversation with Michael King, professional "Constitution" expert and ship model builder, of 22 Chestnut St., Charlestown, Massachusetts.

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The American View

3. *American State Papers: Class IV, Naval Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1834), I, 400.
4. Alex. J. Warden, *The Linen Trade, Ancient and Modern* (London: Longman, Green & Longman, Roberts & Green, 1864), p. 319.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 337; Tooke, *View of the Russian Empire*, III, 508.
6. Warden, *The Linen Trade*, p. 319.
7. Arthur C. Bining, *British Regulation of Colonial Iron Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), pp. 3, 122.
8. *The Dictionary of Merchandise and Nomenclature in All Languages for Use of Counting-Houses* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1805), p. 198.
9. *Ibid.*; Bining, *British Regulation of Colonial Iron Industry*, p. 122; Eli F. Heckscher, *An Economic History of Sweden* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 177; Wharton, *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, V, 781.
10. Heckscher, *Economic History of Sweden*, pp. 94-95; James Mavor, *An Economic History of Russia* (New York: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1925), I, 533.
11. Victor S. Clark, *History of Manufacturers in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1929), I, 299-300.
12. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), pp. 294-95.
13. John H. Reinhoehl (ed.), "Some Remarks on the American Trade: Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, 1806," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XVI (January, 1959), 104 n.
14. James F. Hopkins, *A History of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1951), pp. 6-7.
15. Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, 1681-85*, p. 160.
16. Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States*, I, 24; Hopkins, *History of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky*, p. 11.
17. John Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy, 1789-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 125.
18. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, I, 63; Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 235; Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States*, I, 326; *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, II, 39; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Ropemakers of Plymouth: A History of the Plymouth Cordage Company, 1824-1949* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), p. 8.
19. James Duncan Phillips, "The Salem Shipbuilding Industry Before 1812," *American Neptune*, II (October, 1942), 287-88.
20. *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, II, 27, 28, 29.
21. *Ibid.*, I, 246; II, 29-30, 38; III, 89-90; Hopkins, *History of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky*, p. 53.
22. *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, II, 28, 38.
23. Hopkins, *History of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky*, pp. 21, 80, 90; Hutchins, *American Maritime Industries*, p. 125.

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

24. *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, II, 28.
25. *Ibid.*, II, 29-30, 36.
26. Hopkins, *History of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky*, pp. 57-58.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7; Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, 1681-85*, p. 160.
28. Hemp was occasionally used to make duck, but this was rare. Sailcloth was almost always made of flax (*American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, II, 28). This was nearly exclusively the case until, starting in the times of interrupted trade immediately before the War of 1812, cotton duck came into use. The first cotton duck factory in the United States was established by Seth Bemis, of Watertown, Massachusetts, in 1809, but it wasn't until the second quarter of the century that cotton supplanted flaxen duck in America's merchant marine (Hutchins, *American Maritime Industries*, pp. 123-24). The U.S. Navy, however, still conservatively clung to flaxen canvas as superior, and continued buying it from Baxter Brothers of Dundee until 1914 (C. N. Parkinson, *The Trade Winds: A Study of British Overseas Trade during the French Wars, 1793-1815* [London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1948], p. 92).
29. Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States*, I, 35.
30. *Ibid.*, I, 373, 531, 549.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 289; *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, II, 28.
32. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 272.
33. *American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation* (Washington, D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1832-61), I, 269-482; Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States*, I, 301, 327, 492.
34. Joseph V. Bacon, *Memorandum Book, 1810-11* (Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts), pp. 137, 140.

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The Russian View

THREE GENERATIONS or so of West European historians whose minds never crossed the Oder have given most of us the impression that Russia was as hermetically sealed before Napoleon broke in as Japan before Perry. We picture Russia before 1812 as a dim region where peoples sat with hands in lap or wandered listlessly, except when tortured into violent activity by demons like Ivan the Terrible or Stephen Razin.

Now, it cannot be claimed that Russia under Catherine the Great was as full of innovation and vitality as England under George III, but it certainly was not somnolent. Before the industrial revolution caught West Europe and hurtled her forward at an unprecedented velocity, East Europe was in the vanguard in many ways. In the 1840's, Russia's Uralian iron mines and iron works would still be unfamiliar with the steam engine, but in 1800 Russia was producing better iron than Britain.¹

Nor was Russia isolated from the rest of creation. She was inextricably knotted into the skein of world trade. By the end of the eighteenth century the total of her imports and exports was in the vicinity of 100,000,000 rubles a year. Her exports went all over the world. She exported about 60,000 tons of hemp annually. One-third of her flax and linen cloth went abroad. Her grain was standard fare for those who dwelled to her west. Her forests supplied West Europe's navies with their timber, masts, and spars, and with pitch to calk their seams. Isinglass, beeswax, bristles, tallow, soap, linseed and hempseed and their oils, and even tobacco poured out of Russia to the world.²

Most of Russia's industries producing for export has been midwived by Peter the Great.³ One of his most successful ventures was the exploitation of the iron deposits in the Urals. As early as 1718, he had boosted Russia's production of iron as high as 6,641,000 poods. Peter also introduced modern techniques of manufacture of duck and other linens from Holland.⁴

Probably Peter's expulsion of the Swedes from the eastern coast of the Baltic was his greatest contribution to bringing Russia into world trade. Previously ships could only reach Muscovy through semi-arctic Archangel, which looked out on a sea called White for the very good reason that it was full of ice for not less than half the year. Now foreign vessels had the Baltic ports of Reval, Narva, Riga, and St. Petersburg to trade with. These ports were icebound two months or so less a year than Archangel,⁵ had many more docks, warehouses, and other facilities for traders, and also had the advantage of being hundreds of miles closer to both West Europe's and Russia's

economic centers of gravity. By 1800, 70 per cent of Russia's foreign trade went on through her Baltic ports.⁶

Most important of the cities of this newly Russian coast was St. Petersburg. In 1703, Peter founded it; and in 1721, he ordered that the factories of the foreign merchants be established there. His ambitions for his city to be Russia's greatest port were well founded, and as St. Petersburg approached one hundred years of age it was handling half of all Russia's foreign trade. St. Petersburg's growth as a seaport was not easily managed. At the site of that city where the Neva River flows into the Gulf of Finland, the shore is low (which made for wet cellars) and the water shallow. This is typical of the east Baltic coast, and the Neva is typical of rivers flowing into that sector of the Baltic—in fact, typical of any large river flowing into a shallow sea. It piles up at its mouth a permanent sand or mud bar. In our period this bar prevented all vessels that drew more than seven or eight feet of water from coming up to St. Petersburg.⁷ Thus, though tsars might order St. Petersburg to become a great and magnificent city, which it did, they could never make it into a proper seaport.

The solution to the problem was Kronstadt, which played Piraeus to St. Petersburg's Athens. Some twenty miles down the gulf from St. Petersburg, on the other side of the bar, is the island of Retusari. On this island was built the port of Kronstadt, and at this port moored practically all vessels which came to trade with St. Petersburg. Between Kronstadt and St. Petersburg shuttled a constant procession of shallow-drafted, cargo-laden galliots, permitting the foreigner and the merchant of St. Petersburg to deal with one another, although direct consummation of their business was impossible.⁸

One of the features most attractive to traders about St. Petersburg and the other Russian ports was bracking. Bracking was the official inspection and sorting into different grades of the goods for export. To be noted for honest and efficient bracking was a great advantage to a port. As each bracker inspected and graded merchandise, he guaranteed his honesty and judgment by affixing his name to the inspected articles: the casks of tallow or oil by stamping, the flax by a lead tally attached with a string, the hemp by a wooden tally placed inside the bale. Thus, if a bracker let some inferior merchandise slip by or rated some as of higher quality than it truly was, he could be brought to answer. If the charges against him were proven, he would be liable to severe punishment.⁹

The goods that St. Petersburg and her sister ports sent to the west came from every part of European Russia and even from Siberia. Hemp-growing was widespread, but this fiber was chiefly raised in the Ukraine and the provinces to its immediate east. Flax, which was hemp's only peer for value and quantity as a Russian export, was also widely cultivated, but came mainly from north-central European Russia: the area around Novgorod, Carelia, Polotzk, Vologda, Viatka, Yaroslav, and Kostroma. Concentrated in that area was, logically, the manufacturing of the flax into cloth, although—in a fashion recommended for driving economic historians mad—it was also sprinkled elsewhere. Duck manufacturing was, of course, typical of the seaports. Historically, the weaving of linen had been done in the households of the peasants, but of late the merchants were setting up factories. By 1804, there were 285 of these.¹⁰ The old domestic production went right on, however. Joseph V. Bacon, an American in Archangel just before the

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The Russian View

War of 1812, mentions that diaper, a kind of linen usually white and having a simple pattern, came "not from the regular manufactory workmanship . . . , " but "from the country people. . . ." ¹¹

Iron, the other big American import from Russia in our period, came chiefly from the Ural Mountains, the farthest march of Europe and the rough forested edge of central Asia. By 1800, Russia was sending out through the Baltic and White Seas about 40,000 tons of iron a year. ¹²

Russian iron came not in ingots, but—like Swedish—in variegated forms: handy small flat pieces of various conformations, various lengths of bar iron of several different shapes. Bacon says the usual bar was three inches broad, half an inch thick, and varied in length from eight to twelve feet, but also mentions some square, round, and octagonal in cross-section, and some as long as twenty-four feet. ¹³ Having all these various sizes and shapes of iron available was a great convenience for the blacksmith, which you can appreciate if you imagine yourself given a choice between making a wagon wheel rim from a long bar half an inch thick or from an ingot.

Of the other goods with which Russia supplied the west, the oak and the fir and the tall straight trunks that carried Europe's sails to the ends of the earth were originally cut on the shores of the Baltic and, when the best trees there had been razed, from farther and farther west and south. Grain and bristles came largely from the southern steppes, though, of course, wheat and hogs were raised all over Russia. Cattle, whose slaughter supplied Russia with hides, tallow, salted beef, glue, and even bones for export, were especially plentiful in the Ukraine. From the Ukraine great cattle herds were annually driven to

Moscow, St. Petersburg, Reval, and Riga.¹⁴ Russia had her cattle drives, cowboys, rustlers, stampedes, and all the rest that we consider so distinctively American.

Russia's main commercial problem was, as it was with contemporary America, one of internal transportation: cattle could walk to market, but how to transport goods like hemp, flax, and iron, whose weight and bulk are so great in proportion to their value, across the practically interstellar distances of Russia? It was done as it had been done for a thousand years and probably ten times that: by taking advantage of Russia's rivers, her relative lack of mountain chains, and her plentiful cheap labor. The Dnieper, Don, Volga, Dvina, Volkhov were the arteries of Russia and—to strain an analogy—caravans of wagons and sledges were her capillaries. By the utilization of these, goods were carried amazing distances from producer to customer. An example came to the incredulous notice of British merchants trading British woolens to China for tea. They discovered that they were in competition with fellow Britons shipping woolens to St. Petersburg. These woolens were being landed at St. Petersburg, then carried to Moscow to Tobolsk to Irkutsk to Kiakta, and exchanged there for Chinese tea, which traveled to St. Petersburg by the same route.¹⁵

In the winter Russia was alive with lines of horse- or cattle-drawn sledges sliding and crunching along the hard white highways nature had provided. These caravans distributed imports throughout the interior and carried goods to be exported either to the ports or to places on the rivers called *pristans*, where freight was gathered in the winter to be floated down to the ports in the spring.¹⁶ George Coggeshall, captain of an American vessel frozen in for the winter of 1810-11 at

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The Russian View

Riga, described these caravans as being composed of twenty or thirty one-horse or one-“steer” (ox?) conveyances, with one man and a boy in charge

of the whole caravan; the man rides and drives the leading horse, all the others follow in a direct line, while the boy brings up the rear, and so they follow another by night and day; the drivers clothed in sheepskins and nestled in straw. . . . The price of horned cattle and horses is extremely low, while the wages of the peasants and working classes are merely nominal; consequently, the transportation of goods from place to place, even at a great distance, must be very reasonable.¹⁷

Reasonable, indeed! It was less expensive, for example, to ship freight by these sledges from Moscow to the Baltic than the equivalent distance by sea. Compare this with the cost of freighting by land in the United States, as described above by Daniel Webster.

When spring freed the rivers from ice, the traffic to the sea began. Hemp, flax, tallow, timber came floating down (or painfully up) the great rivers. The most impressive is the thousand-mile journey of iron from the Urals to the Baltic. From the mines and shops in the mountains it has been dragged, slid, rolled, and generally roughnecked to the banks of the Kama River. It is loaded on barks (we would call them barges) and floated down the Kama, to the Volga, then up the Volga. (Tow several tons of iron up a river by the strength of your back, and the dreary chant of “The Volga Boatmen” becomes much more meaningful.) Where the Volga forks in its upper reaches, the iron-laden barks are towed into the Vishney Volotshok Canal. Once through this canal, the need

for constant towing ceases, for the river system is all downhill to Lake Ladoga, from which the Neva flows to St. Petersburg and the sea.

This canal of Vishney Volotshok, similar in its importance and geographical position to the Erie Canal of Jacksonian America, was the pivot point of Russia's internal waterways. By means of this canal, goods could pass from the Caspian to the Baltic without a single portage. Through it passed the principal part of the trade of the Empire. It was cut through the low crest from which the flat lands that are European Russia fall away toward the oceans. South and east of that crest the vast expanse of Russia's grasslands tilt almost imperceptibly toward the Black and Caspian seas, and all the rivers flow inevitably into those two. To the north and west the land slips down toward the Baltic and Arctic seas, and all rivers, no matter how they may twist or hide themselves in swamps, flow toward waters where western ships awaited cargoes.

Those who think that Russia was locked in sleep in the eighteenth century will, we hope, forgive a few dry statistics: in 1797, through the Vishney Volotshok Canal passed 3,958 barks, 382 half-barks, 248 one-masted vessels, and 1,676 floats (rafts?), laden with 8,403,014 poods, 1,618,819 chetverts,¹⁸ and 12,239.5 barrels. Tolls for that year amounted to 34,194 rubles.

The ubiquitous vessel of the Vishney Volotshok and the river systems which it joined was the bark. Perfectly flat bottomed, sometimes of great length, and usually no more in depth than four feet, it was constructed to carry one hundred to four hundred tons, and yet it very rarely drew more than thirty inches of water. The rudder was simply a long tree trunk used

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The Russian View

like an oar. The bark was constructed of the longest fir planks available and braced with timbers crudely fashioned from boughs and roots whose curves suited them to such use. The bark was created with little care and little expense—one hundred to three hundred rubles—because its life was short. After the long trip to St. Petersburg or Riga or Archangel, it was usually broken up and sold for firewood, seldom bringing more than twenty or thirty rubles.¹⁹

When Americans finally won the Mississippi Basin from the Spanish, French, British, Indians, and wilderness, they found themselves with the same transportation problem as the Russians. Until the coming of steamboats and railroads, nature dictated to Midwesterners (then Far Westerners) the same solution as she had to Russians. Farmers in the region of Pittsburgh, for instance, who wanted to send their produce out to the world market built themselves a kind of rough barge or raft, put aboard their goods and a crew of two or three adolescents and maybe one or two men who had made the trip before, pushed the whole ramshackle conglomeration of barge, wheat, flour, pork, and gangling sons into the waters of the Ohio, and waved goodbye. Four to six weeks and 1,950 miles later, if all went well, the barge reached New Orleans, where its contents were sold, and the barge itself broken up and peddled as lumber. As a young man Abraham Lincoln made two such trips to New Orleans, one from Indiana and one from Illinois.²⁰ At that time he would have felt much more comfortable aboard a Volga bark than on one of those new spark-spitting steam boats.

Of all the great nations of Europe, Russia probably could have best survived if all foreign trade had been cut off. Russian

society was a vast ocean of serfs in which a tiny number of aristocrats and bourgeoisie sported like minnows. To the serf foreign trade meant little. He probably had never seen, much less consumed, coffee, tea, or sugar. Money meant little to him. That which he ate and the rough garments he wore were the products of his own labor and that of his fellow peasants. If all the world outside Russia had been suddenly cut off, it would have brought no overwhelming change to his life. He would have had to give up hemp and flax as major crops because the market for them would have disappeared, and this dislocation might have brought, let us say, three rather than two famines in his lifetime, but nothing to which he wasn't already inured. Like most things that live in and of the soil—like rabbits and grass and bears—he had a high survival quotient.

On the other hand, foreign trade made a world of difference to the nobility, who, after all, did run Russia. It probably made an even greater difference to the bourgeoisie, but they—a few merchants in a society still medieval—had influence only insofar as they could earn a noble's favor. To the Russian noble, trade with the West was essential because it was the only means he knew to maintain the kind of life he had come to consider as normal. The Russian noble wore English woollens, drank coffee from South America sweetened with sugar from Jamaica, dyed his kerchiefs with indigo from South Carolina, savored his meals with spices from Batavia and wines from France, and read Voltaire and Rousseau in the original. All these things came to him by foreign trade, and for these things he had to exchange his hemp, flax, iron, timber, etc., or hard cash brought to his coffers by trading in such goods. A cultured and comfortable nobility existed in Russia because the muzhik

raised enough hemp and flax and cattle, cut down enough trees, and scraped enough iron from the rocks of the Urals to pay for its keep.

The balance of trade was enormously in favor of Russia. Between 1793 and 1803, the balance in favor of Russia averaged about 400,000 pounds a year.²¹ The chief source of this favorable balance was Russia's chief customer, Great Britain.²² Great Britain, whose need for naval stores was insatiable, usually took from one-half to two-thirds of the whole export of St. Petersburg and this was probably true of the other Russian Baltic and White Sea ports, also. More often than not, Britain did not come to trade but simply to buy. In 1802, for instance, of the 971 British ships which came to Russia, 642 came in ballast. Of the 932 British ships that cleared Russian ports that year, only thirty-nine left unladen.²³ And Britain, standing her usual mercantilist policy on its head, made up in hard cash the vast difference in value between what she brought and what she took away. It was this specie from Britain, to a very great extent, that kept the Russian noble in comparative luxury.

Britain's crucial need for naval stores and Russia's sybaritic need for gold would always bring them together despite all political differences, like lust drawing together two sensualists despite disparate backgrounds and mutual dislike.

1. Peter I. Lyashchenko, *History of the National Economy of Russia to the 1917 Revolution* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 421.

2. H. E. Ronimois, *Russia's Foreign Trade and the Baltic Sea* (London: Boreas Publishing Co., Ltd., 1946), p. 11; Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 70, 80; Mavor, *Economic History of Russia*, I, 532; Warden, *The*

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

Linen Trade, p. 319; Robert G. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy, 1652-1862* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), *passim*.

3. Lyashchenko, *History of the National Economy of Russia*, p. 296.

4. Mavor, *Economic History of Russia*, I, 533; Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 84. The pood is equal to 36.113 pounds, although it might have been, at this time, as much as several pounds lighter or heavier depending upon the section of Russia.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

6. Ronimois, *Russia's Foreign Trade*, p. 11.

7. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 114; Ronimois, *Russia's Foreign Trade*, p. 11; Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 116; J. E. Worcester, *A Geographical Dictionary or Universal Gazetteer* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1823), II, 310.

8. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 116; Worcester, *A Geographical Dictionary*, p. 459.

9. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 195.

10. *Commerce of Rhode Island, 1726-1800* ("Publications of the Massachusetts Historical Society," Ser. 7, Vol. X [Boston: Plimpton Press, 1929]), II, 338; Lyashchenko, *History of the National Economy of Russia*, pp. 298, 331-32, 344; Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 80-84; Tooke, *View of the Russian Empire*, III, 279, 507-9; Warden, *The Linen Trade*, pp. 322-23, 326; Mavor, *Economic History of Russia*, I, 532.

11. Joseph V. Bacon, *Memorandum Book*, p. 142.

12. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 73.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 299; Joseph V. Bacon, *Memorandum Book*, pp. 116-18; *Dictionary of Merchandise*, p. 198.

14. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, p. 139; Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 75, 89; Lyashchenko, *History of the National Economy in Russia*, p. 344.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 136; "Report Relative to the Trade with the East Indies and China from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to Inquire into the Means of Extending and Securing the Foreign Trade of the Country . . .," *Parliamentary Papers: 1821*, VII, 86.

16. *Commerce of Rhode Island*, II, 348; Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 69.

17. George Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages to Various Parts of the World Made between the Years 1802 and 1811* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1852), p. 98.

18. A chetvert is equal to 5.957 bushels.

19. Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 63, 67-70.

20. George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1951), pp. 56-57; Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1956), p. 5.

Hemp, Flax, and Iron: The Russian View

21. Warden, *The Linen Trade*, p. 321; see also "Rise and Progress of the Russian Trade, from Coxe," *Naval Chronicle for 1799*, II, 399-400.

22. In 1792, St. Petersburg exported 701,450 poods of tallow, of which Britain took 527,480. In 1784, Russia exported 50,000 tons of iron through the White and Baltic seas, of which Britain took 40,000. In the years around 1800, Russia usually exported about 60,000 tons of hemp a year, of which Britain took from 35,000 to 40,000 tons. In 1803, Russia exported about 15,000 tons of flax, of which nearly 10,000 went to Britain (Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 73, 80, 90, 120).

23. Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 120, 201.

A New Flag for the Old Trade

AS THE SPRING of 1783 unshackled Russia's rivers and eased the salt ice collars off the pilings of the wharfs at Kronstadt and Riga, the war in America was drawing to a close. Yankee ships could now sail the Atlantic without fear of the omnipotent and omnivorous British navy. Francis Dana, at this time still in St. Petersburg, confidently awaited the first arrival from the United States.¹

During the later years of our Revolution a few American vessels, hagridden by the fear that every sail on the horizon might be a British frigate, slipped across the Atlantic to Sweden, took on board hemp, iron, and linens, and returned home by the same scary route. The Scandinavians were, of course, happy to replace the British as middlemen between America and Russia. Dana, writing in 1781, mentioned that the Swedes were making considerable profits by selling us Russian products.² Surprisingly, no American captain thought it worth his while to venture to Russia itself.

On the twelfth of June in 1783, a ship of 500 tons sailed into

A New Flag for the Old Trade

the harbor of Riga and dropped anchor. As the tide pivoted her around her mooring, the Russians on the waterfront could see clearly the banner that she flew—a strange device of stars and horizontal red and white stripes.

She was a Boston ship come up from Lisbon with a cargo of salt, rice, sugar, chests of fruit, and a few hogsheads of brandy. Hers had been a triangular voyage and, excepting the salt and brandy, she came loaded with tropical goods. Her captain, Daniel McNeill, only lately shifted from privateering to trading, grasped the principles of the embryonic Russian trade as well as did Francis Dana.

The name of McNeill's ship is now unknown. Where she went after Riga is also a mystery. She loaded with hemp and sailed off, but the *Boston Gazette* contains no mention of her ever arriving home, and the Danish Sound records, though they mention her passage to Russia, do not record that she ever returned.³

If she sank in the Baltic, she did nothing so romantic as to sink with all hands. Daniel McNeill survived long after 1783, commanding U.S. naval vessels in the quasi-war with France of the late 1790's and in the Tripolitan War that followed shortly after. His latter decades he spent on shore; and when he died in 1833, he was more noted for shrewd real estate investments than for marine derring-do. At his funeral no one, apparently, rose to eulogize him as the seaman who, fifty years before, had first unfurled the flag of the United States in a Russian port.⁴

McNeill commanded the first United States vessel to go to Russia, but was by no means the first United States citizen to arrive in Russia looking for a chance to turn a dollar. Jeremiah

Allen, a merchant of Boston, arrived in 1783 when the ground was still soggy with melting snow. He disembarked at Riga in May and came up to St. Petersburg in the middle of June,⁵ full of initiative, ambition, and Yankee acquisitiveness. He apparently had the proper letters of credit and appears to have favorably impressed the proper people, because when the ship "Kingston," under Captain Norwood,⁶ cleared Kronstadt in that year, she was loaded with goods under his name. The "Kingston" reached Boston on the twentieth of December, 1783 (possibly with both Allen and Francis Dana aboard⁷), and unloaded a cargo of linens, cables and cordage, hemp, and iron.⁸

Jeremiah Allen bought space in the *Boston Gazette* of the following twenty-seventh of January to advertise the goods he had brought back from Russia. (Those interested were invited to come to a location with the simple address "the stone house above the chapel.") At the end of the ad, Allen mentioned, with a touch of wholesome pride, that he had friends in St. Petersburg. He offered "every possible information . . . if any gentleman inclines to send a ship that way. . . ." More than one gentleman would so incline.

The year 1783 had been one of small beginnings. Only two vessels sailed from St. Petersburg for America;⁹ and if any other American vessels than McNeill's arrived in Russia, the information is well hidden from the historian's spade. In 1784, a few more decided to chance the unfamiliar markets and water of the Baltic. In June, three American vessels passed through the Danish Sound on their way to Russia, one from Boston by way of Amsterdam, one from Philadelphia via Cadiz, and one direct from Salem. Their cargoes were typical

A New Flag for the Old Trade

of those America would be sending to Russia for the next three-quarters of a century: sugar, indigo, rice, dyewood and, less significantly, a few pipes of wine and hogsheads of rum.¹⁰

Far behind these three vessels came the American bark "Light Horse," not passing Elsinore on the Danish Sound until the seventeenth of July.¹¹ Salem, Massachusetts, was her home port and Nehemiah Buffington her captain. She was the property of Elias Hasket Derby, who before his death was to become Salem's, and one of America's, richest citizens. It is not known whether Derby discussed plans for this voyage with Jeremiah Allen or not. It is certainly likely that they knew each other. In any case, in mid-June Derby dispatched the "Light Horse," loaded with sugar, out of Salem harbor for St. Petersburg. With cargo she was worth eight thousand pounds—a pretty hostage to give to the wind and seas and the wiles of St. Petersburg's merchants.¹² She survived the wind and waves with ease, but the intricacies and fluctuations of the market in Russia were too much for her. The "Light Horse" returned home with a profitable cargo of hemp, duck, and iron, but the market for sugar in Russia had been limited, and she had been obliged to sell her cargo at a loss. Salem marked this voyage as a partially successful and provocative experiment, and probably never noticed that it was the first direct and unbroken voyage by a United States vessel to and from Russia.¹³ (Or at least the first we know about.)

Commerce between the United States and Russia had completed its humble and uncertain debut. No more were foreigners to monopolize that trade, although they would, of course, continue to take part in it. In the 1780's, when America was weak and not yet free economically from England's apron

strings, England played quite an important part in this trade.¹⁴ Scandinavia would continue in its role as the logical halfway house for Russo-American trade. Swedish and Danish vessels with Russian goods aboard would be common arrivals in our ports. For the rest of the eighteenth century most American vessels would find it more convenient to stop in Gothenburg and Copenhagen and trade for Russian goods there.¹⁵ The market for the products we were peddling was surer in Scandinavia than in Russia, and Russian goods were nearly as plentiful there as in the country of their origin.

But Russo-American trade had irrevocably begun. Merchants—Muscovite and Yankee—had met and politely sounded the depth of each other's purse. And they had agreed to do business.

1. Wharton, *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, VI, 249.

2. Cresson, *Dana*, p. 244; James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: Colonial Years* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 218.

3. Letter from Francis Dana to Robert Livingston, 13 June 1783, O.S., St. Petersburg, in *Letters of John Jay and Francis W. Dana*, Vol. II, in *National Archives, Papers of the Continental Congress*; Rigsarkivet, Rigsdagsgarden, Copenhagen, Denmark, Sundtolreg 1783, 1. bd. 2, p. 357.

4. "Daniel McNeill," *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), XII, 149-50.

5. Francis Dana to Robert Livingston 19 May 1783, O.S., St. Petersburg, in *Dana Papers* (Massachusetts Historical Society); Dana to Livingston, 13 June 1783, O.S., St. Petersburg, in *Letters of John Jay and Francis W. Dana*, Vol. II, in *Papers of the Continental Congress*.

6. Despite the English or American ring to the names "Kingston" and "Norwood," her port of registry was St. Petersburg. She was probably an English ship operating under a Russian flag. Rigsarkivet, Rigsdagsgarden, Copenhagen, Denmark, Sundtolreg, 2. Vol. 2, p. 287; no. 292.

7. The *Boston Gazette*, 15 December 1783, says Dana and Allen returned on the ship "Empress of Russia." Cresson's biography of Dana says

A New Flag for the Old Trade

Dana returned on the "Kingston" (Cresson, *Dana*, p. 318). The *Boston Gazette*, 27 January 1784, says, "Jeremiah Allen has brought with him in the ship *Kingston* . . .," which would seem to indicate that he came on the "Kingston."

8. *Boston Gazette*, 22 December 1783; 27 January 1784.

9. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 271.

10. Rigsarkivet, Rigsdagsgarden, Copenhagen, Denmark, Sundtolreg, 1784, nr. 2, 1. bind, p. 248^r, 366^v.

11. N. Fenwick to E. H. Derby, 19 July 1784, Elsinore, in Derby Papers, Letters 1769-1788, Vol. XIII (Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts).

12. Freeman Hunt, *Lives of American Merchants* (New York: Office of Hunt's Merchants' Magazine, 1856), II, 52.

13. James D. Phillips, "Salem Opens American Trade with Russia," *New England Quarterly*, XIV (December, 1941), 686.

14. Emory R. Johnson, et al., *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1915), I, 126.

15. Phillips, "Salem Opens American Trade with Russia," p. 688.

Making and Learning the Rules

THE 1780's WERE NOT A GOLDEN AGE for American merchants. Great Britain, delighted at the prospect of devouring her young, subjected the thirteen United States to the grinding commercial competition they had hitherto avoided by being part of her empire. So outclassed was America in such a contest that John Adams wrote from Europe in 1785, "The Britons boast, that all the prophecies of the loss of the American trade from the independence of the United States, have proved false . . . : that Britain has monopolized our trade beyond credibility."¹

Adams had been listening to the likes of Lord Sheffield, who advised Britain that she could completely absorb America's trade with the Baltic if she wanted. America, he said, produced nothing to sell to the countries of the Baltic, and therefore—by allowing drawbacks on tariffs on goods from that area which were to be re-exported—Britain could give Americans a better deal on Baltic iron, hemp, and linens than could the original producers.²

The greedy lord was correct in guessing that Britain was still

Making and Learning the Rules

the natural emporium for American trade with the Baltic and Russia. A large proportion of Russian goods coming into the United States in the eighties came through Britain or came in British bottoms. But a narrow file of American vessels continued to keep direct Russo-American trade alive, broaching tides of competition every bit as challenging as those of the North Atlantic. These American ships never plied Russian waters in great numbers in the eighties, but as the decade passed their number increased rather than decreased.³

The men who manned these ships performed the essential, but not necessarily profitable, task of pioneering the trade, of discovering which mercantile houses were the most trustworthy, which goods were the easiest to peddle. These pioneers performed this task so well that by 1790 the general outlines of the trade were already firmly sketched. For the next half century Americans in the trade with Russia would follow the patterns and techniques discovered by the McNeills and Buffingtons.

The first task of these pathfinders had been to discover products that would appeal to Russian tastes. John Paul Jones, now in the service of Catherine the Great, wrote from her man-of-war "Wolodimer" to the Marquis de La Fayette in 1788 that the United States could increase its trade with Russia by offering whale oil, dried fish, spermaceti, and rice.⁴ Luckily, American merchants relied on their own calculations rather than on the wisdom exchanged between such fierce and unbusiness-like warriors. Of Jones' list, only rice had a good market in Russia.

A solution to the problem of catering to the tastes of Russians had already been reached on paper by Francis Dana. Ship

them tropical goods, he said. The experiments of the 1780's confirmed Dana's theorizing. In 1787, Anto. Fr. Thiringk, a St. Petersburg merchant whose knowledge of trade exceeded his knowledge of English, wrote to an opposite number in Rhode Island, "The most properest articles . . . suitable at this market, are St. Domingo sugars of a bright and white grain that's substantial, also small blue beand coffee and best St. Domingo indigo, which sells readily here. . . . Rice is also made use of here." ⁵

Of these goods, rice and indigo alone were grown in the United States. Cotton was the only other domestic product that Americans would sell Russians in significant amounts before the War of 1812, and that product hardly figured at all in the trade before 1809.⁶ The others on Thiringk's list, plus dye-woods, another item popular in the trade, were native to the tropics and semi-tropics. The great bulk of our shipments to Russia, therefore, were of foreign origin. In 1805, for example, we sent Russia only \$12,044 worth of domestic products as compared with \$59,328 of articles of foreign origin.⁷

The chief source of these products was the West Indies (Thiringk's "St. Domingo"), the pivot point of so much of our overseas trade. To be sure, many of the articles exported by the United States to Russia came from elsewhere—pepper from the East Indies, tea and nankeens from China, gums and drugs from Arabia, spices and dyestuffs from India ⁸—but the great bulk of the staples of the trade came from the islands that shield the Caribbean from the Atlantic.

Beyond stating the crucial importance of West Indian products, it is difficult to generalize about Russo-American commerce. *Average* and *typical* are dangerous words to apply to any

Making and Learning the Rules

part of that labyrinthine intercourse. For instance, any given American vessel that cleared for Russia on a triangular voyage usually stopped to pick up a cargo in the West Indies, but the snow "Vigilant" went to Russia via the Isle of France in the Indian Ocean on a voyage in the mid-1790's.⁹ Any given vessel returning from Russia might possibly put into a North European port for a few days, but otherwise would sail directly home. In a voyage in 1811-12, the ship "John" returned to Salem from Archangel via Lisbon, Pernambuco and Bahia.¹⁰

Typically defiant of classification is the cargo of the brig "Hopewell" that cleared Salem for Russia in 1798. The vessel carried coffee from Santo Domingo, Dutch Guiana, the Isle of France, and Java, and sugar from Calcutta. Two barks, five brigs, two schooners, and one ketch had sailed to those far reaches of the world and back in order to make up the cargo of the "Hopewell."¹¹ (In order that the Tsar of all the Russias might relieve the daily round of protocol with a good, hot, sweet cup of coffee).

At least as numerous as the sources of our exports to Russia were the destinations of those goods we brought back from Russia and exported as our own property. Russian iron, linens, cordage, tallow, candles—essential items in any clime—were standard entries in bills of lading of American vessels bound for every quarter of the world.¹²

A small portion of our Russian re-exports went back across the Atlantic to such southern European ports as Lisbon and Bilbao. Most went to the world outside Europe. Madeira Island was glad to exchange her wine for Russian cloth. The Cape of Good Hope was almost always a good market for iron, duck, ravensduck, and cordage. The same was true of the Isle

of France and Bourbon, eight hundred leagues or so beyond the Cape on the way to the Far East. Madras and Calcutta took lots of iron and an assortment of other Russian products. America sent tons and tons of Swedish and Russian iron to China. Batavia, the great port of Java, was such a good market for iron, and, to a lesser extent, cordage and duck, that America's East India merchants characteristically carried on trade with Russia as well, so as to reduce payments to middlemen.¹³

The West Indies, as always of crucial importance in any kind of American overseas commerce, took great quantities of our Russian goods: iron, cordage, candles, tallow, and all types of linens from sailcloth to bedticks. The cargo of the ship "Fanny," Captain Wellman, that cleared Salem for Havana in December, 1797, is as typical as any. The "Fanny" had in her hold nine cables, one hundred and thirteen coils of cordage, twenty bales of merchandise (linens?), one hundred and fifty bars of iron, two feather-beds, ten casks of oil (probably linseed or hemp oil), one box of hair powder, and ten packs of sheeting—all products of Russian manufacture. The "Fanny" herself had brought all but the sheeting from Russia.¹⁴

The same vessel that had brought from Russia that extra sheeting, brought another ten bales of the same which were shipped to Boston to fill out the cargo of the ship "Eliza," Captain Rowan. This vessel sailed from Boston in 1798 to trade with the Indians on the Northwest coast of America, the area now comprising Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.¹⁵ The arrival of the "Eliza" off that coast thus gave the Nootka Indian the choice of trading his sea otter skins for Russian cloth brought around the Horn by Captain

Making and Learning the Rules

Rowan—or for Russian sheeting brought across the marches of Siberia, over the Bering Straits into Alaska, and down the coast by Russian traders who were extending Russia's empire into America in those years.

Meanwhile, at St. Petersburg, the other geographical and social extreme of the Russian Empire (where the Tsar's coffee has been growing cold), Americans were still improvising solutions to the chronic problem of our trade with Russia: what had we to offer in exchange for Russia's products? Very, very few Russians had even one hundredth of the income of the Tsar or his taste for coffee and sugar or any of the other goods Americans could bring. Thomas Ward, a Yankee trading at Kronstadt in 1802, judged that the inhabitants of that city lived "chiefly on black bread and salt, except officers and merchants."¹⁶ A decade later John Quincy Adams wrote from Russia that the consumption of "colonial [i.e., tropical] merchandise in this country is very small, and scarcely sufficient to afford a market for fifty vessels a year."¹⁷

Elias Hasket Derby's seminal experiment of sending the "Light Horse" out to Russia in 1784 freighted with sugar had established the truth of Adams' statement thirty years before the statement was made. The Russian market for sugar had been too dull for Derby to turn a profit on the cargo. If he and his fellows were to make extensive purchases in Kronstadt and Riga, most of them would have to find something more suited to the Russian market than colonial goods. Otherwise, Russo-American trade would be simply an exercise in communal bankruptcy.

There were innumerable ways which Americans improvised to skin this particular cat. For instance, Martin Page, master

and supercargo of the ship "Arthur," cleared Providence for St. Petersburg on 8 June 1804 with a cargo of beef and flour. Twenty-six days later, he anchored in Lisbon and exchanged his foodstuffs for Spanish dollars, and *then* sailed to St. Petersburg.¹⁸ Specie was never a glut on even Russia's finicky market.

A more typical solution—in fact, the standard solution to the problem—was yet another variety of the Yankee's favorite mercantile technique, triangular trade. The Yankee made Russia the far apex of a triangle (or a square, or a pentagon, or a . . .) which had as an intermediate point some North European port. In the ten years preceding 1807, about one hundred American vessels a year passed through the Danish Sound and into the Baltic. Of these, about 50 per cent had first discharged their cargoes at ports on the North Sea.¹⁹

For any given American vessel bound for Russia, the intermediate port might be French or Dutch, or perhaps London, Bristol, or Falmouth. Hamburg was more likely. Sweden's Gothenburg or Denmark's Copenhagen were more likely still. Unlike Kronstadt and Riga, all these ports had hinterlands populated by folk many of whom had the income and taste for products of the New World. At these North European ports the Americans would trade their cargoes for letters of credit of mercantile houses known and respected by the merchants of Russia. Typical of sailing orders written by American merchants to their captains bound for Russia was that of Christopher Champlin, of Newport, to Captain Bailey in 1792:

You being the master of my brig Bayonne, are to observe the following instructions. Proceed with all dispatch to Copenhagen, when you arrive, deliver your cargo into the hands of

Making and Learning the Rules

Messrs. Ryberg and Company merchants there, to whom you are consigned. Balast your vessel with dispatch, and proceed to St. Petersburg, taking with you Messrs. Ryberg and Company letter of credit upon the House of Messrs. Edward James Smith and Company to furnish you on my account with Russian goods. . . .²⁰

Often Americans, come as far as the edge of the Baltic seeking Russian goods, went no further. Gothenburg and Copenhagen were good markets for our sugar, coffee, rice, and tobacco. Sweden could offer hemp, sailcloth, and linens of her own growth and manufacture as well as quantities of these goods imported from Russia. More important, she could offer Swedish iron, which was at least equal in quality to Russia's, and reputed by many to be superior.²¹ Copenhagen, one of the great entrepôts of the world, could supply American buyers with iron, hemp, duck, ravensduck, cordage, flems, tallow, etc., almost as readily as could Kronstadt or Riga. Some of the linen was of Danish manufacture. All else was imported from Sweden, Prussia, Russia, and elsewhere in central and eastern Europe.²²

Those American vessels that persevered and sailed on to buy Russian goods at their source rather than haggle with Scandinavian middlemen were quite courteously received—and no wonder. Britain was Russia's best customer, but by the first decade of the nineteenth century few other nations could top the United States' claim to be Russia's second best customer. For instance, in 1803, United States vessels took from St. Petersburg 315,452 poods of clean hemp, little enough compared with the 1,313,912 poods with which British vessels sailed off. However, *all* the purchases of clean hemp of *all* the

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

other nations that traded with St. Petersburg that year only amounted to 239,268 poods! A similar situation existed in the distribution of some of St. Petersburg's other important exports in 1803:

	Iron (poods)	Ravensduck (pieces)	Sailcloth (pieces)	Broad Diaper (archines)
Exported in British ships	1,665,496	85,943	160	75,976
Exported in U.S. ships . .	413,822	10,651	32,653	239,365
Exported in ships of all other nations	117,216	11,048	27,228	7,087

The United States took none at all of certain of Russia's leading exports—in 1803, British ships took 1,982,454 deals of lumber from St. Petersburg and American vessels took not one stick—but there can be no doubt that the arrival of ships from the United States had become by 1803 a very important detail in Russia's economy.²³

American buyers were desired in Russia not alone because of the size of their purchases but also because of the fashion in which they paid for them. As we have already seen, Americans habitually did their selling somewhere else and came to Russia only to buy. In 1804, sixty-six American vessels arrived at St. Petersburg, of which only eighteen were fully loaded, nine were not quite fully loaded, and thirty-nine were but partially loaded or completely in ballast.²⁴ The United States was just the sort of trading partner most dear to the heart of the Russian mercantilist. In 1795, to pick an average year, America sent \$69,221 worth of goods to Russia . . . and received in exchange \$1,168,715 worth! ²⁵

Making and Learning the Rules

Carrying on a commerce *that* far from being simple barter called for rather complicated financial transactions. The fact that several different nationalities using several different and fluctuating currencies participated in this commerce snarled the tangled skein of its transactions just that much more. American merchants, strictly small fry in the field of international finance, conducted their business with Russia through the medium of the great banking and mercantile institutions of Europe. The houses of John Parish and Company of Hamburg and Messrs. Ryberg and Company of Copenhagen played important roles as brokers of Russo-American trade. Of ever-increasing importance in that trade were such powerful British institutions as the House of Baring.²⁶ London was building herself into the international banking capital of the world in those years.

The anglophilic tendencies of our trade with Russia were reinforced by the presence of Englishmen in influential positions in the ports of Russia herself. Russians, having neither capital nor mercantile experience, depended to a great extent on foreigners to conduct their overseas trade for them.²⁷ As England was the greatest maritime trader of the world and Russia's best customer, most of these foreigners were Englishmen,²⁸ which explains why Americans come to Kronstadt to buy Russian goods found themselves dealing with mercantile houses with such un-Slavic names as Blandow and Company, Edward James Smith and Company, Cramp and Company, and Gale, Hill, Cazalet, and Company.²⁹

Examples of British prominence in the trade of the Baltic can be found in every year and in every port. Elias Hasket Derby was told by agents in St. Petersburg in 1784 that drafts

on London were the most acceptable medium of purchase there.³⁰ In 1813, when Britain and all of Europe and the United States were at war, John March, an American in Gothenburg trying to send home remittances for American property sold in that port, made use of a London house to do so because, "I know of no other means by which remittances can be made . . . but by bills on London. . . ." ³¹ Like many Europeans, Americans must have sometimes felt that Britain was making up for her losses in the American Revolution by laying the commerce and coastlines of the world under tribute.

Still and all, there was enough profit left after the English had pared off fees for services and rental of capital to keep United States vessels coming to Russia. There must have been, because the men who owned those vessels and manned them were among the shrewdest traders in American history.

Most of them were Yankees, a people still known for their cognizance of the worth of a dollar. Of the thirty American vessels that cleared St. Petersburg in 1793, twenty-one had New England ports for destinations: ten for Boston, five for Salem, three for Providence, two for Newburyport, and one for Gloucester. The remaining nine comprised seven for Philadelphia and two for New York.³² In 1810, there were sixty American vessels in the port of Archangel. Fifteen of these were from New York—more than from any other single port—but a full half of the sixty came from the hundred miles of coast between Boston and Portland.³³

Massachusetts led all the states involved in the trade with Russia. She did so not because of the predominance of one port, such as Boston, but because the broken coastline of Mas-

sachusetts and Maine (part of Massachusetts until 1820) contained many inlets, which in that day of small and shallow-drafted vessels sent ships all over the world, including Russia. Plymouth and Marblehead considered themselves blue-water ports. Salem was one of the great ports of North America. Even Kennebunk, which today seems a proper size for lobsterboats and nothing larger, sent a vessel to Archangel in 1811—the brig “Eliza,” commanded by Captain Lathrop.³⁴

Practically none of the men involved in this commerce with Russia came from outside our northeastern states. In 1811, John Quincy Adams, who had been in St. Petersburg for two years, wrote home about the “continual succession” of men he had met off the American vessels then arriving in great numbers. “Some of them,” he said, “are naturalized Americans, but the greatest number are natives of the northern and eastern states as far as Virginia, inclusive. Of the states south and west of that, I think I have not seen a native since I have been in Russia.”³⁵

Perhaps a fitting coda to this chapter is to follow, knot by knot, an average voyage from the United States to Russia. This account will be laced with quotations from logs and diaries of American voyages to Russia and the Baltic.

Our home port is Salem. It could be any of the ports on the northeast coast, but—as Salem is at her peak in the decades between the Revolution and the War of 1812—let us ship aboard one of her vessels. Our vessel is a brig. A ship, bark, schooner, or even a ketch would do, but brigs seem most popular in the Baltic trade.³⁶ This means that our home for the next half year displaces something like 150 tons—quite big enough for a voyage across the Atlantic. Our crew is eight or

ten in number—quite numerous enough to handle such a craft.³⁷

If we were going to Russia directly, fear of storms and ice in the North Atlantic and Baltic would keep us in port until March at the earliest. "31 March 1816—At one A.M. while handling M.T.G. sail the ship struck an island of ice about the size of a long boat and stove in the starboard bow and stem and started the butts on both sides. The ship making much water got the boats ready."³⁸ We, however, are—more typically—first going to warmer climes for a cargo. We can embark in January, if we wish. Whether we sail directly or indirectly to Russia, we want to clear early in the year in order to take advantage of a full spring and summer of good weather at sea.³⁹

Perhaps the owner leaves his coffers and account books to see us to the harbor's mouth. "26 May 1787—At eight A.M. Mr. Derby came on board, got the ship underway and beat out the harbor. . . . At eleven o'clock he left us . . . with the wind at south bound to Russia."⁴⁰ With luck, we may have one look at faces from home. "30 May 1816—When abreast of Cape Ann a boat came off full of lads and lasses, passed near us and gave three cheers. Answered them and honored them with a gun."⁴¹ Then Massachusetts is only a smudge on the horizon astern and then the horizon is clean and keen as the edge of a blue knife.

Our course is south to Guadaloupe. Guadaloupeans, being typical West Indians, are too busy raising sugar to grow food-stuffs, raise livestock, or manufacture the standard paraphernalia of life. They depend on North America for such. Our cargo consists of, let us say, furniture, cider, candles, potatoes,

Making and Learning the Rules

onions, fish, bacon, beef, bales of sheeting, bundles of hoops, empty casks and hogsheds, butter, and lard.⁴²

We have a good run and drop anchor in the lee of Guadalupe's green hills in eighteen days. Five knots, you know, is good speed for a vessel of our era on a deep water voyage.⁴³ With adverse winds, it could have taken over a month to get this far.

After exchanging our variegated cargo for sugar and coffee, we weigh anchor, and our captain lays a northeast course. Settle down for a long voyage. We are roughly 6,000 miles from Kronstadt and 5,000 from the entrance of the Baltic. Yankee captains are good navigators and sublimely skillful seamen, but they fully appreciate the breadth of the Atlantic. "8 April 1810—I take my departure bound for Gothenburg. May it please God to send us in safety to our desired port."⁴⁴ Even riding the Gulf Stream, it may be two months before we see the Baltic.

With luck and good weather, monotony will be our only enemy for the next few weeks. Life at sea is, at its best, not easy, however, and not even the keeper of the log is always an enthusiastic sailor. "Sunday, 12 May 1811—There is no day in the seven, that I think as much of home as on this day. Ah, I am quite homesick. Let thy name be peace and it was called Salem. 21 May 1811—The life a sailor and a jailor—ah, how much alike. Only difference the form of one letter."⁴⁵ The iron men who manned New England's wooden ships were not always made of iron unalloyed. "Log of brig 'Cossack,' 16 June 1815—This evening the moon shone with resplendent lustre. Not a cloud to be seen. I cannot help adding the following piece of poetry . . .

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

And I felt such an exquisite wildness of sorrow
As I gazed at the tremulous glow of the deep
That I longed to prevent the intrusion of morrow
And stay there forever to wonder and weep." 46

But the Atlantic in the spring is not always calm and sometimes staying "there forever" seems disturbingly possible. "Log of ship 'Eclipse,' 21 May 1843—Squall . . . At eight parted starboard fore topsail sheet. At nine carried away flying gib. 22 May 1843—The ship steers very badly. Makes a course about so [wavy line] . . . 23 May 1842—Mr. Higginson thinks it will be a miracle if he gets safe across. Midnight bad weather and plenty rain." 47

The Atlantic in spring is usually a benign monster, and, with Yankee luck, our log is a boring succession of daily "Commences brisk breezes and fine weather. . . . Terminates with breezes and fine weather." The first landfall is the Orkney Islands. (Despite one's Mercatorial preconceptions, the shortest sea route from the West Indies to the Baltic runs north of Scotland.

In wartime the narrowness of the Baltic makes it a fine hunting ground for privateers who wish to prey on neutral shipping. In such times many American captains bound for Russia lay course for Archangel. Those who do must round Lapland, far north of the Arctic Circle. "22 May 1812—I should think this body of ice must extend at least 500 or 600 miles—in fact, it is impossible to say how far it doth extend. . . . These is the days for hot coffee. 23 May 1812—Everything on board is froze—even the pumps. The log line is stiff as soon as hauled in. The poor ink must go and see

the cook—both pretty much the same color. Oh, happy West Indian, with your glorius land.”⁴⁸

Fortunately, we are bound for one of Russia’s Baltic ports. The captain steers for Norway, and the first sight we have of her is the Naze, her southernmost tip. Continuing west, we come into the Kattegat. More and more sails can be seen. The fleets of the world rub elbows here in the anteroom of the Baltic.

Gothenburg would be a good port for our sugar and coffee, but the owner thinks the market to be stronger at Copenhagen—or at least he thought so last winter when he wrote his instructions to our captain and supercargo. Besides, the owner has connections with the House of Ryberg of Copenhagen. Ryberg will take our sugar and coffee and give us the latest information on the state of the market in Russia.

The distance between the mainlands of Denmark and Sweden is never less than several score miles, but between the two is lodged the great island of Zealand. In order to get to Copenhagen, which is on the east side of that island, the captain plots a course which will take us through the narrow Danish Sound between Sweden and Zealand. Even if he had no intention of pausing at Copenhagen but simply wanted to get through to the Baltic, we would take the Sound route. The other routes around Zealand—the Great and Little Belts—are broader, but are also longer and the channel through their islands and shallows is elusive. The Sound is narrow, but its channel is deep and comparatively straight.⁴⁹

At the entrance of the Sound the island of Zealand and Sweden are a bare four miles apart, and the channel runs close to the Danish town of Elsinore. The most prominent feature of

Elsinore is Cronberg Castle, and we must sail beneath its guns. About the castle's ramparts passes, not the indecisive Hamlet, but the doughty collector of the Sound dues. For hundreds of years the kings of Denmark have exacted a toll of each vessel passing through the Sound.

As our brig nears Cronberg Castle, the captain orders our topsails lowered—a required salute the omission of which would bring a cannon shot across our bow. We come to for the first time in two months. The captain goes ashore with the papers of our vessel and cargo, pays the toll, and returns. He may also have had to show a bill of health signed by the Danish, Russian, Prussian, or Swedish consul of our last port. The Baltic peoples are sensitive about the arrival of American ships with Yellow Jack aboard.

We weigh anchor and get underway, carefully hoisting our colors as we pass the guardship that supplements the Castle's surveillance of the entrance of the Sound. Failure to proffer that salute would also earn us cannon balls.⁵⁰ All the courtesies now completed, the captain can return to the engrossing business of sailing.

These waters hereabouts are too narrow for the captain's taste. The shores on either side, although several miles away, seem to deep water sailors to be grazing our gunwales. The current here where the Baltic forces itself through the nozzle of the Sound is disturbingly swift. On all sides we can see other sailing craft. If the wind holds true, all are safe. If it dies and leaves us to the mercy of the current, or if a squall springs up . . . (from the diary of John Quincy Adams on board the ship "Horace," 26 September 1809) "About three in the afternoon she began to drift again, when we threw out the third and

Making and Learning the Rules

last anchor, a very heavy one. We had drifted within the ship's length of a large brig, whose bowsprit threatened our cabin windows all afternoon and evening; and we were within a quarter of a mile of the shore and a reef of rocks." ⁵¹

We, however, have the law of averages on our side. Thousands of vessels pass through the Sound every year and few come to any harm. With a good breeze at our backs we run through the Sound in a matter of hours and come to anchor before dark in the deep safe harbor of Copenhagen.

Copenhagen is one of the greatest and most beautiful ports of the world. If we are arriving in 1799, we will find her population to be 83,063. ⁵² (In 1790, the population of Philadelphia, the biggest city in the United States, was 42,444. ⁵³). The harbor is capable of accommodating five hundred ships at one time. ⁵⁴ Our brig, accustomed to whole oceans of privacy, is surrounded by scores of moored vessels.

In the morning, the captain and supercargo take the ship's papers ashore to be inspected by the port authorities and to see Mr. Ryberg. When they return, we warp into position beside one of the quays. For the next few days Danish lumpers unload the hogsheds of sugar and barrels of coffee while our crew makes minor repairs to the rigging and sails. When our vessel is empty and floating so high that the gangplank is more like a ladder than a stairway, the lumpers turn to shoveling sand into our hold for ballast.

We clear for Kronstadt with a cargo of sand and Ryberg's letters of credit safe in the supercargo's chest. Steering south and then west, we round the last tip of Sweden and enter the Baltic Sea. The Baltic is a northern sea and never warm: the Gulf of Finland, that arm of the Baltic leading to St. Peters-

burg, is in the same general latitude as the southern cape of Greenland. He who ventures into the Gulf too early in the year will see more ice than any sailor ever wants to see. "23 April 1802—At four P.M. saw ice on the lee bow and spoke an English bark who informed us that the Gulf was full of ice. 29 April 1802—Surrounded by ice."⁵⁶

Our owner, Lord praise him, has so arranged our voyage that we are entering the Baltic in summer, which leaves us only the numerous islands, rocks, shoals and general shallowness of that sea to worry about. With any sort of luck we should make Kronstadt in a week or ten days.

The first indication the landlubber has that we are nearing our destination is a thickening of the horizons on either side of our vessel as Finland and Estonia draw toward each other as we stretch out for Kronstadt.

On the fourth of July—an appropriate day—our brig drops anchor in the harbor of Kronstadt. We could, of course, have gone to Riga or Reval or any other of Russia's Baltic ports, but, like the great majority of Americans, to us St. Petersburg-Kronstadt is the only Russian port.⁵⁶ On the starboard are two or three other vessels flying American colors, and there are probably others that we cannot see. Other owners are as shrewd about wind and weather as ours is, and more than half of the vessels that will come from America to Kronstadt this year have already arrived.⁵⁷

Shoveling out the ballast takes only a few days, but negotiating through Edward James Smith and Company—the St. Petersburg house to which our owner and Ryberg have directed us—for the best cargo at the lowest price, stowing the cumbersome Russian goods, and preparing our brig for the

Making and Learning the Rules

long journey home through the North Atlantic will take a month or more. Time never lags. The crew—officers and men alike—are busy. We, the drones, follow the supercargo ashore and spend our time sightseeing.

Kronstadt, although its fortifications and waterfront cilia of masts make it an impressive sight from a distance, proves to be a straggling town with many poor wooden buildings and vacant areas. Its inhabitants, upwards of 30,000 in number, are not in the business of impressing visitors. Commerce is this city's whole reason for existing, and indicative of this are the hundreds of sailors we see jostling in her streets.⁵⁸

In contrast, one of St. Petersburg's main reasons for existing is to impress visitors. The tsars have made her into one of the great cities of the world. The many magnificent stone buildings, the spacious open squares, the long and die-straight boulevards, the canals, the crystal Neva River with its bridges and sumptuous embankments quite awe the American bumpkin. Even the candid Londoner and Parisian will admit that there is nothing at home like this crown city of all the Russias.

The simple size of St. Petersburg would suffice to impress, even if all else about the city failed to do so. Her population is close to a quarter of a million. (As of 1790, Salem's population was 7,921.)⁵⁹ The cosmopolitan nature of St. Petersburg's crowds emphasizes to us her importance as Russia's cultural and commercial window to the West. Stand on one of her street corners and count the foreigners: English, Germans, Swedes, Dutch, Spanish, Americans, etc.⁶⁰

We have had to do most of our sightseeing without a guide. The supercargo has been a busy man, for his employer, the owner of the brig and cargo, has only tenuous connections

here. The trade with Russia is not, after all, one of the main branches of United States commerce. Our owner didn't instruct Messrs. Edward James Smith and Company to reserve a cargo for us last winter when the demand and prices were low. Thus the supercargo has to pay the Kronstadt merchants their price or condemn the brig to sail home dead freighted. An English buyer tells us half-petulantly, half-contemptuously, "None, in general, have been the cause of raising the prices, or suffered more from it than the Americans. . . ." ⁶¹

Still and all, we made a profit at Copenhagen, and our cargo of Russian goods will bring a profit on the American market. Our cargo is completed, and Russian stevedores and our crew are straining, sweating, and swearing in two languages, and stowing the goods into the hold. The cargo consists of 2,319 bars of iron, 272 bundles of hoop iron, forty-five packs of flems and ravensduck, ninety-eight coils of cordage, ninety-eight and a half bundles of hemp, and six casks of tallow.⁶²

The captain sniffs autumn in the August breeze and is anxious to clear for home. Winter can pounce like an angry bear in these latitudes.⁶³ But it isn't ice that he fears. Not yet, at least. What sets him to yelling at the stevedores for more speed are the equinoctial storms that can make the Baltic a sailor's nightmare in the autumn. If he has to weather a gale, he says, he wants to do so with no lee shore within a thousand miles. Being caught in the Baltic by a good gale is like being shut up in a closet with a famished wolf.⁶⁴

Before August is two weeks old, we are tacking out through the roads of Kronstadt. The sun that is rising in Asia throws wavering shadows of our masts on the choppy water ahead like

Making and Learning the Rules

uncertain compass needles pointing toward Salem and home.

The Baltic's winds are not so docile as during the outward voyage, and it is nearly two weeks before we pass under "the dreadful summit of the cliff that beetles o'er his base into the sea" at Elsinore. Yet by summer's end we have beat our way through the North Sea and are in the Atlantic with the Faroe Islands the nearest dry land. The weather, habitually foul, forces our seamen to muster every bit of seacraft they know. It is hurricane season in the North Atlantic. "23 September 1811—Fresh gales until four P.M. when it came on to blow a very severe equinoctial gale and continued a tremendous gale throughout with a very dangerous sea. . . . 4 October 1811—Strong gales from NW. . . . Spoke with Schooner Industry of Yarmouth which has lost bowsprit. Supply her with twine, needles and a spar." ⁶⁵ The violent rolling and pitching of the vessel and the strength of the seas that sometimes sweep across our decks often make survival a matter of having a good grip: (from the log of the brig "Belle Isle," 9 November 1810) "Heavy gales. . . . At four P.M. lost John Fellows overboard without being able to give him the least assistance. . . ." ⁶⁶

On the morning of the first of November, seventy-odd days out of Kronstadt, the mate clumps below in his heavy boots and announces a landfall. We scramble up on deck to gaze at the low misty streak that is the first glimpse of Massachusetts we have had in something like seven months.⁶⁷ By afternoon, the green shoulder of Marblehead Point is clearly visible, then the vessels in the harbor, and finally—lying in the soft hills like a

pillow on a tired man's bed—the small white village of Salem.

1. *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America from the Signing of the Definitive Treaty of Peace, 10th September 1783, to the Adoption of the Constitution, March 4, 1789* (Washington, D.C.: Francis Preston Blair, 1833-34), II, 175.

2. Johnson, et al., *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States*, I, 126.

3. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 271.

4. *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-89*, VII, 383.

5. *Commerce of Rhode Island*, II, 335.

6. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 233.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, p. 80; Phillips, "Salem Opens American Trade with Russia," p. 689; Porter, *The Jacksons and the Lees*, I, 38; account book of the ship "John," kept by Francis Boardman (Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts).

9. Log of the snow "Vigilant," 1793-94 (Essex Institute).

10. Log of the ship "John," 1811-12 (Peabody Museum).

11. *Debenture Book, 1795-1800*, Custom House, Salem, Massachusetts.

12. *American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation*, I, 694-95, 737, 868, 891, and 964.

13. Edward Gray, *William Gray of Salem, Merchant* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), p. 13; Charles S. Osgood and H. M. Batchelder, *Historical Sketch of Salem* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1879), pp. 187-88; Porter, *The Jacksons and the Lees*, II, 671, 681; *American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation*, II, 99; John H. Reinsoehl (ed.), "Some Remarks on the American Trade: Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, 1806," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XVI (January, 1959), 103, 107, 110; William Weedon, *Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1891), II, 824-25; John Bryant Notebook, 1806, and Clifford Crowninshield Invoice Book, 1791-96 (Peabody Museum); *Debenture Book*, Salem Custom House.

14. *American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation*, II, 99; *Debenture Book*, Salem Custom House.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Thomas W. Ward's journal of voyage of "Pallas" to Kronstadt, 1801-2 (Peabody Museum).

17. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 323.

Making and Learning the Rules

18. Weeden, "Early Oriental Commerce in Providence," p. 274.
19. Erving to Secretary of State, 12 February 1812, Copenhagen, United States National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.
20. *Commerce of Rhode Island*, II, 453.
21. The women of Sweden were, by themselves, enough to attract Americans to that port. In 1811, at the age of forty-four, John Quincy Adams remembered his trip through Sweden on the way back from Russia in 1782, and mused uncharacteristically, "... To me it was truly the 'land of beautiful dames' and to this hour I have never forgotten the palpitations of heart which some of them cost me and of which they never knew."—John Quincy Adams to Alexander Everett, 19 August 1811, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook [p. 405], in microfilms of the Adams Papers owned by the Adams Manuscript Trust and deposited in the Massachusetts Historical Society, Part II, 135.
22. *American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation*, I, 469–82, 675–86, *passim*; W. W. Jennings, *The American Embargo, 1807–09* (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1921), pp. 17–18; H. Niles (ed.), *Weekly Register*, I (26 October 1811), 130; Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 310, 115–16; Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 237; Abraham Rees (ed.), *The Cyclopaedia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and Literature* (Philadelphia: Samuel F. Bradford & Murray, Fairman & Co., n. d.), Vol. XII ("Denmark"), Vol. XXXVI ("Sweden"); Gardiner to Secretary of State, 11 September 1803, Gothenburg, United States National Archives, Consular Letters—Gothenburg, Vol. I.
23. Extract from account of exports from St. Petersburg in 1803, inclosed with letter from Harris to Secretary of State, 5/17 November 1803, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I; similar figures for 1804 can be found in Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 127.
24. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 133.
25. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, pp. 232–33.
26. J. D. Forbes, *Israel Thorndike, Federalist Financier* (New York: Exposition Press, 1953), p. 39; Ralph W. Hidy, *The House of Baring in American Trade and Finance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 21–22.
27. Worcester, *Geographical Dictionary*, II, 310.
28. Harris to Secretary of State, 18/30 August 1805, St. Petersburg, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.
29. *Commerce of Rhode Island*, II, 453; Forbes, *Thorndike*, p. 39; Cramp and Company to Derby, 24 July 1786, St. Petersburg, Gale, Hill, Cazalet, and Company to Derby, 17 July 1786, St. Petersburg, in Derby Papers, Letters 1769–1788, Vol. XIII (Essex Institute).
30. Phillips, "Salem Opens American Trade with Russia," p. 686.
31. March to Wm. Bartlet, 15 March 1813, Gothenburg, in Letterbook of John March, Gothenburg, 1811–13 (Massachusetts Historical Society).
32. "Exported by the American Ships in 1793," a printed sheet signed

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

in handwriting, "From Messrs. John Matthew Bulkeley and Company of St. Petersburg" (Essex Institute).

33. Robert G. Albion and Jennie B. Pope, *Sea Lanes in Wartime: The American Experience, 1775-1942* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1942), pp. 107-8.

34. Bacon, *Memorandum Book*, p. 35.

35. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 137-38.

36. F. Hitchings, *Digest of Duties from 1789 to 1851: The Amount of Duties Paid into the Salem Custom House from August 15, 1789, to April 7, 1851, passim* (Peabody Museum).

37. Salem Custom House, *Entry Book*, 7 October 1792, brig "Betsy," 132 tons, 8 men, enters from Gothenburg.

38. Log of ship "Rubicon," 1816 (Essex Institute).

39. Phillips, "Salem Opens American Trade with Russia," p. 688.

40. Log of ship "Astrea," 1787 (Essex Institute).

41. Log of ship "Janus," 1816 (Essex Institute).

42. This was the actual cargo of the brig "Rebecca" that sailed from Salem to Havana to Kronstadt (log of brig "Rebecca," 1821 [Essex Institute]).

43. Parkinson, *The Trade Winds*, p. 87.

44. Log of ship "Messenger," 1810 (Essex Institute).

45. Log of ship "Friendship," 1811-12 (Essex Institute).

46. Log of brig "Cossack," 1815 (Essex Institute).

47. Log of ship "Eclipse," 1843 (Essex Institute).

48. Log of ship "Friendship," 1811-12 (Essex Institute).

49. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 356.

50. John White, "A New and Correct Tariff or Book of Rates and Duties on Goods Passing the Sound of Elsinore in Denmark," National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. I.

51. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 29.

52. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 358.

53. Morris, *Encyclopedia of American History*, p. 442.

54. Rees, *Cyclopedia*, Vol. X, "Copenhagen"; Walter Teller (ed.), *Five Sea Captains* (New York: Atheneum, 1960), p. 297.

55. Log of ship "Pallas," 1801-2 (Peabody Museum).

56. Of the eighty-five American vessels that came to Russia in 1803, eighty-four went to Kronstadt. Of the sixty-six that came in 1804, all but one went to Kronstadt (Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 133, 204; Harris to Secretary of State, 18/30 November 1804, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I).

57. Of the sixty-six American vessels that arrived at Kronstadt in 1804, forty arrived before 24 June (Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 133; Harris to

Making and Learning the Rules

Secretary of State, 12/24 June 1804, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.

58. Rees, *Cyclopedia*, Vol. XI, "Kronstadt"; Worcester, *Geographical Dictionary*, I, 458.

59. F. D. Robotti, *Chronicles of Old Salem* (Salem: Newcomb & Gauss Co., 1948), p. 46.

60. Rees, *Cyclopedia*, Vol. XXVIII, "St. Petersburg"; Worcester, *Geographical Dictionary*, II, 310.

61. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 202.

62. Actual cargo of snow "Hind," Captain Putnam, which returned to Salem from St. Petersburg in 1793 (Salem Custom House, Entry Book, 1792-94).

63. In the fall of 1809, an unseasonable west wind pinned the late ships against the Russian coast of the Baltic while an early frost froze them in. Ninety vessels were frozen in at Kronstadt, eighteen of them American (Thomas B. Osgood to Pickman and Derby, 5 December 1809, St. Petersburg, in Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood, 1809-11 [Peabody Museum]; translated extract from *Court Gazette of St. Petersburg*, dated 27 January 1810, O.S., National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Russia, Vol. I).

64. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 105.

65. Log of brig "Independence," 1810-11 (Essex Institute).

66. Log of brig "Belle Isle," 1810-11 (Essex Institute).

67. Phillips, "Salem Opens American Trade with Russia," p. 688; James D. Phillips, "Salem Ocean-Borne Commerce from the Close of the Revolution to the Establishment of the Constitution," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, LXXV (July, 1939), 251, 253.

Trade in Time of War

IN 1788, JOHN PAUL JONES presented Catherine the Great with a copy of the spanking new Constitution of the United States of America. During the conversation that followed, the Tsarina expressed the opinion that "the American revolution cannot fail to bring about others, and to influence every other government."¹

If Catherine remembered that prophecy a year later, it must have been with a mixture of pride and distaste, pride at her own prescience and distaste at what was happening in France. Louis XVI, desperately seeking a cure for his government's chronic indebtedness, had called the Estates-General. A Parisian mob had stormed the Bastille and raised on a pike the first bloody head of the revolution.

The French Revolution had an all-pervading influence on the young United States of America. The Revolution gave Hamilton and Jefferson something upon which to disagree so violently that they founded America's first political parties. Militarily, it bestowed two wars on us, one undeclared and one declared. Economically, it gave us our opportunity to shake

Trade in Time of War

completely loose from the depression that seemed to be the gloomy familiar of our new independence.

When the United States emerged as a free nation in 1783, it discovered that it had exchanged for independence all the privileges it had had as part of a world-wide empire. Prior to our revolution, one of the great sources of wealth for New England and the Middle Colonies had been the trade between the West Indian possessions of the great colonial empires and the European motherlands of those empires. In 1783, when Americans sailed forth in search of peacetime profits, they discovered that American vessels were excluded from this carrying trade. Great Britain, as always, reserved that trade strictly for ships of her own empire. The other powers in the West Indies—France, Holland, Denmark, and Spain—no longer interested in cajoling America into matricide, did the same. Until American vessels were admitted to that trade again, American sailors and merchants would have to content themselves with meager incomes.²

In April of 1794, the Yankee snow "Vigilant," come up from the Isle of France on its way to Russia, put into Ostend to deliver a cargo of coffee, sugar, and cotton to a M. Keef of that port. On the eleventh of May, two days before the snow cleared for Kronstadt, it was noted in the log that "we have heard the French and English cannonading for the three last days."³ The accelerating violence of France's revolution and the increasing tendency of that nation to consider her revolution an item for export had brought a British expeditionary force across the Channel the year before to defend the Lowlands. What the crew of the "Vigilant" was hearing was the sound of Carnot's ragged conscripts hustling the armies of

Britain and her allies out of Flanders. The following winter French hussars would ride triumphantly into Amsterdam on the ice.

The war between Great Britain and France, begun so inauspiciously for the British, was to continue practically unbroken until Napoleon's exile to St. Helena in 1815. For its first fifteen years, that war was the making of America's fortune. The United States was the only maritime power which wasn't habitually at war with half or more of the great trading nations of Europe. British ships were considered worse than plague carriers by the governments of France and her allies, and Britain's navy scoured the vessels of France and her allies from the face of the oceans. By the process of elimination, a huge proportion of the carrying trade of the Atlantic community fell into American hands. The "long haul" from the West Indies to Europe became the special province of the American merchant marine. In 1792, on the eve of the wars of the French Revolution, our re-exports of sugar and coffee were only 1,176,156 and 2,134,742 pounds respectively. In 1807, these figures were 143,136,905 and 42,122,573 pounds respectively.⁴ American sailors had become panderers to the sugar and coffee habits of the whole European continent.

All in all, between 1792 and 1807, the value of America's re-exports climbed from \$2,000,000 to nearly \$60,000,000.⁵ This had an electric effect on our whole economy. In that fifteen years the value of American imports leaped 300 per cent and exports 400 per cent. The total tonnage of our shipping rose from 564 million to 1,268 million tons, and the percentage of tonnage arriving in U.S. ports which was owned and registered in America rose from an anemic 63 per cent to a glowingly

healthy 92 per cent.⁶ The American sailor and merchant, and the myriads whose livelihood depended on the prosperity of those two—the ship-builder, lumberman, fisherman, stevedore, coastal and piedmont farmer, silversmith, etc.—experienced the greatest fortune they had ever known. The ill wind that scorched and shriveled a whole generation in Europe carried the United States into the sunny latitudes of its first boom.

Being a war profiteer, however, is not a life of joy unalloyed. There was always the danger that we would be sucked into the war. In a time when even a hermit would have found it difficult to remain neutral, the United States was a peddler hawking his wares in every port in the world. George Washington tried to save his country from any involvement by declaring our neutrality in 1793 and forbidding any American to carry to any belligerent "those articles which are deemed contraband by the modern usage of nations . . .,"⁷ but, of course, the difficulty was, who is to define contraband? If two men are trying to strangle each other, then the very air becomes contraband.

Very early in the war, Britain, in an effort to strangle the economy of the French empire, began to seize American vessels bound to and from the ports of France and her colonies on the slightest pretext. The aggravation of these seizures, added to the chronically annoying and illegal presence of British troops in the forts of our Northwest, might well have brought us into the war on the side of France if the Washington administration hadn't been so unshakeably dedicated to neutrality. John Jay was sent to England to settle the differences between Britain and the United States by negotiation. The treaty that he

signed, which came into effect in 1796, did prevent war between the two English-speaking powers, but it did so at the expense of much of America's self-respect. For instance, impressment—already an issue between the United States and Britain—was not even mentioned, and Jay accepted the British definition of contraband. This meant that we agreed not to ship naval stores nor any timber but pine plank to the ports of France or her allies.⁸ At this point the Jay Treaty impinged on the commercial relationship between Russia and America. France, which had already counted us as an ally and which, at the very least, expected our vessels to bring to her naval stores from the Baltic, considered herself betrayed.

The government of France, following the revolutionary's standard creed that "anyone not for me is against me," informed her navy and privateers that American vessels and cargoes were fair game. According to our Secretary of State, by June of 1797 the French had captured over three hundred of our vessels.⁹ For all practical purposes, a naval war existed between France and America.

This undeclared quasi-war, reinforcing the paralyzing effects of a domestic depression, had a profound effect on our overseas trade, especially our trade to the Baltic. Our exports, which had climbed steeply in value every year since the beginning of the wars in Europe, dropped from \$67 million in 1796 to below \$57 million in 1797.¹⁰ In 1796, 169 American vessels had passed the Danish Sound. In 1797, that number plunged to 81.¹¹ War, almost always an Indian giver, was taking away the prosperity it had given the United States.

The United States, however, did not supinely accept French depredation. Congress created the Navy Department and re-

vived our moribund navy. The frigates "Constitution," "Constellation," and "United States" rigged for combat and soon demonstrated to France and the world that the eagle had talons.¹² American merchants and captains armed their vessels and prepared to supplement their pleas of neutrality with ball, chain, grape, pike, and cutlass. For instance, the ship "Lucy," returning home from the Baltic in 1798, belied her femininity by taking on board ten cannon and "a number of men extraordinary" at Copenhagen.¹³ Before the end of the quasi-war America armed a thousand of her merchantmen.¹⁴

Americans, also, made full use of the convoy system, sometimes being shepherded by men-of-war of their own navy—our Captain McNeill, now a naval officer, conducted convoys in the waters off Surinam¹⁵—and occasionally by men-of-war of other nations, particularly Britain.¹⁶ Outside the Caribbean area, the main theater of the war, American merchantmen often lacked a friendly warship to cosy up to, and sometimes of necessity formed a convoy exclusively from their own number. The theory was that the sum of their individually meager armaments would be great enough to discourage all but the more heavily armed French vessels. Such was the case with a convoy of nine armed American merchantmen that sailed home from St. Petersburg in 1798 under the command of Commodore Thorndike in the "Sally," of Beverly, Massachusetts.¹⁷ Probably a single French frigate could have blown the Commodore's whole fleet to kingdom come, but such a convoy would be too tough a nut for a privateer to try to crack. Privateers, after all, were out for profit, not for victory or death.

In 1798, American commerce started to recover. Exports

climbed five million dollars in value above the previous year's figures.¹⁸ The improvement was the result of America's increased ability to protect her vessels and cargoes, and of our use of new channels of trade to replace those that had led to the ports of France. We renewed our contacts with the markets of the Continent through the ports of North Europe. Prior to 1798, the greatest amount we had ever exported to Denmark in a single year was worth \$421,779. In the year ending 30 September 1798,¹⁹ we sent \$1,400,253 worth to Denmark and, in 1799, \$951,577 worth. Prior to 1798, the greatest amount we had ever exported to the ports of the Germanies in a single year was approximately nine and a half million dollars worth. In the year ending 30 September 1798, we sent them \$14,563,343 worth, and in the following year \$17,866,493 worth.²⁰ In those two years one quarter of our exports to the world went to Denmark and the Germanies!²¹ The vagaries of war had made Copenhagen and Hamburg the most important markets for tropical goods on the continent of Europe.

Our trade with Russia was, also, drastically affected by our war with France. Our exports to Russia shrank to a paltry \$3,450 in value in 1797, and only twenty-six vessels cleared St. Petersburg for American ports, in sharp contrast to fifty-nine the year before. But in 1798, this annual number of vessels resumed its rise. In that year it rose to thirty-nine, and in 1799 to sixty-two, higher than ever before.²²

It was during these years that Russia experienced her first twinge of ardor for America. The United States was giving a good account of herself in her quasi-war with France, which helped to establish a good reputation for the United States among the anti-French aristocracy of Russia. Also, the United

States was becoming one of Russia's most dependable customers. The American flag was becoming an everyday sight in the Baltic during the shipping season.

In November of 1798, Count Woronzow (or Vorontsov), the Russian ambassador to Britain, spoke to Rufus King, the American minister to Britain, about the possibility of a commercial treaty between Russia and the United States. In February of 1799, President Adams appointed King as a special minister to negotiate such a treaty with Russia. The whole scheme was killed in embryo by a relaxation in America's relations with France in 1799 which destroyed the Russian misconception that America might be coaxed into being a permanent enemy of France, but the aborted negotiations had brought into being one of the minor but recurring themes of Russian and American foreign policies for the next few decades. Whenever war and distortion of normal trade patterns troubled Europe, Russia and the United States would seek each other's friendship.²³

The continuance and expansion of Russo-American trade during our war with France must be credited to the perseverance and skill of the British navy. Britain's men-of-war kept most French vessels close to home. The approaches of the Baltic could be dangerous waters for Americans. French privateers plying the North Sea in 1799 captured the American schooner "Little John" on the Dogger Banks returning from Bremen, beat her captain "in a savage manner peculiar to the French," and only by Providence did the armed ship "Camilla," of Boston, come along to recapture the "Little John" and save her captain and crew from a French prison.²⁴ But American vessels heading for Russia usually sailed only

through the far northern reaches of the North Sea and then coasted down Norway to the Sound. It seems that the only American bound to or from the Baltic who fell victim to the French was Captain Joseph Mossby of the ship "Enterprise," of Salem, who "was unfortunately killed by a privateer firing about twenty musket shot before she boarded his vessel." ²⁵ The ship herself was allowed to continue to Copenhagen.

It must not be thought that the voyage to Russia was one on which the watch dared catch a nap when the captain or mate was not about. The insurance underwriters of Philadelphia, a very knowledgeable and hardheaded group of men, thought otherwise. At one period during the war, they demanded a whopping 22.5 per cent to insure a voyage to Russia! ²⁶

Despite the forebodings of gloomy underwriters, American traders obviously continued to seek the ports of Russia. One effective method of avoiding French capture on the way to Russia was simply to keep as far away from France as possible. During the quasi-war, America sent its first ships in any numbers (and probably its first ships, *period*) to Archangel. That boreal port is better acquainted with ice than water, and American sailors were more familiar with the Celebes Sea than the White Sea, and the most southerly course to Archangel took them several hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle—but then war has always been a maniacal navigator. We know few details about the opening of the trade with Archangel beyond the fact that there were four American vessels there in September of 1798, two of them being the ship "Financier," Captain Clark, of Boston, and the ship "Perseverance," Captain Wheatland, of Salem. ²⁷

In 1800, the war was dwindling to a close. France, not

Trade in Time of War

wanting the United States as a permanent enemy, formalized the end of the war by settling the most peremptory of her differences with us in the Treaty of Morfontaine, signed 30 September, 1800.²⁸ A war that was never declared cannot technically come to an end, but, at any rate, in 1800, American and French seamen stopped shooting at each other.

It was also the year in which American exports to Russia sank to absolute zero, fewer American vessels passed the Sound than in any year since 1790, and only twenty-three ships cleared Kronstadt for America, fewer than in any year since 1791.²⁹ American commerce with Russia was obviously being distorted by some new and very powerful influence.

It is necessary to go back four years. In 1796, Catherine the Great died and was succeeded by her son, Paul I, a man haunted by the memory of his murdered father and so afflicted with wild eccentricity that many historians have called him mad.

Paul, an autocrat, naturally detested French radicalism, but he kept out of the war against France until her forces seized the island of Malta and invaded Egypt in 1798. Malta was the home of the Knights of St. John, who chose Paul as their Grand Master. (That Paul, arch-layman of the Russian Orthodox Church, should be the chief of a Roman Catholic order is somehow typical of his reign.) Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire, which Russia felt to be exclusively her whipping boy.³⁰ Also contributing to his decision was France's demand that Denmark close her Sound to all ships carrying English commodities. This was a move to constrict Russia's economic jugular, and Paul reacted by sending part of his fleet to keep the Sound open.³¹

Although Russia maintained a squadron of men-of-war in English waters (commanded, by the way, by Admiral George Tate, of Massachusetts!),³² her significant contribution to the Second Coalition against France was all on land. Paul sent his armies deep into Europe. When they were defeated, Paul angrily blamed their failure on the cowardice and treachery of the other members of the Coalition. Napoleon, now First Consul, sensed the weakness in the Coalition and bent his efforts to tempting Paul into the French camp—or, at least, into neutrality. Napoleon freed his Russian prisoners and offered Malta to Paul. As the French on Malta were now isolated by the British navy and bound eventually to surrender to the attack the British were launching on them, Napoleon's generosity was perhaps questionable. His offer was a perfect "bait on purpose laid to make the taker mad" because Paul's ally, Britain, would no more tolerate a Russian Malta than a French. Britain fancied the Mediterranean a British lake, which meant she claimed Malta for herself.³³

Britain further assisted Napoleon's courtship of Paul by acting her customary role on the high seas. As usual in war-time, she took it upon herself to investigate the papers and cargo of every neutral vessel her cruisers could overhaul. Neutrals, the United States included, objected. Denmark particularly objected to British search of Danish merchantmen under convoy by Danish men-of-war. In December, 1799, and July, 1800, British and Danish men-of-war clashed over this question. In the latter encounter, blood was shed and the British captured a Danish frigate.

Thus the affairs of North Europe stood in July, 1800, the

year of the unexplained diminishing of Russo-American trade. At one end of the Baltic, Russia was lending a ready ear to Napoleon, and at the other end Denmark and Britain seemed on the brink of war.

Events hurried toward a crude resolution. Britain, too busy to be delicate with little Denmark, sent an ambassador to Copenhagen with an entourage of several ships of the line and a few bomb vessels.³⁴ As Nelson was to say on *his* way to Copenhagen the following year, "A fleet of British men-of-war are the best negotiators in the world."³⁵ A large number of merchant sail went along, too, using the ambassador's task force as an impromptu convoy to the Baltic. Among them was the "Neptune," of Providence.³⁶ Americans would be on hand to witness all three English violations of Copenhagen.

This first was only a rehearsal. The Danes were easily intimidated, and the British had no wish unnecessarily to create allies for Napoleon. On 29 August of 1800, the two nations signed an agreement to refer the question of the right of search to future negotiations. Denmark suspended her convoys and the British released the Danish frigate.³⁷

Britain's blatant use of her naval might to oblige a neutral to change its policy aroused all the latent fear and hatred of the weaker sea powers for "perfidious Albion." In Russia rumors that the English had taken Elsinore and were bombarding Copenhagen sprang up like weeds in rich soil.³⁸

Paul used Britain's actions against Denmark as an excuse to sequester all British property in Russia, and he directed a concentration of Russian troops because "a rupture of friendship with England may ensue." About three hundred English

ships and their crews were seized, and the Tsar declared an embargo on trade with the British until Britain acknowledged his claims to Malta.

On the sixteenth of December, 1800, Russia and Sweden signed an agreement reviving the League of Armed Neutrality of 1780. They were joined shortly after by Denmark and Prussia. Catherine the Great's old pronouncements that the neutrality of a vessel renders its cargo neutral, that naval stores are not contraband, and that paper blockades are illegal were again presented to Britain on the point of a bayonet.³⁹ The difference was that this time Russia and the League were throwing their weight not on the side of the less aggressive of the two great powers of western Europe, but on the side of the more aggressive. In Boston, Massachusetts, the *Columbian Centinel* reacted by stating what has often again been America's view of Russia and her followers, "Unfortunately, from that quarter no assertion can be disproved from its own anomalies or absurdity. It is rather the precise case to believe things because they are incredible, and to admit whatever is monstrous and absurd."⁴⁰

Throughout 1800, the sea lanes to Russia reverberated with the rude cacophony of rattling swords. Is it any wonder that American ships avoided the Baltic? If an American ship were caught in the cul-de-sac of the Baltic when a war broke out between Great Britain and the nations that joined the League, what would be that vessel's fate? Seizure by a member of the League because she looked like a British ship? Seizure by the French or the Danes while passing the Sound? (The war would probably make the Danes and French allies, and remember that France and the United States did not sign their

Trade in Time of War

final "peace" until 30 September, nearly the end of the Baltic shipping season.) Above all, what reception would Britain give to any neutral vessel trading with its Baltic enemies—Britain, which "with her seven hundred ships of war, can block up the Catigat as effectually as if an immense dam was erected over it?"⁴¹

No sane American merchant of 1800 would risk too large a portion of his wealth in an area that might become a cockpit of war at any moment. Conditions similar to those of 1800 would exist in the Baltic between 1807 and 1812, and yet hundreds of American vessels would flock through the Sound and Belts, but only because by then there was nowhere else to go.

At the end of 1800, the Baltic situation was one of such tension and imbalance that it could not long remain static. Russian aristocrats, cut off from the chief market for the products of their estates and appalled by rapprochement with France, would not long accept Paul's new foreign policy. England, cut off from the source of much of the timber used in her fleets and from the source of 90 per cent of the hemp that was so vital to her survival,⁴² could not long accept Paul's foreign policy. Only the descent of winter checked a sudden and violent resolution of the unnatural situation. Even crises hibernate in winter in the Baltic.

As spring came to the Northern Hemisphere in 1801, Federalists in America worried that that idiot Jacobin, President Jefferson, would allow America to be drawn into that "hostile compact," the League of Armed Neutrality of 1800;⁴³ a few American farmers, surmising that hemp from Russia would soon be a rare article, thought of raising some themselves as a valuable cash crop;⁴⁴ and American captains and supercargoes

in England found themselves offered amazingly high fees to take their vessels to Russian and other Baltic ports on English account.⁴⁵

British merchants could well offer such fees. Britain was already desperate for Russian naval stores. The Royal Navy was resorting to the use of inferior beech in place of imported fir and there was a project to make tar from seaweed.⁴⁶ Hemp, usually between thirty and fifty pounds a ton, was climbing to a vertiginous eighty-six pounds a ton.⁴⁷

Like Britain's merchants, Britain's Lords of the Admiralty were also trying to find ways to Russia. With admirable dispatch, they decided to blast a path. On 12 March 1801, a fleet of eighteen sail-of-the-line and thirty-five smaller vessels sailed from Yarmouth for the Baltic. "Thus," said Britain's *Naval Chronicle* for 1801, "will a severe but just lesson be taught to all our puny rivals, of the folly and imbecility of any attempt to dispute with Britain the Sovereignty of the Ocean. . . ." ⁴⁸

On April Fools Day, 1801, Admiral Nelson took a large segment of that fleet to the head of a dangerously shallow but relatively unfortified channel leading to the harbor of Copenhagen. The next day he entered that channel, and, though his fleet was under constant galling fire and several of his sail-of-the-line ran aground, he methodically battered a good part of the Danish fleet and the defensive batteries of Copenhagen into splinters and rubble.

Hark, hark! the thundering cannon's roar,
Thro' Heaven's high vault rebound,
The Swedes and Danes in vain implore,
For Nelson's in the Sound.

Trade in Time of War

Before he slept that night, he wrote Lady Hamilton to tell her, "Of eighteen sail, large and small, some are taken, some sunk, some burnt in the good old way." ⁴⁹ British access to the Baltic was assured.

In the harbor of Copenhagen on that tremendous day was the Salem brig "Exchange." Josiah Orne, her captain, and his men had an awesomely close view of what the broadsides of a British fleet could accomplish in the way of creating hell on earth.⁵⁰ It was experiences like this that helped make Yankee seafarers so much less anxious to challenge Britain's might than frontiersmen from Ohio and Tennessee.

Ironically, it may well be that all the Danes and Britons who died on that second of April in the roads of Copenhagen harbor died totally in vain. Paul I was the central figure of the League of 1800. Without him, Russia would resume trade with England and withdraw from the League, which would collapse like a tent without its center post. On 24 March, when the British fleet was still off Elsinore, a new tsar of Russia, Alexander I, announced that "It has pleased the decrees of the Almighty to shorten the life of our beloved Parent Sovereign Emperor Paul Petrovitz, who died suddenly by an apoplectic stroke, at night. . . ." ⁵¹

Alexander's explanation of his father's death was euphemistic. Paul's anti-British policy brought a massive decrease in Russia's foreign trade; and as her exports plummeted, the hatred of her nobles for Paul soared. Paul's eccentricity, accelerating toward complete insanity, had changed the loyalty of those around him to complete revulsion and fear.

A plot to assassinate the Tsar came into being, probably with the tacit approval of Alexander. On the night of 23 March

1801, a group of Paul's officers, crazed with drink, hatred, and terror, burst into his apartment and beat and strangled him to death.⁵²

The League of 1800 was gone. Throughout 1801, diplomats busied themselves with sweeping away its remains. In 1801, 172 American ships passed through the Sound, more than ever before, and sixty-one vessels cleared St. Petersburg for America, only one below the previous all-time high.⁵³

The violent deaths of several thousand Danes and Britons and of the Tsar of Russia had cleared the Baltic of obstacles to American trade.

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3. Log of snow "Vigilant," 1793-94 (Essex Institute).
4. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 167.
5. John H. Reinhoel, "Post-Embargo Trade and Merchant Prosperity: Experiences of the Crowninshield Family, 1809-1812," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLII, No. 2 (September, 1955), 230.
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7. Henry S. Commager (ed.), *Documents of American History* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1949), I, 163.
8. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, p. 188.
9. S. E. Morison and H. S. Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), I, 370.
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11. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 369.
12. Morison and Commager, *Growth of the American Republic*, I, 373.
13. *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France. Naval Operations from November, 1798 to March, 1799* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 176.
14. *Naval Documents of the Quasi-War, 1797-1798*, p. vi.
15. Gardner W. Allen, *Our Naval War with France* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), p. 125; *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 5 June 1799.

Trade in Time of War

16. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 9 January 1799; *Boston Gazette*, 1 January 1798.
17. *Naval Documents of the Quasi-War, 1798-1799*, pp. 163, 183, 188.
18. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, pp. 36-37.
19. Throughout the first decades of our history the official year of the United States customs service ended on 30 September.
20. *Miscellaneous Documents of the House of Representatives . . .*, 1892-93, XXVI, xiii, xiv.
21. Letter to Secretary of State, 10 October 1798, Copenhagen, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. I.
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23. J. C. Hildt, *Early Diplomatic Negotiations of the United States with Russia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1906), pp. 31-32, 35.
24. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 25 September 1799.
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26. *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, I, 69.
27. *Naval Documents of the Quasi-War, 1798-1799*, p. 166.
28. Morris (ed.), *Encyclopedia of American History*, p. 129.
29. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 369; Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, pp. 271-72.
30. Andrei A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, *Russia and Europe, 1789-1825* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1947), pp. 19-22.
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32. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 26 January 1799; R. C. Anderson, "British and American Officers in the Russian Navy," *Mariner's Mirror*, XXXIII (January, 1947), 26.
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36. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 1 October 1800.
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38. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 29 October 1800.
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41. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 15 April 1801.
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43. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 15 April 1801.
44. *Ibid.*, 25 April 1801.

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

45. Letter to Charles Coffin, 1 May 1801, Portsmouth, in Letterbook of Thomas Sheafe, 1797-1803 (Peabody Museum).
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52. K. Waliszewski, *Paul the First of Russia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1913), pp. 386, 391, 423-25, 455-60.
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Alliances and Embargo

ON 21 MARCH 1801, two days before the murder of Tsar Paul, representatives of France and Britain began to hammer out a treaty of peace between their two nations. Neither France nor England was exhausted enough to make the details of the peace easy to work out, and months of wrangling were necessary before the final signatures were appended to the final document. But that moment did come—the date was 25 March 1802—and Britons and Frenchmen stopped trying to kill each other for the first time in close to a decade.¹

The decline of mass homicide in Europe had an appalling effect on American commerce. Long before the final peace, shrewd American merchants were paring down the capital they had laid out on speculation, demanding payment of their loans, and generally preparing for foul economic weather. Jacob Crowninshield, merchant of Salem, wrote in November of 1801,

It now behooves us to look about us, sell all we can to good men, buy as little as possible in order to lessen our payments,

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

for money will soon be scarce. . . . Get all the hard dollars possible; if you can secure \$50,000, so much the better. Take all they'll give you. We shall want them. . . . Buy no more vessels, for they'll fall greatly.

Jacob, as sly a trader as his Old Testament namesake, knew what he was talking about. Already speculators were tumbling into ruin, especially those who had invested heavily in naval stores from Russia.²

The trouble was that now Europeans could use their own merchant marines for overseas commerce. A merchant of Le Havre who wanted to import coffee from a plantation owned by his brother on Guadeloupe could send out his own ships to that island. No longer need he depend on neutrals to bring his tropical imports to Hamburg and then have the goods laboriously carted several hundred miles overland to his warehouse.

In 1801, the United States re-exported 97,565,732 pounds of sugar and 45,106,494 of coffee. The next year those figures were 61,061,820 and 36,501,998, respectively, and in 1803—despite renewal of war in Europe—they had fallen to 23,223,849 and 10,294,693, respectively.³ The momentum of the depression carried us deeper into economic despair even after new violence heralded new prosperity.

The commercial situation was summed up by the American Thomas W. Ward of the ship "Pallas" in 1801. The "Pallas" had come over from Norfolk, Virginia, with a load of tobacco to peddle in Falmouth, England, before sailing on to Russia. Ward examined the peacetime prices of such colonial goods as tobacco in that port, and declared, "This peace will make me turn bankrupt."⁴

Alliances and Embargo

The merchant marine of the United States was again on the outside looking in, and depression roosted like a raven on the ink pot of every American merchant. Many American merchants, finding no profit in following the usual channels of trade, sent their vessels to the less frequented corners of the watery world.⁵ In 1802 and 1803, although American trade with the rest of the world dropped in both value and quantity, Russia saw more Americans than she ever had seen before. In 1802, sixty-five vessels cleared Kronstadt for America, an all-time high. In 1803, when America's total imports were lower than they had been for a decade, *eighty-four* vessels left Kronstadt for the United States.⁶

The reason for the amazing jump in trade with Russia in 1803 was not primarily the depression, however, but the renewal of bloodshed in Europe. By the spring of that year, the tensions between England and France had again become too great for a peaceful world to contain; and on 18 May 1803, England renewed her war on Napoleon and his legions. On 11 May, Jacob Crowninshield had written, with the mixed emotions of an unemployed lawyer about to witness a fist fight between two litigious millionaires, "The affair of peace or war will be determined in a day or so. All are anxious. Many, however, dread it. For my part I shall regret its taking place. Still, as individuals I think we may turn it to our advantage, but its effects will be dreadful upon Europe."⁷ Jacob was right again. It is probable that not until World War I did the American merchant marine again carry as great a proportion of Europe's imports as in the years immediately following 1803.

When the news of the war reached America, many mer-

chants, like Jacob Crowninshield, realized the opportunity for economic growth the war brought, and the expansion of our merchant marine that growth would entail. That realization probably had something to do with the amazing number of American vessels loading hemp, cordage, iron, and sailcloth at Kronstadt in 1803. Even more likely an explanation is that, until the trade patterns of this new war jelled, the wary American merchant would avoid trading with the main ports of the continent of Europe so far as he could. He would prefer ports as distant as possible from the battle fields. Kronstadt was America's favorite "any port in a storm."

By 1803, the burgeoning Russo-American trade had become important enough to attract the attention of President Jefferson. It was suggested that we needed some sort of diplomatic representation in St. Petersburg and Kronstadt.

In April, 1803, Jefferson's Secretary of State, James Madison, sent to Levett Harris, of Philadelphia, a commission appointing him consul of the United States at St. Petersburg.⁸ Harris quickly accepted, busied himself with arranging his affairs, and, before too many weeks had passed, embarked for Russia. His voluntary exile was to bring him into the company of the great, into honor and wealth, and into treachery and disgrace.

Harris arrived in St. Petersburg in October and was shortly thereafter received by Count Vorontsov, Alexander's Minister of Foreign Affairs. At that meeting Harris gleaned his first strong indications that the advent of a new tsar had meant the advent of a new Russian policy toward America. Count Vorontsov voiced much satisfaction at the rising state of the

Alliances and Embargo

commerce with America and congratulated the United States on its acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase from France.⁹

Again and again Harris was to receive indications in words and deeds of the affection of the Tsar for America and of his desire to encourage trade with her. The honors tendered Harris were enough to dazzle the poor man:

Since my arrival here—in compliments to the first appointments from the United States, no doubt—the most pointed and unremitted [*sic*] attentions and civilities have been shown me by the officers of the government, and the principle nobility and persons of distinction; in short I have not been classed on this score, with the foreign consuls, but have always received invitations with ministers of the first rank.¹⁰

Harris was accorded the ultimate in honor in 1806 when he informed the court that he had received a personal letter for the Tsar from President Jefferson. Harris was told that he might present it in person. The Tsar of All the Russias granting a private audience to a mere consul—it was unheard of! After the audience, Harris wrote home proudly that all “the honors of the guard and palace, shown exclusively to ambassadors and officers of the court, were extended on this occasion to the consul of the United States.”¹¹

High honor had its drawbacks, too. Harris, treated like a minister of the first rank, found himself expected to live like one, to accept invitations from the great, to entertain, to eat, clothe, and house himself like one of the great. Unfortunately, there was no salary attached to the post of consul. Harris’s total income as the United States consul at St. Petersburg consisted

of two dollars for each paper he authenticated with his consular seal, with the exception of the certificates of goods being landed, for which he received \$1.50. Like many consuls, Harris set himself up as a commission merchant, earning the bulk of his income by acting as a middleman between the Russian merchants and custom service, and the foreign supercargoes. He received a certain percentage on the value of each cargo that passed through his hands.

Even this income was not sufficient to let him live as he felt society demanded. He had not been in Russia a year before he complained to the Secretary of State that he needed more money. The United States government, of course, refused.¹² A soothsayer's foresight would have persuaded the United States to offer Harris more. Napoleon, certainly, if he could have seen into the future, to his estrangement from his brother emperor Alexander and to the flames of Moscow, would have been glad to supplement Harris's income.

The first years of Levett Harris's stay in Russia were also marked by evidences of rapprochement between Russia and America other than those which personally flattered Harris. Alexander used his influence at Constantinople to have the Dardanelles opened to American vessels and on behalf of the crew of an American ship of war captured by Tripoli.¹³ Alexander's intercessions may have had little effect, but they did prove that he was becoming our best friend in East Europe.

In 1804, Tsar Alexander and President Jefferson began their correspondence. Both wrote of how happy the growing trade between their nations made them. Each threw bouquets to the other. Jefferson, the elected president of a republic, wrote on 15 June 1804:

Alliances and Embargo

I avail myself of this occasion of expressing the exalted pleasure I have felt in observing the various acts of your administration. . . .

To which Alexander, autocrat of the Russias, answered on 7 November 1804:

. . . I express the wish that the United States may retain for a long time at the head of their administration as virtuous and enlightened a chief as you are.¹⁴

Alexander's grandmother, Catherine the Great, had assuaged her repressed desire to be an "enlightened despot" by having Alexander educated in the latest western style. The infection of liberalism he contracted from this education hung on through the early years of his reign as tsar, and he actually played with ideas of reform and even thought of instituting a constitution. Jefferson sent him several books on our own constitution, which Alexander was happy to receive.¹⁵ Thus, in the early years of the nineteenth century, America and Russia had, of all things, something of an ideological basis for friendship.

In 1804, Russo-American friendship was put to the test. In that year the United States was at war with the corsair power of Tripoli, and ringed the harbor of Tripoli with the men-of-war of the brand new United States navy. A ship flying the Russian flag appeared off that port, sighted the blockading squadron, and fled under a full press of sail. An American man-of-war pursued, overhauled, and captured her. The United States, in a complete reversal of her usual role, was guilty of

seizing neutral property on the high seas. The fact that this was property of a citizen of one of the most tender-minded neutrals in Europe increased the fascinating possibilities of the affair.

In a bit more than a half year the affair was settled. The United States, of course, had to acquiesce to Russian demands and remit to the original owner the proceeds from the sale of the captured ship and cargo; but for all of that, the most significant aspect of the whole affair was Russia's restraint.¹⁶ She resorted to none of the breast beating and sword rattling that are the usual accompaniment of conflict between a great and small nation, especially a conflict in which the smaller nation is at fault. The empire of Russia had taken a moderate attitude towards an infraction of her maritime rights, which—if the guilty party had been Britain—would have set her to howling.¹⁷

What underlay this warm affection of the Russian government for the United States? It could have stemmed from Alexander's pseudo-liberalism—and some part of it probably did—but the real source of Russo-American rapprochement was economic.

Russia was an empire whose aristocrats depended on trade with Great Britain for their hard cash. Russia was also an empire with a miniscule merchant fleet and middle class. To ship and transact her export trade, she had to depend on foreigners, most of whom were English. This engendered an ambivalent Russian attitude toward Great Britain: Russia feared and respected Britain's naval and mercantile strength; Russia hated Britain for her near monopoly of Russia's overseas trade and hated her for her overweening maritime pretensions. Russia therefore turned to any and every other maritime

power—i.e., the United States—for an alternative to dependence on Great Britain. Count Rumiantsev, Chancellor of Russia, asserted to John Quincy Adams in 1811 the great attachment of his country to America and summed up the policy of his government by saying, "It was the interest of Russia to encourage and strengthen and multiply commercial powers which might be the rivals of England, to form a balance to her overbearing power."¹⁸

In spite of the then current opinion of Rumiantsev and his tsar, the most dangerously overbearing power in Europe in the first decade of the nineteenth century was not England but France. France was at the height of *La Gloire*, and Napoleon was changing the map of Europe.

The struggle between France and her allies and England and hers went into its final world-quaking stage in 1805. In that year Nelson caught the combined French and Spanish fleets off the Cape of Trafalgar, and Napoleon caught the armies of Austria and Russia at Austerlitz. Each man, a master of warfare in his medium, routed his opponents. England, triumphant at sea, and France, triumphant on land, glared at each other across the most insurmountable barrier that could have separated them—the insubstantial line of surf that curled on the beaches of Europe.

Britain and France, each seeking a way to deal the other a mortal blow in a situation in which they really could not come to grips, turned to economic warfare. Economic warfare had been constantly utilized since 1793, but never in such grim earnestness as after 1805. Since the exports and imports of each of these super-powers were often carried in neutral bottoms, it was inevitable that the neutrals of the world would be caught

and mangled between the oceanic grindstone of Britain and the continental grindstone of France.¹⁹

The British government issued Orders in Council forbidding neutral trade with Napoleon's Europe (excepting, of course, those varieties of that trade which operated to Britannia's advantage), and the British Admiralty raised a screen of ships to enforce those orders. Napoleon issued the Berlin and Milan Decrees, creating his Continental System, the basis of which was a direct order to Europe and the world to boycott all British goods and all goods which might have been once owned by the British. By the end of 1807, it had become practically impossible for an American vessel to land anywhere in Europe without breaking a law of either France or Great Britain.

Although American overseas trade had increased steadily ever since 1803, and although in 1807 we imported and exported goods of greater value than ever before in our history, the price in seizures of our vessels and diplomatic incidents verging on war had become too great. Shortly before Napoleon issued the Milan Decree, President Jefferson, hoping that a cessation of trade with the United States would force Britain and France to respect our neutral rights, asked Congress to proclaim an embargo on all exports from the United States to any part of the world. On 22 December 1807, the Embargo Act became law.

In passing such an act the United States government postponed American participation in the hectic chapter of European history opening in the Baltic in 1807. Americans were there to witness the very beginning, but would not become protagonists until the embargo was repealed.

Alliances and Embargo

By the summer of 1807, France had only one real rival left on the continent of Europe, and that rival was Russia. On 14 June of that year, Napoleon defeated Alexander I's forces in the battle of Friedland, but the Russian army was not destroyed, and Russia's ability to wage war was still intact. On 25 June, Napoleon and Alexander met on a raft moored in the middle of the Niemen River near Tilsit. That river, forming as it did the boundary between East Prussia and Russia, had become the boundary between the domains of Napoleon and Alexander.

Alexander, who had good reason to fear France and little to love England, is supposed to have said upon greeting Napoleon on the raft, "Sire, I hate the British as much as you do." "In that case," Napoleon replied, "peace is made."²⁰

By the middle of July the treaties of Tilsit were completed and signed. The most important agreements were, of course, secret. In return for a pledge of French support for his schemes for Turkey, Alexander pledged to support Napoleon's schemes for West Europe. Alexander promised to close Russia's ports to English goods and to declare war on England if by November that nation had not accepted peace with France, consented to return all her conquests since 1805, and granted to all complete freedom of the seas. Alexander also promised to use all Russia's influence to force neutrals into Napoleon's camp.²¹

The meeting at Tilsit was the apogee of Napoleon's fiery passage through world history. Britain, alone and threatened with severance from the chief source of her naval stores, was teetering on the edge of defeat. Britons closed ranks and grimly acknowledged that victory would come only after

. . . *a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull together.* And then, my masters, what signifies argufying and dealing out speeches a fathom long, when the boatswain pipes all hands, and whistles till his lungs are ready to crack? Methinks ye want the mate of the watch among ye; for it is coming on to blow, and if your time is occupied in making speeches, and attacking each other, some surly old seaman will exclaim, as he turns his quid, "here's hell to *pay*, and no pitch hot!"²²

Napoleon next moved to dragoon the neutrals into his service. He was especially interested in Denmark. By utilizing her strategic location and her fleet, he could cut off British access to the Baltic completely, and, perhaps, again challenge Britain's naval supremacy.

On 31 July, Napoleon notified Denmark that she must choose between England and France.²³ Tiny Denmark was discovering, as she did again in 1940, that being neutral, small, and innocent does not necessarily qualify one for survival.

It remained to be seen what England would do. Her secret service had already informed her of the secret agreement at Tilsit, and Napoleon's designs on Denmark had been common knowledge for at least a year.

In August of 1807, an extremely large British task force, one of the most powerful of Napoleonic times, entered Danish waters. A plenipotentiary went ashore and presented the British ultimatum to the Danes—ally with Great Britain and surrender your navy to her, or Copenhagen will be destroyed. The Danish government rejected the ultimatum. The British proceeded to implement the threat.²⁴

On the fourth of August the Salem ship "Susan" had weighed her anchor from the bottom of Lisbon harbor and

"stood down the river Tagus, the wind N by E." Once in deep water she settled on a course north for the Baltic. Eight days out she was boarded by an English frigate, "one of George's ships," and inspected. Ten days out a French privateer sighted her, but she showed him a clean pair of heels. On the nineteenth she passed Beachy Head. On the twenty-first, seventeen days out, the British sloop-of-war "Ariel" obliged her to heave to, "pressed a Danish sailor" who had shipped on the "Susan," and "sent on board an American seaman in his place, John Rust."

On the twenty-fifth, the "Susan" came into the waters around Zealand. "At three A.M. saw the Kole light south four leagues, was boarded by an English frigate. At eight passed Elsinore Castle, passed a number of English ships anchored under the Swedish shore. . . ." The "Susan" had found the British fleet. On the twenty-first she also met and "supplied Captain Cavendish of the brig 'Rover' of Salem with two barrels beef, one bag potatoes, six salt fish, one cask water, one bag flour."

By the time the "Susan" entered the Sound, the British Admiral had clapped a blockade on Zealand and was putting troops ashore to scatter the meager Danish forces and set up batteries bearing on Copenhagen. The weather was all that one could desire for such an operation—pleasant and suitable for outdoor work according to the log of the "Susan." On the twenty-seventh the "Susan," continuing through the Sound, "passed a fleet of men-of-war, transports and merchant ships of about two hundred sail of English and Danish prizes, at anchor abreast of Copenhagen. Brisk firing of cannon and heaving of shells kept up on shore. . . . Passed a number of ships of war

at anchor on the grounds. Was boarded by the *Mador*, three-deck ship of war commanded by Captain Linsey, formerly of Boston. Ends with pleasant light southwest breezes. . . ." The "Susan" passed on up the Baltic to Russia.²⁶

When the topsails of the "Susan" tipped over the horizon and disappeared, the agony of Copenhagen had not really begun. It wasn't until 7:30 P.M. on 2 September that the real British bombardment started. When the shelling stopped, some three days later, twenty-eight streets of Copenhagen, with houses, churches, and palaces had been destroyed, and 2,000 Danes had been killed.²⁶

On 7 September, the Danes surrendered their fleet. Some Britons found the whole affair difficult to reconcile with their ethics, but most probably agreed with Cobbett, the political writer, when he said that if the ministers did not deserve impeachment for doing what they had done, then they would have deserved impeachment for not doing it.²⁷

Elsewhere in the world the bombardment brought a thrill of horror. Three years later, John Quincy Adams summed up the attitudes of most non-Britons:

Among the examples of political profligacy and wanton outrage, which the European nations for the last half century have rendered so familiar, the British attack upon Copenhagen, as far as I have been able to estimate its merits, stands at the very pinnacle of infamy.²⁸

Britain had gained another fleet, but, in doing so, presented Napoleon not only with a propaganda victory but also with one of his most loyal allies. Denmark, her capitol violated by British cannoneers for the second time in six years, declared

war on England immediately. Denmark had lost her navy, but she still had shipyards and her strategic position at the entrance to the Baltic. Britain might yet regret 1807.

When the news of the bombardment reached Russia, feeling against the British rose so rapidly and a declaration of war against Britain was so obviously in the offing that many British vessels at Kronstadt weighed anchor and sailed off without completing their cargoes.²⁹

Alexander temporized until his ports and fleets were safe behind a shield of Baltic ice, and then—in November, 1807—he broke off relations with Great Britain.³⁰

On the first of that month the "Susan," loaded with hemp and cable, cleared Kronstadt for home. Off Copenhagen she was inspected by a party from an English man-of-war and a gale forced her to anchor seven days with an English convoy of forty merchantmen. On the twentieth, she struck a reef off Elsinore and had to hire two boats from shore to tow her off. The rest of her voyage home was uneventful, except for one more inspection by a British ship, the cutter "Factor." By the first of December, the "Susan" was safe in Salem harbor.³¹

In 1807, the furies of economic warfare drove the "Susan" and eighty-seven other American vessels to Kronstadt.³² Never before had so many American sail gone to that port.³³ In no previous year had our exports to and imports from Russia been so great. Yet the omens for the future were bad.

The "Susan" and her sister ships in the Baltic had survived unscathed a shipping season full of violence and auguries of future violence. The "Susan" had witnessed part of the bombardment of Copenhagen and had cleared Kronstadt only a month before Russia declared war on England. Yet no English

ship had tried to capture her. No Russian had tried to seize her as being English. No Dane had come over her side with cocked pistols and a conviction that everyone who spoke English was a subject of George III. The "Susan" and her eighty-seven sisters had passed through the Baltic unscathed. They were among the very last Americans to do so.

1. Louis R. Gottschalk, *The Era of the French Revolution* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929), p. 326; John H. Rose, *The Life of Napoleon I* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1918), I, 311-12.

2. John H. Reinhoehl, "The Impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon upon the United States as Revealed by the Fortunes of the Crowninshield Family of Salem" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State College), pp. 50-51.

3. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 167.

4. Log of ship "Pallas," 1801-2 (Peabody Museum).

5. Reinhoehl, "Impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon on the United States," p. 67.

6. Albion and Pope, *Sea Lanes in Wartime*, p. 70; Pitkin, *A Statistical View of Commerce*, p. 272.

7. Reinhoehl, "Impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon on the United States," p. 67.

8. Letter to Secretary of State, 25 April 1803, Philadelphia, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.

9. Letters to Secretary of State, 25 October, 27 October, 5/17 November 1803, St. Petersburg, *ibid.*

10. Letter to Secretary of State, 12/24 June 1804, St. Petersburg, *ibid.*

11. Letter to Secretary of State, 10 August 1806, St. Petersburg, *ibid.*

12. Letter to Secretary of State, 12/24 June 1804, St. Petersburg, *ibid.*; Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 536; John Quincy Adams Diary, 20 November 1810, 24 June 1811, in microfilms of the Adams Papers, Part I, Reel 31, pp. 180, 263.

13. Letter to Secretary of State, 12/24 June 1804, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg; letter to Count Warontzoff, 26 January 1804, St. Petersburg, *ibid.*

14. Max M. Laserson, *The American Impact on Russia—Diplomatic and Ideological, 1784-1917* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 82-83.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-83.

Alliances and Embargo

16. Samuel Barron to Harris, 3 December 1804, Syracuse; Rodgers to Harris, 18 July 1805, Malta, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg.

17. The only other Russo-American maritime incident in European waters outside the Baltic and White seas in these years was the capture by the Russians of two American ships, the ship "Commerce," of Boston, and the brigantine "Hector," of Weymouth, Massachusetts, in 1807. Both were cruising in the Mediterranean too close to Turkish-held ports for Russian taste. Russia was then at war with Turkey.

On this occasion Russia was the offender, and—as she was so much bigger than the United States—years passed before the owners of the "Commerce" and "Hector" received compensation (*American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, IV, 635; V, 784–85; J. B. Moore, *History and Digest of the International Arbitrations to Which the United States Has Been a Party* [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1898], V, 4554).

18. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 271.

19. This book is not a diplomatic history of the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, nor is it a history of the various measures implemented by the belligerents and the United States to protect, control, or destroy neutral trade. Such material is essential to any understanding to United States overseas trade between 1793 and 1812, but if included in any detail in this book would soon become the tail that wags the dog. I, therefore, only make cursory mention of the Orders in Council, the decrees, etc., in the text, and refer the reader to the Appendix, where he will find a chronicle and thumbnail description of the most important events and measures affecting American trade with the Baltic and Russia during the period in question.

20. Lobanov-Rostovsky, *Russia and Europe*, p. 155.

21. The basic facts of the war with Russia and the meeting at Tilsit can be found in any text on the era. See, for instance, Gottschalk, *The Era of the French Revolution*, Pt II, bk I, chapt. iv.

22. *Naval Chronicle for 1807*, XVIII, vi.

23. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, II, 276–77.

24. Arthur Bryant, *Years of Victory, 1802–1812* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1945), pp. 199–200; William L. Clowes et al., *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1900), V, 209.

25. Log of the ship "Susan," 1806–7 (Essex Institute).

26. Clowes, *Royal Navy*, V, 214–15; Paul Frischauer, *England's Years of Danger* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 187.

27. Bryant, *Years of Victory*, pp. 200–201; Clowes, *Royal Navy*, V, 217.

28. Letter to Joy, 11 May 1810, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. I. This letter is not signed, but from its handwriting, style, date, and city of origin, I am convinced it came from John Quincy Adams.

29. Letter to Secretary of State, 18/30 September 1807, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

30. Rose, *Napoleon*, II, 134.

31. Log of ship "Susan," 1806-7 (Essex Institute); Hitchings, "Digest of Duties from 1789 to 1851" (Peabody Museum).

32. Letter to Secretary of State, 19/31 December 1807, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.

33. With the possible exception of 1806, for which no figures are available.

Fraudulent Trading

IN 1807, EIGHTY-EIGHT AMERICAN VESSELS came to Kronstadt, two to Archangel, and one to Narva. These last three had been chartered by the English.¹

When American sailors are seen in Kronstadt's streets by the hundreds, when Americans steer through ice floes to far Archangel, and when England, with the greatest merchant marine in the world, begins chartering American merchantmen, "the time is out of joint" and conditions are becoming desperate.

1807, however, was prosaic compared to the year that followed. In 1808, American, English, and Russian traders reaped the harvest of the tares and dragon's teeth their governments had sown the previous autumn. In America the embargo reduced the enormous export trade to what little could be smuggled out by alleged coasters or over the borders into Canada and the Floridas. A tiny number of American vessels were given permission to clear foreign—the brig "Leopard," for instance, was authorized to sail from New York to St. Peters-

burg and return with \$9,800 worth of goods—but the total of such clearance amounted to not even a drop in the bucket.²

In Great Britain the effects of the Continental System spread like a killing fog. Clearances from her ports to Europe dropped from 2,290 in 1807 to 1,282 in 1808. The value of her exports to the north of Europe decreased by 50 per cent. Her imports of naval stores plummeted. For example, in 1807, she imported £639,507 worth of hemp, and in 1808, only £218,947 worth.³ In 1808, attempts were made to raise hemp in India, New Holland, and even to make cordage out of the fiber of the plantain tree of the West Indies.⁴ The price of hemp shot upward. Hemp, £53 per ton in the summer of 1807, was £118 a year later.⁵

In Russia 1808 confirmed for the anglophiles all that they had supposed Alexander's alliance with France would mean. England, which regularly took half or more of the exports of Russia, was cut off by war. Jefferson's embargo prevented the United States from taking England's place to any significant extent. War with Sweden, practically Britain's only remaining ally, closed off any intercourse with that neighbor. Trade by sea with everyone and anyone else was cut off by the presence of the British fleet in the Baltic. Normally, between three and five thousand vessels entered Russia's ports every year. In 1808, the total of all entries into all of Russia's ports was 996.⁶

The traders and governments of these nations in 1808 moved as best they could to remedy their discomforts. American traders badgered Jefferson and Congress to lift the embargo. American skippers in foreign ports or on the high seas when the embargo was passed often decided to stay away from home rather than spend the duration of the embargo fretting

on shore. A few of those caught at home ports waited for a moonless night and slipped out to sea despite Jefferson's law. After all, a ship was a sea-going machine for making money, not a breakwater to protect wharf pilings.

These expatriate skippers, conniving Flying Dutchmen inadvertently cursed by Jefferson to briny exile, were by natural selection among the most dangerous Americans to have wandering about in Europe in 1808. If they were like most officers of American merchant ships, they were Yankee and Federalist, and their attitude toward the Republican administration would not be one of reverence. As men who voluntarily chose to disobey the law of their own government, they would be apt to disobey the laws of any and every country, and thus sully Americans' international reputation.

An extreme example of their type was Captain Arnold of the ship "*Carmelite*," which was at Kronstadt in 1809. As Arnold was taking his ship out of the harbor in October of that year, a Russian boat overtook her and Lieutenant Durnilov of the Russian Imperial Marines came on board. The lieutenant directed Arnold to come about or drop anchor because the "*Carmelite*" was fraudulently clearing with sailors of other foreign vessels aboard, which was illegal according to Russian law. Arnold refused to obey, and Durnilov ordered his own boatmen to execute the order. Then, in the words of Count Rumiantsev's complaint to the United States government about the affair, ". . . There immediately arose a great uproar among the crew of the *Carmelite*, who opposed the lowering of the sails. The Russian officer repeated the order to cast anchor, whereupon Captain Arnold and the supercargo rushed from the cabin armed with swords and guns, and taking aim at the

Russians employed, threatened to fire upon and to sabre them if they dared to proceed, or, to carry them to America if they did not immediately go from on board." Lieutenant Durnilov noted the numerical superiority and earnestness of the Americans, the lengthening distance to shore, and the falling dusk. He wisely returned to his own craft. The "Carmelite" made off under a press of sail.

When Rumiantsev's complaint reached Washington, President Madison expressed his deep regret, but admitted that he could do nothing in the way of immediately punishing Arnold. Captain Arnold, it seemed, was a rugged individualist who had sailed from America after the embargo went into effect and who had not returned.⁷

As none of Arnold and his like would think of returning home with cargo until the repeal of the embargo, they of necessity sold the services of themselves and their vessels to whoever had need of an empty ship and a neutral flag, i.e. the English. English merchants were particularly interested in renting sheep's clothing for voyages to Russia, and would pay an American three times the fee an English smuggler could get for such a voyage.⁸ Thus a goodly part—possibly a majority—of the small number of American vessels that entered Russia's ports in 1808 were sailing under secret British contract. The ships "Aurora," of New York, and "Diana," of Boston, arrived at Russian ports on the Baltic in that year and were seized and condemned for sailing on British account. Two or three Americans came to Archangel and sailed safely away, and it was not until later that it was learned that they were pure unadulterated English merchantmen.⁹ We will never know how many of the other American arrivals in Russia in

Fraudulent Trading

1808 were either English vessels in disguise or Americans sailing on English account. Our only source of information on American ships in Russia that year is Levett Harris, which makes them all suspect.

The prostitution of the American flag by some Americans to the interests of British commerce was so blatant—and would continue to be so for the next four years—that all honest Americans were forced to confess the existence of the unsavory practice. In July, 1809, forty-three Americans at Christiansand, Norway (Norway was then a possession of Denmark)—captains and supercargoes of vessels seized and charged with sailing for the English, and therefore men to whose interest it was to deny that any American had ever accepted any British employment—admitted in a memorial to their government “. . . that many of our citizens have, especially during the eighteen months last past, been engaged in a commerce, violating alike the laws of the United States and those of the belligerents, and which has been carried on under false papers procured in England, and under the mask of the American flag.”¹⁰

The hiring of American ships was only one of the methods Great Britain used to survive Napoleon's Continental System and Russia's enmity. Lacking a dishonorable neutral to do their smuggling for them, Britons often would slip through the meshes of the Continental System by posing as neutrals themselves. After 1807, neutral nations were few and far between, and British merchantmen often experienced the indignity of flying the flags of such comic opera nations as Knyphausen, Pappenburg, and Oldenburg. The flag of the United States was, of course, a favorite cover. The United States consul at

Bordeaux wrote in November, 1808, "The English . . . send shoals of American vessels from their ports, who never saw America, and whose papers were manufactured in London." ¹¹ British merchants and captains went to extraordinary lengths to disguise their ships. The forty-three Americans at Christiansand mentioned above even thought ". . . it not improbable that latterly the English have built their ships as much as possible to resemble the Americans, and with them have been carrying on an extensive trade, especially to Archangel and to the Baltic, under the American flag and with American papers of English manufacture." ¹²

The more successful the British became at posing as Americans the more dangerous it became to be an American. Dickson, the United States consul at Gothenburg, reported in 1808 that every British convoy passing Gothenburg bound for Russia contained British ships flying the American flag. He worried that

in a short time the seas will be entirely covered with them to the great detriment of the honest and fair American trader, as it is not to be expected that the Russians, Danes, and Prussians who very vigorously carry their decrees against England into execution can be long blind to this nefarious practice, and the papers being in many instances so like as with difficulty to be known from the real, the consequence will be that every ship sailing under the flag of the United States will be seized and condemned indiscriminately.¹³

Forging foreign ship papers became one of the minor industries of the port cities of England. Between 1807 and 1812, a good engraver was as valuable as a regiment to England's war effort, for, as Sir William Scott said, "It is a matter perfectly

notorious that we are carrying on the whole trade of the world under simulated and disguised papers. . . .¹⁴ English craftsmen learned to reproduce the seal of the United States and the signatures of Jefferson and Madison with near perfection. One of the leading forgers of American documents was a certain Van Sander, a Londoner who kept his atelier near Whitehall.¹⁵ Another who dealt in forgeries, although probably as a dealer rather than creator, was Peter Vander, also of London. When he went bankrupt in 1812 (alas, in 1812 the Continental System so decayed that it was hard for an honest forger to make a living), his assignees put up for auction—besides “several capital charts,” among which were charts of the Northern Sea and the Cattegat, and the Baltic Pilot—thirty-four boxes containing simulated ships’ papers and seals for foreign countries, various colored inks, foreign writing paper, etc.¹⁶

Americans occasionally assisted British merchants in their masquerade by selling them American vessels—keel to truck, papers, flag, and all. The “Manhattan,” of New York, and the “Two Friends,” of Charleston, were two dishonored in this fashion.¹⁷ Sometimes the transactions allowing British merchants to hide behind the Stars and Stripes were rococo masterpieces of casuistry. For instance, in 1809, Mr. John Thomas, of Baltimore, U.S.A., sold to a Mr. Worthy, of Liverpool, Great Britain, a power of attorney, *irrevocable*, over the American vessel “Thomas,” and made him supercargo of that vessel. In 1810, Worthy bought a cargo at New York as an agent of John Thomas, but paid for the goods with bills of exchange upon a Liverpool house. Worthy, with a passport—real or forged—as a United States citizen, then sailed the vessel “Thomas” to Archangel, where she was admitted as American. There one of

her sailors told the Russians that, although she was ostensibly going to clear for New York, she was really going to sail to Liverpool. The Russians confiscated the vessel. While the ship was under confiscation and awaiting trial, the Liverpool house refused to cash the bills of exchange which had been paid to the New York concern for the cargo of the "Thomas." Worthy, who had fled when the "Thomas" was seized, then mortgaged the "Thomas" to the New York concern as payment on the sum owed that concern. The New York concern also procured a real bill of sale from John Thomas, the original owner. The New York concern then sent a captain and crew to Archangel to claim the "Thomas" and sail it away. Levett Harris did his best to get the vessel freed and also claimed very heavy damages for her detention. The final settlement of the case—if there ever was a final settlement—is mercifully unknown.¹⁸

Although the British government was conscious of the necessity of smuggling to British survival after the Treaty of Tilsit, the government of George III was also perfectly conscious of the fact that unrestricted smuggling would help France more than Britain. It would restore to Napoleon that access to the highways of the ocean that so many British tars had died to deny him. The British government therefore tried, with considerable success, to manage the illicit trade by issuing licenses to all smugglers, British and foreign alike, who had British approval. These licenses gave a ship safe passage through the British blockade no matter what nationality she affected. Without such a license, she was liable to capture.

Thus a smuggler, with a license to show the British navy and a set of forged American, Portuguese, Pappenburg, Mecklenburg, etc., papers to show the privateers and custom inspectors

of France and her allies, was *theoretically* as safe as in his mother's arms. Of course, the captain of the smuggling vessel had to pledge his sacred oath on each contradictory set of papers—but honor is a very negotiable security in time of war.¹⁹

In 1807, 2,606 such licenses were issued by the British government. In 1808, the number was 4,910; in 1809, 15,226; and in 1810, 18,356! In 1811, the number of licenses fell off very sharply to a mere 7,602 because in that year the Continental System reached its peak of efficiency and all British trade languished. After 1811, the decline of Napoleon's power and influence made licenses superfluous.²⁰

Today we don't know much about the license trade beyond its general outlines—smugglers rarely write memoirs—and perhaps we will never know what portion of the licensed vessels which went to Russia posed as American or what portion of them *were* American. We do know that four-fifths of the licensed vessels went to the North German, Scandinavian, and Russian ports,²¹ and there are literally heaps of evidence that an appreciable portion of these claimed American nationality. It is therefore just—in a bitter-sweet way—that many of the ships issued British licenses to trade with the United States when exports to Britain were embargoed by the United States government disguised themselves as Russians. Of the fifty-five vessels, almost all British owned, licensed to smuggle timber and other naval stores out of the United States after 1 July 1810, perhaps as many as twenty flew the Russian flag.²²

The one ingredient that made England's license trade possible was her supremacy on the high seas. In the words of Admiral Alfred Mahan, the greatest scholar of the maritime

history of this period, "Great as was the power of Napoleon, it ceased like that of certain wizards, when it reached the water." ²³ Britain's navy constantly shielded Britain's smuggler and only left him in total dependence on his disguise and wits when he came within range of Napoleon's shore batteries. The British navy arranged convoy shuttles that provided the license trader with nearly complete protection on the high seas, and screened the coast of the continent with dozens of cruising frigates, brigs of war, cutters, etc., to keep most of Napoleon's privateers in port. Only in narrow waters, such as those around Denmark, were privateers a real and constant danger.

In the spring of 1808, Admiral Saumarez, one of England's greatest and yet most unpraised captains of the Napoleonic Wars, entered the Baltic with a fleet of sixty-two men-of-war, sixteen of which were sail of the line. Significantly, his flagship was the "Victory," which had been Nelson's ship at Trafalgar. For the next four shipping seasons, he and his fleet would dominate the Baltic, driven from that sea only by the advance of ice and returning every spring when the ice, in its turn, retreated. Saumarez won no great battles—there were no fleets to do battle with—but he did efficiently manage the incredibly difficult business of shepherding vast convoys of "neutrals" through the Great Belt, and he performed great feats of diplomacy in preserving and cultivating the fund of North European good will toward Britain which had survived Napoleon's machinations and Britain's brutality. He kept open the vital channels of trade between his nation and the Baltic. Without his services it is entirely possible that Napoleon's Continental System would have succeeded in its object.²⁴

Saumarez's main opponent in the Baltic and its approaches

Fraudulent Trading

was Denmark. Denmark, her fleet gone, her merchant marine decimated, and her vital maritime commerce throttled, moaned for her dead like Laertes over the graves of his father and sister, and—like Laertes—plotted revenge with the ready approval of the true villain of the piece.

The Danish government, having neither the time or means to reproduce its fleet, turned to privateering as a way to strike at England. In September, 1807, while the ruins of Copenhagen still smoldered, the first *Kaperreglement*—regulation for privateering—was issued. The Danish and Norwegian sailors, their normal ways of earning a living cut off by the presence of the British fleet, were spurred into privateering by hunger as well as by patriotism, and thirty-two vessels were fitted out for privateering in less than a month.²⁵ They were just the vanguard.

In addition to encouraging such private ventures into naval warfare, the Danish government itself built and sent out numbers of gunboats. These boats carried at the very most only two twenty-four pounders and a crew of sixty, and, while they did have auxiliary sails, normally depended on oars. They were paltry successors to Denmark's proud sail of the line that now flew the hated Union Jack, but in Denmark's narrow, shallow waters they could be deadly weapons. In the Belts or Sound, an English mistake in seamanship or a slackening of the wind could leave a whole convoy of tender "neutral" merchantmen open to attack while their seventy-two gun shepherd languished on a sand bar or whistled for wind a mile away. With a bit of luck, oars and two cannon and a few dozen sabres might bring down the British Empire.²⁶

The Danish gunboats and privateers operated from bases on

both flanks of the Skagerak (Norway, you remember, is Danish), from Denmark proper, and from Zealand, and from Bornholm and other islands in the Baltic. The Danes and Norwegians devised "telegraph" systems to warn of approaching sails: sentinels stationed high in the hills along the coast peering over the far edge of the beach-dweller's horizon to signal privateers waiting below to the attack long before the privateers or their prey saw each other. Thus it was impossible for any American—fraudulent or real—to pass through the narrows to the Baltic and Kronstadt between 1807 and 1812 without knowing that he was constantly under the gimlet eye of one or several or a hundred plunder-hungry Danes.²⁷

Danes, particularly hungry ones, found it very difficult to tell an American vessel from a British; and when they did seize a real American, they were inclined to assume, too often with justification, that the Bostonian or New Yorker or Philadelphian was sailing on British account. That the captain and crew of a privateer got a good percentage of whatever they brought in and persuaded the courts to condemn was not, of course, inclined to blunt their eagerness or sharpen their discernment.

Shortly after the melting ice admitted shipping to the Baltic in 1808, the Danish privateers brought in the "Margaret," Captain Alexander Clark, allegedly of Baltimore bound into the Baltic from Charleston. A bit later the "Jermina and Fanny," Captain Jacob Sherburne, allegedly of Charleston bound for Russia, and the "Galen," Captain Stedman, allegedly of Boston bound from London to Russia, were captured. These were the first of scores and scores of vessels seized and

brought into Danish ports while indignantly claiming American nationality.²⁸

By 18 November 1808, eleven vessels flying the American flag had been captured. The American consul at Copenhagen found himself with several score of stranded Americans on his hands. The problem of maintaining them was so difficult that the consul asked for and received permission to load them on the "Live Oak," one of the captured vessels, and ship them all back to America. Some the Americans, however, were of little expense or trouble to him. They enlisted aboard Danish privateers.

Of the captains of the eleven captured ships, only Captain Stedman of the "Galen" was able to convince the Danish authorities by November that his ship was, indeed, an American vessel. The "Galen" was released, and Captain Stedman bound himself to sail her directly back to the United States. As the "Galen" cleared Copenhagen, there was in sight of that port a British convoy. In full view of those on shore, the "Galen" joined that convoy and resumed its voyage to Russia.²⁹ Danish faith in American neutrality was presumably not strengthened by the event.

When the "Galen" arrived at Kronstadt, it found a city by now fully aware of what the alliance with Napoleon was doing to Russia's commerce. Usually eight hundred to a thousand vessels arrived at St. Petersburg and her seaward offspring, Kronstadt, in a year. In 1808, sixty arrived.³⁰

Russian merchants and nobles were grumbling, sometimes under their breath and sometimes not, and developing a mercenary inability to tell a false neutral arrival from a real one. The

Russian government was busying itself with finding new customers for Russian products. Alexander's valiant ally, France, was no good as a customer. France was a continental nation, too, and raised for itself many of the goods Russia exported.³¹ The goods she did want, and want desperately from Russia, such as masts and spars, were too cumbersome to ship any way but by sea, and there lay the British fleet, eager to utilize every stick of timber it could seize. In 1810, the French needed masts so badly that they tried to float rafts of masts from Riga along the coastal shallows behind the sand bars and low islands to Memel, where they could travel by inland waterways to Hamburg and thence to France. But a storm shattered the rafts and strewed the masts all over the Baltic.³² There was simply no way in which France could substitute for England as Russia's chief customer.

On 13 July 1808, Count Rumiantsev, Chancellor of Russia, informed Levett Harris that Russia was sending its first diplomatic representative to the United States. Tsar Alexander had appointed André Dashkoff the Russian consul-general at Philadelphia and also conferred on him the office of his chargé d'affaires near the Congress of the United States.³³ As Rumiantsev said, ". . . In dissolving our commercial connections with Great Britain, it became necessary to seek some other power in whom we might find a substitute, and on looking around, I could see none but the United States who were at all competent to this object."³⁴

1. Letter to Secretary of State, 19/31 December 1807, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.

2. *Message of the President of the United States, Transmitting List of*

Fraudulent Trading

Vessels Permitted to Depart from the United States since December, 1807 (Washington City: Roger Chew Weightman, 1808).

3. *Journals of the House of Commons*, LXV, 647-48, 696; LXVII, 766.

4. Francis D'Ivernois, *Effects of the Continental Blockade upon the Commerce, Finance, Credit and Prosperity of the British Islands* (London: J. Hatchard, 1810), nn. 52-54.

5. Tooke, *A History of Prices*, I, 274.

6. "Recent State of Russian Commerce," *Weekly Register*, III (10 October 1812), 95; *Naval Chronicle for 1809*, XXII, 25. Quoted from Count Romanzow, "State of the Commerce of the Russian Empire from 1802 to 1808."

7. Count Rumiantsev to John Quincy Adams, 23 February 1810, enclosed with dispatch dated St. Petersburg, 24 March 1810; John Quincy Adams to Count Rumiantsev, 31 December/12 January 1811, St. Petersburg; John Quincy Adams to Secretary of State, 27 January 1811, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Russia, Vol. I.

8. "Memorial against the License Trade, presented by the Merchants and Ship Owners of the Town of Kingston upon Hull, to Board of Trade, 4 April 1811," *Papers Relating to the License Trade, Parliamentary Papers*, 1812.

9. Letter to Secretary of State, 5/17 July 1809, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.

10. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 330.

11. W. E. Lingelbach, "Historical Investigation and the Commercial History of the Napoleonic Era," *American Historical Review*, XIX (December, 1914), 269-70.

12. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 330.

13. Letter to William Pinkney, 22 July 1808, Gothenburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Gothenburg, Vol. I.

14. Roland Ruppenthal, "Denmark and the Continental System," *Journal of Modern History*, XV (March, 1943), 16.

15. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 342-43.

16. "British Manufactures," *Weekly Register*, III (26 September 1812), 63, quoting *London Morning Chronicle*, 12 June 1812.

17. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 535.

18. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 390-91.

19. Joseph Phillimore, *Reflections on the Nature and Extent of the License Trade* (London: J. Budd, 1811), pp. 29-31.

20. "An Account of the Number of Commercial Licenses Granted during the Last Ten Years," *Parliamentary Papers*, 1812, Miscellaneous.

21. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, II, 322.

22. "An Account of All Licenses Granted for Importing Cargoes from . . . North America . . . to Britain . . . in Foreign Ships since 1 July 1810," *Parliamentary Papers*, 1812.

23. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, II, 279.

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

24. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, pp. 181-82; Sir John Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Admiral Lord de Saumarez* (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), II, 98-101.

25. Ruppenthal, "Denmark and the Continental System," p. 19.

26. A. N. Ryan, "The Defense of British Trade with the Baltic, 1808-1813," *English Historical Review*, LXXIV (July, 1959), 445.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 448; Ruppenthal, "Denmark and the Continental System," p. 19.

28. Letter to Secretary of State, 19 May 1808, Copenhagen, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. I.

29. Letter to Secretary of State, 18 November 1808, Copenhagen, *ibid.*

30. Oddy, *European Commerce*, 122; extract from *Court Gazette of St. Petersburg*, dated 27 January 1810, O.S., National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Russia, Vol. I.

31. Oddy, *European Commerce*, pp. 125, 397.

32. Letter to Secretary of State, 6 November 1810, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of the Adams Papers, Reel 136, p. 187.

33. J. C. Hildt, *Early Diplomatic Negotiations of the United States with Russia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1906), p. 38.

34. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 299.

The Danish Problem

PRESIDENT JEFFERSON had little desire to see his nation entangled in the war between Russia and Great Britain—or in any other war—but he had to quiet the clamor of the American seaboard cities for trade. In America in 1809, the ice and Jefferson's unshakeable dedication to his embargo melted about the same time. On the first day of March, three days before the presidency passed to James Madison, Jefferson signed the Non-Intercourse Act, which renewed trade with all the world but France, Britain, their colonies, and lands occupied by their forces.

In April the British minister to the United States, D. M. Erskine, went far beyond his instructions and negotiated an agreement by which Britain pledged to surrender some of the most galling of her claimed rights to dictate the cargoes, courses, and destinations of American merchantmen. The British government soon repudiated the Erskine Agreement, but in the meantime President Madison renewed commercial intercourse with realm of George III and hundreds of American vessels cleared for British ports.

The Non-Intercourse Act was restored to its full original scope when news of the repudiation reached the United States and Anglo-American diplomacy resumed its slide toward war. In contrast, Britain's actions in 1809 were such as to spur Russo-American trade and rapprochement forward. Numbers of the American vessels which sailed for Britain under the Erskine Agreement undoubtedly continued on into the Baltic, some probably under secret English charter. And in that same spring London issued a new order in council permitting Americans to trade with any North European port east of the Ems River not in actual possession of the French without stopping first in British ports.¹ American vessels sailing directly to the Baltic and Russia could pass right beneath the guns of British men-of-war with impunity.

Everything in the United States and Russia seemed to point to 1809 becoming the greatest year of Russo-American commerce. The Non-Intercourse Act made trade with most of western Europe illegal. Nearly all the leading rivals of the United States for Russian trade had been eliminated, and Russia's capacity as a market for goods brought by Americans was thus far greater than it had ever been before. Russia, anxious to open new channels for her exports, gave American ships a more hospitable welcome than they could find practically anywhere else in Europe.² Now that the end of the embargo had changed sailing ships from liabilities into assets, the demand in America for Russian naval stores was enormous. Russian duck, which brought at most \$24.50 a bolt wholesale in 1807, was priced as high as \$44.00 a bolt in 1809.³ Hemp, usually about \$250.00 to \$270.00 a ton, now commanded as much as \$400.00 to \$450.00 a ton, and would continue to

The Danish Problem

bring such prices for a year and more.⁴ As late as July, 1810, even the despised Kentucky dew-retted hemp brought \$330.00 a ton in Philadelphia.⁵

Americans who did reach Russia in 1809 and return made fantastically high profits. The "North America," of Portland, sailed for Russia with the usual cargo of mahogany, logwood, coffee, pepper, indigo, and rum, and returned with the usual cargo of iron, hemp, sheeting, ravensduck, sailcloth, and bristles. And yet hers was one of the most profitable voyages in the history of Portland.⁶ Similarly lucrative was the voyage of Boston's "Catherine" to Russia in 1809. She cleared \$115,000 on that single voyage.⁷

Yet, in 1809, only fifty-five American vessels found their way to Kronstadt. Probably something like two thirds as many entered at the other Russian Baltic ports and at Archangel, making a total of, let us say, eighty to ninety American vessels in Russian ports that year.⁸ That figure isn't really impressive if you consider the forces driving and attracting Americans to Russia in 1809. The number of American vessels that arrived in Russia in 1809 was probably not much, if at all, in excess of the number that arrived in 1807.

The mystery of why so few arrived in 1809 is, unfortunately for American merchants of the day, very easy to explain. In 1809, the accelerating economic warfare between France and England made the life of the neutral trader very miserable indeed. In the fall of that year, Stephen Girard, the great Philadelphia merchant, wrote plaintively to Baring Brothers and Company, his chief agent and broker in Europe, "It is remarkable that out of six ships which I have dispatched for Europe since the Embargo has been taken off, that three of

them have been captured, one lost, and only one has arrived safely at her destination." ⁹

The chief opponents of Girard in his losing battle to make a profit in European trade in 1809 were the Danes and Norwegians. These peaceful Scandinavians, egged on by French scheming and driven by English brutality, scourged the waters around Norway and Denmark. In the process of bringing in every vessel in 1809 that wasn't lucky, fast, or hiding behind a British man-of-war, these corsairs of Frederick VI, king of Denmark, captured sixty-one American vessels.¹⁰

The attitude of Danes and Americans toward each other was not exclusively that of wolf and prey. In 1809, they also did considerable trading, mostly through the tiny Danish town of Tonningen in Schleswig. (Schleswig-Holstein was then still part of Denmark.) In 1809, Tonningen found that the fortunes of war had made it the most westerly port in North Europe not under Napoleon's direct control and not blockaded by the British navy. Between June and December of 1809, 150 American vessels, among others, carefully tacked through the dangerous baffle of shoals at the mouth of the Eyder, and up that narrow river to Tonningen. There they unloaded enormous quantities of colonial goods. This produce was carted south to Altona on the border near Hamburg and smuggled from there across into the heart of Napoleon's Europe in pouches, under ladies' dresses, in coffins which pious Danes brought across the border to Hamburg to bury, and in a thousand other ways. Before the year was over, Napoleon—to whom all Americans were Englishmen in disguise and all colonial produce English in origin—intimidated Frederick VI into closing this gaping rent in the Continental System. "J'ai

The Danish Problem

vu avec peine qu'Altona était devenue colonie anglaise," murmured Bonaparte, and Frederick jumped. But in 1809, called by the Danes "den auden Tonningenske," Americans exported over four million dollars worth of goods to Denmark, more than twice as much as ever before.¹¹

Denmark is best remembered by Americans who were there in 1809, not for Tonningen, but for Christiansand and Copenhagen and the scores of inlets from which the privateers slipped like barracuda from coral caves. The Danes captured twenty-five American vessels and brought them into ports of Zealand, Denmark proper, and adjacent islands. Eighteen of the twenty-five were acquitted and seven condemned.¹² The Norwegian subjects of Denmark, literally driven by hunger, were even more active. In the same period they brought in thirty-six American sail. Thirty of these were eventually acquitted and six condemned.

In total, sixty-one were captured in 1809, and of these all but thirteen acquitted. The large number of acquittals indicates that the Danish prize courts were among the most just in Europe at the time. The large number of acquittals also probably indicates that nothing like a majority of the ships sporting the American flag in European waters in these years were disguised Englishmen. (Fraudulent Americans, however, would probably always take the English convoys past Danish territory, and thus usually escape capture, so the number of Americans acquitted by the Danes is no more than merely indicative of American honesty.)

Americans caught up in "the law's delay" in Denmark had not our detachment, and they didn't think of the Danes as just. In fact, they thought Danish law and courts the very writ and

tribunals of the Devil. George Thorndike, of the captured Massachusetts vessel "Suwarrow," discovered that his Bowdoin College baccalaureate thesis on international trade, which the privateers had commandeered, was being used against his ship in court. The thesis contained deprecatory remarks about Napoleon. Therefore, the privateers reasoned in a *non sequitur* born of greed, the "Suwarrow" must be English. The vessel was not condemned on that fiction, though. She was condemned on the charge that, although neither the vessel or cargo were English, they had become tainted with Englishness when the "Suwarrow" appealed to a British frigate for help at the time of the capture. The Americans shouted that there wasn't even an English sail in sight at the time—but to no avail.²³

The forty-three American memorialists at Christiansand, Norway, whom we met in the last chapter, agreed that the Danes did work rather too hard at trying to convict:

In some cases, where the most trifling inaccuracy could not be discovered in our ships' papers, we have found them, when out of our possession, mutilated and defaced. In some instances, our people have been tempted with bribes, and threatened with punishments, to induce their giving false testimony against our property. . . .

The Danes, the forty-three also agreed, did little to broach the language barriers:

In those cases which have been adjudicated, all the proceedings are in the Danish language, (with which your memorialists are unacquainted,) and we have been invariably refused either a copy of those proceedings generally, or even the

The Danish Problem

particular charges against us, until what they called the trial was over. . . .¹⁴

All the captured Americans complained bitterly of the snail-pace of Danish justice. While prices of colonial goods in Tønder and Kronstadt dropped, the captured Americans waited. While their provisions ran out and their crews idled and got paid for it, the Americans waited. While Napoleon thought about forcing Frederick VI to sequester all neutral property in Danish territory, and thought about adding all Denmark to his empire, which would have meant confiscation of all American property in that land, the Americans sat and waited. Their exasperation wasn't entirely mercenary, either. By September of 1809, there were upwards of 400 Americans at Christiansand, and all Norway was on the edge of starvation.¹⁵

Delay was part and parcel of Danish justice. The "Suwarow," for instance, was captured on 30 April 1809 and wasn't finally condemned until December.¹⁶ The vessel "Good Friends," one of the lost ships of which Girard complained, was taken on 18 July 1809 and not freed until 9 June 1810.¹⁷

When the American ships were, as was usually the case, liberated, it still cost their owners money. The courts invariably dunned the Americans for the court costs, which amounted to two, three, and even five hundred rixdollars per trial. And Americans cleared by the lower courts often found it cheaper to bribe the privateers not to appeal their cases than to wait for trial in the higher courts. More litigation meant months and months more delay. The captains and supercargoes of the seventeen American sail brought into Norway and freed by the

lower courts of Christiansand paid between them 19,800 rix-dollars to avoid appeal.¹⁸ To give a specific example, William Adgate of the "Good Friends" waited for a year for his ship to be cleared by the lower court; and when that wonderful day finally came, he was told by Gabriel and Ebe Lund, the privateers who had brought in the "Good Friends," that they wanted 20,000 rixdollars or they would appeal. Adgate settled with them for 6,700 rixdollars and blessed the moment when the "Good Friends" weighed anchor and stood out to sea.¹⁹

The whole problem of Danish seizure of American property was immensely complicated by the lack of any but the most minimal United States diplomatic representation in Denmark. The United States did not even have the standard treaty of peace and commerce with Denmark, although the absence of such a treaty meant that Americans paid higher Sound dues and half again as much duty on goods they brought to Denmark than merchants of Britain, Holland, France, and all the other nations which had treaties with Denmark.²⁰ At the end of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin and the Danish minister of foreign affairs had drawn up such a treaty, but because of inactivity by our Congress it died in embryo.²¹ During these barren negotiations, Franklin had written to the Danish minister:

. . . those ministers are wise who look into futurity and quench the first spark between two nations, which neglected may in time grow into flame, all the consequences whereof no human prudence can foresee, which may produce much mischief to both and cannot possibly do any good to either.²²

Danish-American relations between 1807 and 1812 exactly confirmed Franklin's moralizing.

The Danish Problem

If America's congressmen were sluggards, her merchants were not, and the numbers of American ships passing through the Sound by the early 1790's made it apparent that the United States would have to have a consul at Copenhagen. In 1792, George Washington appointed Hans Rudolph Saabye, a wealthy Danish merchant and member of the House of Ryberg who had been involved in trade with Americans in the 1780's, as the United States consul in Denmark.²³

Thus it was that when Americans of vessels seized by the Danes were crying that ". . . neither the correctness of our papers, nor the justice of our causes afford us any prospect of acquittal. If we ever obtain redress it must be by the interference of our *own government*,"²⁴ the only official of that government on the scene was a Dane and a member of a commercial house that, like nearly every institution in Copenhagen, was involved either directly or indirectly in privateering.²⁵

Mr. Saabye never perverted his consulship by working against the Americans. In fact, he did nothing at all about Americans. Considering the helplessness of those seeking his aid, this may have been nearly as reprehensible. The forty-three memorialists at Christiansand gently complained that "Mr. Saabye, although well apprized of our situation, had not taken those steps which are certainly in his power. . . ." ²⁶ Robert Rogers, of the "Suwarrow," howled that "our consul here is *apathy* itself," and claimed that Saabye's "present conduct ought in the mind of every American to stigmatize him with the guilt of the *unpardonable sin*." ²⁷

Not all the Danish subjects drove Americans to such desperate extremes of expression. Americans had only praise for Peter Isaacson, of Christiansand, whom they—for lack of help or

direction from their own government—chose and appointed as United States consul in that nest of privateers.²⁸ But the attitude of most Americans toward the Danes in 1809 was expressed by the supercargo of the "Good Friends," William Adgate: "The blood suckers are determined to get all they can out of us." Captain Thompson, skipper of the "Good Friends," agreed: "Was you here, you would only help . . . your humble servant to swear at their damn proceedings."²⁹

Some Americans, of course, did slip past the Danish privateers, but even for them life was not entirely filled with joy. Many of them scurried into Gothenburg, Sweden, hoping not so much to find a market there as to gain information as to where one could find a good market in the north of Europe. For instance, when Captain Thomas B. Osgood cleared Salem with the bark "Mary," in May, 1809, he was instructed by her owners to go to Gothenburg and "after obtaining at this place all the necessary information we submit entirely to your judgment the future course of the voyage." As possibilities they suggested Hamburg, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Lubeck, Kiel, or St. Petersburg.³⁰ A perfect indicator of why United States trade increased with Russia so much after 1808 is that, by the end of that shipping season, St. Petersburg was the only port left on the list where Osgood could take the "Mary" with any degree of confidence that she would not be seized.

At the beginning of 1809, Sweden was still at war with Russia and Denmark, and was England's only remaining ally on the Baltic. The Danes contributed little to the war against Sweden beyond harassing her maritime commerce and floating inflammatory literature across the Sound by balloon,³¹ but the armies of Alexander I needed little help. Before summer

The Danish Problem

was over, Sweden was reeling before those armies; and in September, she signed a peace surrendering Finland to Russia. A few months later, Sweden succumbed to pressure from France and Russia and agreed to exclude all British ships from her ports.³²

Sweden's dependence on trade with England, however, prevented her from ever becoming more than a nominal enemy of the British. Admiral Saumarez avoided molesting Swedish shipping, and Sweden never looked too closely at "neutral" merchantmen arriving in her ports. Gothenburg continued as the great entrepôt of trade trying to find a chink in the North European ramparts of the Continental System. The total value of goods in bond in Sweden grew from 511,000 rixdollars in 1807 to 10,200,000 in 1813.³³ Gothenburg—the waiting room of the Baltic—which had a population of only about 20,000, found itself transformed into one of the greatest ports in the world.³⁴

Sweden, like other nations whose normal channels of trade were disrupted by war, discovered a strong vein of love for America in 1809. In May, the American consul at Gothenburg reported to the Secretary of State that "the Swedish government, I can assure you, is much inclined to cultivate a close commercial intercourse with the United States and there is no flag so much respected in their ports as ours. . . ." Sweden's blooming respect for the Stars and Stripes was not misplaced. In 1809, the United States, which at a maximum had never exported to Sweden in a single year more than \$125,000 worth of goods, poured onto her wharves goods to the value of over five million dollars.³⁵

Yet there was no profit for Americans at Gothenburg. The

immense quantities of colonial goods bulging the warehouses of that city drugged the market, and sugar and coffee were as cheap as dirt in Gothenburg for the duration of the Continental System. When Captain Osgood brought the "Mary" into Gothenburg in June, 1809, he discovered that her cargo of indigo, cotton, sugar, coffee, and pepper, worth a king's ransom on the Continent, would not even attract an offer in Sweden.³⁶

The news was that the demand for such goods was high in Russia and that the captain who could manage to get his cargo there was assured of a great voyage. But there was the problem of the Danish privateers, and, in addition, there was the problem of the war between Sweden and Russia. Until those two made peace, an American arriving at Kronstadt from Gothenburg might simply be making a gift of his vessel and cargo to the Russian government. "I wish 'twas in my power to go to Russia," longed Captain Osgood, "but should I go under existing circumstances, the vessel and cargo would be condemned as coming from an enemy port."³⁷

The situation of the American captains and supercargoes at Gothenburg was exasperating in the extreme. Prospects of enormous profit and total failure tormented their imaginations. The only thing the Americans were sure of was that they couldn't remain in Gothenburg. In Sweden there was no chance of selling their cargoes, and the trickle of daily expenses was slowly bleeding away all chance of a successful voyage.

In Russia the merchants were as anxious for the arrival of Americans as the Americans were anxious to arrive. In July a letter arrived in Gothenburg from St. Petersburg, dated 27 June, in which the writer stated that only a miniscule 109

The Danish Problem

vessels had thus far entered at Kronstadt and only four or five of them were American. Where are the Americans?, the writer asked.³⁸ The answer was, of course, fuming in Christiansand and Copenhagen or suffering the tortures of Tantalus in Gothenburg.

Even as late as 4 September, only twelve of the fifty-five American sail to come to Kronstadt in 1809 had arrived.³⁹ But in August and September two developments put an end to the paralysis of American shipping in the Baltic. In August the accumulated complaints of neutral nations and England's retaliatory blockade of Norway persuaded Frederick VI to prohibit privateering everywhere but in the waters around British-held Heligoland.⁴⁰ And in September, the war between Sweden and Russia ended. In the few weeks remaining before ice reclaimed the Gulf of Finland, forty-three American vessels arrived in Kronstadt.

A good many of the fifty-five American sail that came to Kronstadt and the Americans that entered elsewhere in the Baltic in 1809 must have passed through the Danish narrows as members of British convoys. In the first place, it was safer to do so. In the second place, the British fleet, seeking to rob Denmark of her Sound dues and to destroy the commerce of Copenhagen, permitted very few neutrals to enter the Sound, encouraging them rather to take British convoy through the Great Belt.⁴¹ All in all, only forty-five American sail passed into the Baltic through the Sound in 1809, five of which were seized by the Danes and condemned by the Danish prize courts. Of the remaining forty, only twenty returned through the Sound.⁴²

Between 1807 and 1812, literally hundreds of American

vessels passed in and out of the Baltic under the protective cannon of British men-of-war, but very few Americans left contemporary accounts of that part of the voyage. If their vessels were brought in later by the Danes, any letter or diary or log that showed they had sailed in a British convoy would be used as evidence against them. Men skirting the edge of the law are rarely seized with the autobiographical urge.

Captain Osgood, for example, dutifully reported to the owners of the "Mary" every detail of her voyage, but failed to send them any information about her voyage from Gothenburg to Kronstadt. We have no record of whether she did or did not hurry past Denmark under the protection of British guns. All we know is that the "Mary" arrived in Kronstadt harbor on 26 September 1809.⁴³

Sailing with the British was certainly not anything Osgood would have been ashamed to tell the owners of the "Mary." His friend Benjamin Shreve, supercargo of the bark "William Gray," of Beverly, wrote jauntily to his employers from Gothenburg in August, 1809:

GENTLEMEN,

A convoy was appointed this day for the Baltic, to sail the day after tomorrow, and I believe it will go through the Belt. It will consist of a brig of sixteen guns and a sloop of war. In the Belt, I understand, there are many [British] ships of the line. I feel no apprehension of capture, and I am happy to say nothing has transpired to lessen the opinion I have all along entertained, that this will be a very profitable voyage if we can get home in safety. . . . I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you about Christmas.⁴⁴

Throughout the existence of the Continental System, the British navy maintained an admirably efficient convoy service

The Danish Problem

shuttling neutrals, real and false, in and out of the Baltic. Vessels bound from the British Isles to the Baltic gathered at four points: at Nore, the Humber estuary, Leith, and Long Hope Sound in the Orkneys. Every fortnight or so the convoys sailed out into the North Sea from these rendezvous escorted by one or two small men-of-war.⁴⁵ The "Eclipse," of Philadelphia, sailed with one of those convoys in 1810, and her supercargo, Richard S. Smith, recorded nearly sixty years later his memories of that exciting period of his youth:

We sailed from the harbor of Long Hope under convoy of the sloop-of-war, the fleet numbering about thirty sail. . . . I was occupied and amused watching the movements of so many vessels of different nations, and of various classes; ships of large size, others of peculiar shape and rig, and all being subject to the signals and orders of the convoying ship. *One* would get a little in advance of the convoy, when a gun fired in that direction would cause a sudden hauling down of sails, and dropping astern, to receive a reproof for breach of orders; others would hoist all sail, and even then fall so far in the rear that we *all* would have to shorten sail until they could come up with us.

This first leg of the convoy route to the Baltic was usually the least dangerous, but the Danes were never to be underestimated. As Smith's convoy neared the Naze of Norway:

We observed a sloop-of-war, under English colors, making all sail towards us, firing guns and making signals, which were answered by our convoying ship. Being near our convoy, we hailed, and asked the meaning of these signals, and were directed to look up to windward, and there we should see a fleet of about forty sail of vessels, which, being under convoy of the ship that was approaching us, had a few hours before

been met by three Danish gun-brigs, and the whole of them captured and driven before them to Christiansand. . . . We considered ourselves fortunate that the Danes were too much occupied to turn their attention to us, otherwise, as they were to windward of us, they could readily have run down to us, when our convoying ship would not have been able to cope with three.⁴⁶

The immediate destination of a convoy from England was Wingo Sound near Gothenburg, where the North Sea escort left the convoy and anchored to wait, probably impatiently, for a convoy for the Great Belt to be assembled. Sweden never molested the British in Wingo Sound, which is another proof of the perfunctory nature of her friendship with Napoleon.⁴⁷

In 1808, the British had sent convoys through the Sound, but had discovered that the Great Belt was the safer route, in spite of its reefs, swirling currents, its *two* Danish shores, and its great length. It took four or more days to pass through the tricky channels of the Belt, meaning nights of danger and tension anchored practically within cannon shot of shore, but the Sound channel close to the Swedish shore which Danish batteries forced the British to use was so narrow and closed in with sand bars that a convoy had no room to maneuver at all. Strung out in single file, it was a line of sitting ducks for Danish galleys on calm days.

The convoys leaving Wingo Bay for the Baltic often included several hundred ships. As they cleared, they were escorted by not more than a frigate and brig of war or so, but at the head of the Belt, their escort was increased by a sail of the line, which stayed with them until they were through that passage. Halfway through the Belt, they came under the addi-

The Danish Problem

tional protection of four other sail of the line which were stationed there as a sort of floating battery to shelter the convoys from the large enemy bases in that area.⁴⁸

During the passage of the Belt, tension rose as the sun set. Under cover of darkness, the Danes would slip out from the flanking shores to catch a straggler or to hazard a sudden attack to cut out one or two merchantmen. George Coggeshall went through the Belt in one of these convoys as captain of the "Eliza," of New York, in 1810, and forty years later he remembered that as dusk approached, the British would signal for "the headmost ships to shorten sail and close convoy, and it sometimes happened that one of the frigates was ordered to make fast to a dull sailing ship, and tow her up into the midst of the fleet."⁴⁹ Then all dropped anchor, the merchantmen clustered in the middle like ewes and lambs, the men-of-war spaced around the convoy like old rams.⁵⁰ Boats from the men-of-war, armed with cannon, rowed round the convoy in the dark.⁵¹

In the best of weather this passage of the Belt by such large groups of ships called for excellent seamanship. In poor weather it called for prodigies of seamanship. The Belt, narrow and reef-strewn, was not wide enough for a large number of ships to beat to windward at once, so whenever the wind was contrary, the whole convoy had to drop anchor, no matter how deep the water, rocky the bottom, or otherwise unsuitable the situation for an anchorage. With ships tossing about, dragging their anchors, and tangling their cables, and reefs and breakers on the lee no matter which way the wind blew, the convoy could rapidly degenerate into a mess to test the sanity of the coolest sailor. Captain Coggeshall tells of one such occasion:

From the twenty-seventh to the twenty-ninth [of October, 1810] we lay at anchor the greatest part of the time—the wind being ahead. At six P.M., on the twenty-ninth, all the fleet was ordered to get under way; it was blowing strong at the time, with a high sea running, and so many ships crowded together that I found it impossible to weigh our anchor, without getting foul of some other vessel; we were therefore obliged to cut the cable and lose the anchor, with the greater part of the small bower. A great many vessels were similarly situated and were obliged to slip and cut, and make sail, to keep up with the convoy. I think, without the least exaggeration, I passed more than fifty buoys on anchors and cables that had been thus left.⁵²

Losing anchors was such a standard event on these mad voyages that the experienced advised that anyone taking convoy through the Belt “should have *at least three anchors and cables.*”⁵³

Despite manifold difficulties, the British convoy shuttles through the Belt were eminently successful. Except for two or three successful Danish sorties, the most damaging of which was the one Smith observed, the attacks on the convoys were insignificant. Between mid-June and early November, 1809, for instance, 2,210 merchantmen were escorted through the Belt without a single casualty as result of enemy action.⁵⁴ To the extent to which this flow of merchantmen through the straits of Denmark preserved Britain's economy from collapse, Napoleon owed his defeat to the excellent work of Saumarez and his sailors.

Once out of the Belt and into the Baltic, the sail of the line left the convoy. The other escort vessels, the sloops and brigs of war and such minor men-of-war, continued with the convoy to a point about fifty leagues beyond the island of Bornholm.

The Danish Problem

There they, too, left, and the merchantmen were stripped of all but the indirect protection of the British cruisers that screened Gotland and Danzig, from which French privateers sometimes sallied forth to capture an occasional merchantman. But French privateering in the Baltic never compared to the Danish in magnitude, and not until 1811 and 1812 did the activities of French privateers become one of the primary worries of Americans on the way to Russia.

Americans and other neutrals seeking convoy on the return voyage from the Baltic gathered at Karlskrona, Sweden, until Napoleon obliged Sweden to declare war on Britain in 1810. After that they gathered in the harbor of the island of Hano near Karlskrona.⁵⁵ As in the case of Wingo Bay, the Swedes smiled upon the use of this anchorage by the "enemy." The convoy system from Hano was, as one would expect, the same as that from Wingo.

In the ports of Russia, the targets toward which the vast apparatus of convoys was aimed, the government of Alexander I continued in its attempt to make Russia a dutiful member of the Continental System. In May, 1809, the chancellor, Count Rumiantsev, issued a ukase augustly proclaiming that Russia had always protected neutral shipping:

But, as we have learned by experience the last year that the enemy found means, through the medium of neutral vessels, of obtaining the produce he required, and of exchanging his own to his aggrandizement, . . . we command . . .

and there followed a list of legal hurdles a ship must clear before she or her cargo would be admitted to Russian ports. The ship's register, logbook, muster-roll, etc., must all confirm

her neutrality, the burden of proof of her cargo's neutral origin was laid upon her captain or supercargo, and so on and so on. The penalty for failing to prove her spotless neutrality was to be, at best, refusal of entrance, and, at worst, confiscation. The discovery of forged papers or two sets of papers meant automatic confiscation.⁵⁶ All in all, Russia confiscated the cargoes of forty-nine vessels that arrived in 1809.⁵⁷

If Russia were trying to cut off all commerce between herself and England, then she did indeed need this tough new policy for dealing with neutral vessels. The one flaw in the new policy was the difficulty in executing it properly when seemingly all the neutrals and the entire population of St. Petersburg, Kronstadt, Riga, Reval, Archangel, etc., were intent on subverting it. Subvert it they did. In 1809, England imported twice as many naval stores from the Baltic as in 1808.⁵⁸ And a good portion of those stores seem to have gone to England on American ships. In October, Levett Harris, in one of the last honest letters he would write about Americans sailing on British account, said, "Nearly half of those [Americans] which have taken cargoes from hence . . . will to all appearance land them in England."⁵⁹

The Russian government, while it might be quite fond of the United States, could not regard the United States flag as proof positive that the vessel and cargo over which it flew were neutral. Despite all the good will in the world, Russia was obligated to condemn four American vessels: the "Georgia," "Intercourse," "Weltha Ann," and "Malvina."⁶⁰ It well behooved Russia to examine Yankees with a sharp eye because the American merchant marine was well on its way to becoming John Bull's favorite crutch.

The Danish Problem

It seems to be a law of the universe that regulations are not for catching criminals as much as for exasperating honest folk. The regulations laid down by the ukase, though obviously not stringent enough to stop smugglers, were stringent enough to make life hard for honest neutral traders. The "Mary," commanded by Captain Osgood, arrived in Kronstadt on the twenty-sixth of September, but was not allowed to discharge its cargo until the fourteenth of October.⁶¹

This sort of delay was particularly aggravating with the days growing shorter and skims of ice appearing on the edges of the Neva. Captain Osgood didn't even hold the "Mary" in port until he could sell her cargo. He loaded her with iron, hemp, and linens, and sent her off on the second of November under John Ropes, his first officer. He himself stayed in Russia to sell the tropical goods that "Mary" had brought from America.⁶²

The merchants of the Russian ports were as aggravated and frustrated in their drive to make 1809 a golden year of profit as the Americans. There was no doubt that business was vastly superior to that of 1808. In 1809, 376 vessels arrived at Kronstadt and St. Petersburg as compared to sixty for 1808. Financially the contrast between the two years was just as spectacular: in 1808, there passed through Kronstadt and St. Petersburg imports valued at 1,452,233 rubles and exports valued at 5,875,896 rubles; in 1809, imports had grown to 5,159,798 rubles and exports to 20,314,406.⁶³ But the harbor and facilities of Kronstadt were sufficient to handle a thousand vessels a season! Merchants, nobles in St. Petersburg, and serfs hundreds of miles distant in the hemp fields of the Ukraine turned peevish for lack of an outlet for their goods. Rumor had it that in the summer of 1809 the French ambassador gave a dinner at

which most of the high officials of the Russian government were present. He rose and proposed a toast to the Emperor Alexander. The glittering assemblage rose and toasted their tsar. The French ambassador then waited for some Russian to propose a reciprocal toast to the Emperor of France. Nothing happened, and the company stirred uncomfortably in the knowledge that an indirect but very open insult had been paid to the ambassador and his emperor.⁶⁴ The minister from Westphalia best described the climate of opinion in Russia: "There is the Emperor and Rumiantsev on one side, and the whole people on the other."⁶⁵

The perverted spirit that directed the course of American trade with Russia in 1809 crowned the shipping season of that year with a masterpiece of exasperating lunacy. The westerly winds, which blew directly in over the bow of any ship trying to beat its way out of a Russian port on the Baltic, rose earlier than usual. A bad storm swept the Baltic, driving many ships back to port. Then an uncommonly early and severe frost fell on the Baltic coast like a white wolf.

More vessels were frozen in at the ports of Russia than ever before: 187 at Riga, and 95 at Kronstadt and St. Petersburg. Of the ninety-five at Kronstadt and St. Petersburg, fifteen to eighteen were American.⁶⁶ Osgood's "Mary" never made it out of the Gulf of Finland. The storm chased her into Reval harbor, where she was forthwith imprisoned by ice.⁶⁷

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The Danish Problem

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5. Hopkins, *Hemp Industry in Kentucky*, pp. 82-83.
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12. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 533.
13. J. D. Forbes, *Israel Thorndike, Federalist Financier* (New York: Exposition Press, 1953), pp. 69-70.
14. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 329.
15. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 346, 350.
16. Forbes, *Thorndike*, pp. 69-70.
17. McMaster, *Girard*, II, 87, 96.
18. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 529.
19. McMaster, *Girard*, II, 97.
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21. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
22. Joost Dahlerup, "Early Danish-American Diplomacy," *American-Scandinavian Review*, XXX (December, 1942), 313.
23. Fogdall, *Danish-American Diplomacy*, p. 29; *Commerce of Rhode Island*, II, 376, 384, 437, 453.
24. Letter to Israel Thorndike, 18 December 1809, Christiania, in Letterbook of Robert Rogers, 1809-10 (Peabody Museum).
25. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 350-51.
26. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 329.
27. Letter to Levett Harris, 21 August 1809, Copenhagen; letter to Israel Thorndike, 29 September 1809, Christiania, in Letterbook of Robert Rogers, 1809-10 (Peabody Museum).

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

28. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 329, 521-22.
29. McMaster, *Girard*, II, 94.
30. Letter to Osgood, May, 1809, Salem, in Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood, 1809-11 (Peabody Museum).
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36. Letter to Pickman and Derby, 6 July 1809, Gothenburg, in Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood, 1809-11 (Peabody Museum).
37. *Ibid.*
38. Letter to Peale, Dodge, and Robinson, 28 July 1809, Gothenburg, in Letterbook of Benjamin Shreve, 1809-10 (Peabody Museum).
39. Letter to Secretary of State, 23 August/4 September 1809, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.
40. Ruppenthal, "Denmark and the Continental System," p. 19; Ryan, "The Defense of British Trade with the Baltic, 1808-1812," pp. 443-66.
41. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 430-31.
42. Letter to Secretary of State, 12 February 1812, Copenhagen, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.
43. Letter to Pickman and Derby, 4 October 1809, Kronstadt, in Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood, 1809-11 (Peabody Museum).
44. Letter to Peale, Dodge, and Robinson, 14 August 1809, Gothenburg, in Letterbook of Benjamin Shreve, 1809-11 (Peabody Museum).
45. Ryan, "The Defense of British Trade with the Baltic, 1808-1812," p. 452.
46. Richard S. Smith, *Reminiscences of Seven Years of Early Life* (Wilmington, Del.: Ferris Bros., 1884), pp. 18, 19. Smith's memory in the second note is somewhat faulty. The number of Danish brigs was really five and the British escort was a brig of war. Incidentally, eighteen of the vessels captured were American (Ryan, "The Defense of British Trade with the Baltic, 1808-1812," p. 453; *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 523). This attack was one of the few occasions when the Danes came out in anything larger than gunboats.
47. Smith, *Reminiscences*, p. 20; Ryan, "The Defense of British Trade with the Baltic, 1808-1812," p. 454.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 455-57.
49. Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, p. 86.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

The Danish Problem

51. Ryan, "The Defense of British Trade with the Baltic, 1808-1812," p. 457.
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59. Letter to Secretary of State, 13/25 October 1809, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. I.
60. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 343; Letter to Secretary of State, 1/13 June 1810, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. II.
61. Letter to Pickman and Derby, 4 October, 16 October 1809, Kronstadt, Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood, 1809-11 (Peabody Museum).
62. Letter to Pickman and Derby, 14/26 November 1809, Kronstadt, *ibid.*
63. Translated extract from *Court Gazette of St. Petersburg*, 27 January 1810, O.S., in National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Russia, Vol. I.
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65. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 69.
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67. Letter to P. and H. Le Mesurier and Co., 26 November 1809, St. Petersburg, Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood, 1809-11 (Peabody Museum).

“A Bull-dog among Spaniels”

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS' diary for Saturday, 5 August 1809, reads:

At noon this day I left my house at the corner of Boylston and Nassau Streets, in Boston, accompanied by my wife, my youngest child, Charles Francis, my wife's sister, Catherine Johnson, my nephew and private secretary, William Steuben Smith, Martha Godfrey, who attends my wife as her chambermaid, and a black man-servant named Nelson, to embark on a voyage to Russia, charged with a commission as Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States to Russia.¹

Before Adams returned to Boston in 1815, Nelson left him to enter the service of Alexander I, Miss Johnson married Mr. Smith, and Adams' wife gave birth in pain to a child that lived in pain a handful of weeks and was then buried in Russian soil.² Before Adams found his way home, Russia and the United States each suffered and survived devastating wars. Adams played important roles in the beginnings of Russia's war and in the end of America's. Never again, not even as president, did John Quincy Adams stand as near the center of

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

the stage of world history as during his stay in St. Petersburg.

But for the vagaries of domestic politics, the United States would have had a minister to Russia a year before. President Jefferson had long realized that America needed a powerful friend in a world at war, and he felt "that Russia, while her present monarch lives, is the most cordially friendly to us of any power on earth, will go furthest to serve us, and is most worthy of conciliation."³ Jefferson appointed his friend, William Short, as minister to Russia, and sent him off to Europe in August, 1808, with orders to wait at Paris until the Senate confirmed the appointment. On 27 February 1809, the Senate, preaching economy and freedom from foreign entanglements, rejected the appointment. In March, James Madison, the new president, nominated John Quincy Adams as minister to Russia. Adams, a skillful and experienced diplomat who had been in Russia with Francis Dana, was by far the most suitable American for the post. The Senate, however, rejected him and the whole idea of a United States minister to Russia. Madison busied himself with mending his political fences and in June was able to force Adams' appointment through the Senate.⁴

John Quincy Adams' reputation as one of America's greatest statesmen is assured. Perhaps the testimony of an Englishman, W. H. Lyttleton, who knew him in Russia and disliked him would be more enlightening than another repetition of praise, however deserved.

Of all the men whom it was ever my lot to accost and to waste civilities upon, [Adams] was the most dogged and systematically repulsive. With a vinegar aspect, cotton in his leathern ears, and hatred of England in his heart, he sat in the

frivolous assemblies of Petersburg like a bull-dog among spaniels, and many were the times that I drew monosyllables and grim smiles from him and tried in vain to mitigate his venom.⁵

We can be assured that in Russia in Napoleonic times, all Americans who happened to be scrupulously honest were abhorred by Englishmen.

John Quincy Adams and his party took passage on the "Horace," a vessel owned by his friend, the great Massachusetts merchant William Gray. The voyage to Russia was almost a parody on the maritime plight of neutrals of the time. In all, the English and Danes forced the "Horace" to come to eleven times. What must have seemed whole legions of Englishmen and Danes climbed over her side to interrogate her captain and peer suspiciously at her papers. Only the presence of a minister of the United States on board won for her from the British navy the privilege of going through the Sound rather than through the Belt, and saved her from seizure by gunboats from Norway and Denmark.⁶

The voyage afforded Adams a full briefing on the problems of Baltic trading. A Danish gunboat brought the "Horace" into Christiansand for examination, and there he heard the woeful tales of the hundreds of Americans of the vessels detained in that port. When the "Horace" reached Denmark, he went ashore to plead for these and other Americans detained at Copenhagen. His plea brought no results whatsoever, which was in itself educational.⁷

On 22 October, seventy-five long and stormy days from Boston Harbor, the "Horace" sailed into Kronstadt roads. The following day, Adams traveled up the Neva by government

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

packet to St. Petersburg, where he met his associate and companion of the next few years, Levett Harris.⁸

Before Adams and his party could even properly set themselves up in their new quarters in St. Petersburg, the new minister found himself at work trying to separate the true American traders from the false, and his Yankee instinct was already whispering that the smiles of welcome that brightened every face masked fear, distrust, and vicious faithlessness.

November was not half over when he received a request to authenticate the passport of an American, Archibald Graham by name, who was waiting in Lisbon to come to Russia. A prominent merchant of St. Petersburg gave his solemn guarantee that Graham was a citizen of the United States, yet Adams learned through Levett Harris and an American just come from Portugal that Graham was in reality a Scotchman who had arrived in Lisbon in a ship under Pappenburg colors, which was really an American ship that had sailed from the United States during the embargo. That Graham had a passport was credited to the skills of Van Sander of London.⁹

Harris' part in the Graham affair confirmed the good reports Adams already had of the American consul-general in Russia. In fact, the Russians thought so highly of Harris that Adams reported to the Secretary of State:

This gentleman appears, indeed, to have conducted himself in a manner so highly acceptable to this government, as not only to have acquired a personal consideration enjoyed by few among the diplomatic characters accredited to the Emperor, but to have contributed much to the favorable dispositions towards our country entertained by his Imperial Majesty.¹⁰

The only thing that Adams found to object to in Harris' conduct was the man's extraordinary generosity. A bit over a month after first meeting the consul, Adams complained, "He had made to me since I arrived here a number of presents, some of which were of sufficient value to make me hesitate about accepting them; and to Mrs. Adams and Catherine a Turkish shawl each, still more expensive." Adams, who disapproved of public officials accepting presents from anyone, determined to limit his acceptance of gifts from Harris and to "return equivalents in point of cost, that at least I may derive no profit from the interchange."¹¹

On the morning of Adams' third day in St. Petersburg, Harris notified Count Nicholas Rumiantsev, Chancellor of the Empire of Russia and most powerful subject of the Tsar Alexander, that the minister from the United States had arrived. That evening, Adams, accompanied by Harris, went to present his formal credentials to the Chancellor.¹² At this meeting and the many others that followed, Rumiantsev always treated Adams with the greatest civility. The Count emphasized again and again with the most open frankness Russia's need for the American merchant marine to handle her commerce. Rumiantsev was always America's firmest Russian friend—except when the interests of the United States were contrary to those of France. He was the leader of the French party of Russia. No Russian official was more anxious for trade with America and yet more intolerant of Americans trading on English account.¹³

On 26 December, Adams had a long interview with Chancellor Rumiantsev. They talked on the Continental System; of Adams' claim that articles of English manufacture were com-

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

ing into Russia in abundance, which Rumiantsev denied; and of Rumiantsev's claim that none but English colonies produced colonial goods, which Adams denied with many a reference to the cotton and sugar of Louisiana and Georgia and to the coffee of the Spanish West Indies. The conversation revolved around Adams' request that the Tsar use his good offices to influence the Danish government to free the quantities of American property which it had not been able to prove English but which it still held under sequestration. Rumiantsev did not say no, but did openly imply that Russia would not interfere in the matter.

On 29 December, Rumiantsev informed Adams that he had passed the request on to the Tsar, who had immediately ordered that a message be sent the Danish government suggesting that it expedite the restoration of American property.¹⁴ For all his diplomatic experience, Adams had never before come up against anything more secret and strange than the currents of Russian diplomacy.

One week after coming up from Kronstadt, Adams accepted an invitation from Rumiantsev to dine at one of the Chancellor's homes. There Adams met for the first time the ambassador from France, Armand-Augustin-Louis de Caulaincourt, duc de Vincence.¹⁵ For as long as Caulaincourt remained in France, he and Adams were mutually respectful blood enemies. Adams' main task in Russia was to fight for the admission of American ships and cargoes to Russia's ports. Caulaincourt's main task was to ensure the enforcement of the Continental System, to prevent any and all English property, or what might have been at one time English property, from finding a market in Russia. To Napoleon—and therefore to Caulaincourt—any neutral

ship coming to Russia might conceal English property, and so all neutral ships were to be considered as English. Caulaincourt was an ogre who would eat up every American ship that came his way.

If Caulaincourt had only been an ugly ogre, Adams' task would have been much simpler. Unfortunately, the French ambassador was honorable, handsome, wise, and a nobleman by birth—which counted in Russia—and by character, as well as by Napoleon's favor. Where Adams was rather cold and tactless, Caulaincourt was warm and charming. Where Adams had only a small income from his government and entertained little, Caulaincourt had hundreds and hundreds of thousands of francs from Napoleon and gave entertainments, dinners, and balls which were the leading events of the St. Petersburg social whirl. Where Adams was only a minister in rank and had to deal with Alexander through Rumiantsev, Caulaincourt was an ambassador and dealt with the Tsar in person. Where Adams was never more than a respected acquaintance of Alexander, Caulaincourt was as close to being a personal friend of the Tsar as any representative of a foreign power could be.¹⁶

All that John Quincy Adams had on his side were his not inconsiderable wits, the reputation for strict honesty, which Russians soon grew to associate with his name, and the simple but important fact that the great majority of influential Russians demanded that Russia's ports remain open to American ships.

A week after meeting Caulaincourt, Adams received notice that Tsar Alexander I was ready to grant an audience to the American minister. A little after one o'clock on the fifth day of

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

November, Adams went to the Imperial Palace. About two o'clock, he was conducted to the entrance of the Tsar's cabinet. As Adams stepped through the door, a youngish, rather too finely drawn man advanced to meet him and said in the perfect French spoken by all upper-class Russians of the day, "Sir, I am charmed to have the pleasure of seeing you here." The mystic royal son of a murdered tsar and grandson of a murdered tsar greeted the Congregational son of a President and grandson of a farmer. Full formal diplomatic relations between the autocracy of Russia and the republic of the United States of America began.

This first encounter between Alexander and Adams went smoothly. Alexander praised the United States, dwelt on the friendship between Russia and France, and emphasized that England's maritime pretensions alone kept Europe from peace. In the midst of this conversation, Alexander took the American minister "by the arm and walked from near the door to a window opening on the river—a movement seemingly intended to avoid being overheard."

Returning to the subject of Russo-American relations, the Tsar suggested that conflicts of interest between his nation and Adams' were extremely unlikely and that "by means of commerce the two states might be greatly useful to each other, and his desire was to give the greatest extension and facility to these means of mutual benefit."¹⁷

A few days later Adams had his first audience with the empress-mother. His diary reads: "She said there were many very excellent articles brought here from America. And, said I, many sent from this country equally important to us. So that it is a commerce extremely beneficial to both parties. This, she

said, was the best kind of commerce." As Adams took his leave of the empress-mother (doubtless making sure to kiss her hand because he had been warned that the omission of that courtesy would displease her very much),¹⁸ he must have wondered where the legendary deviousness of the Russian royalty was. The Romanovs were certainly making bluntly apparent why they wanted friendship with the United States.

While Adams was busy meeting his friends, his sometimes friends, and his enemies, winter came to Russia. The day Adams learned from Rumiantsev of the Tsar's intercession with the Danes in favor of the Americans the temperature dropped to fifteen below zero, Fahrenheit. That evening Nelson, Adams' man-servant, froze his toes accompanying his master out to watch the coasters at Caulaincourt's ice-hills at Kammenoi-ostrow.¹⁹

Had Nelson been a diplomat rather than a diplomat's valet, he would have found consolation for his discomfort in the knowledge that the temperature that slowed the blood in his poor toes also congealed the tides of the Baltic and slowed the pulse of crisis. Commerce and crisis waited for spring.

Or, at least, such had always been the case in the past. But the winter of 1809-10 was marked by a particularly unusual exception to the rule, an exception that was an omen that 1810 was to be a year of exceptions.

On 23 February, when the Neva flowed sluggishly beneath a yard of ice and all sensible inhabitants of St. Petersburg stirred from the fire only to get more wood, Count Rumiantsev sent Adams word that the first American ship of the year had arrived in Russia. Far, far to the south, the Turks in Constantinople, spurred by a scarcity of grain, had admitted the brig

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

"Calumet," Captain Holmes, of Baltimore, to the Black Sea. Their hope was that her neutral flag would persuade the Russians to let her buy and return to Constantinople with Russian grain, which Russian law forbade to the enemy Turk. The "Calumet" got no grain, but she did attain the honor of being the first American vessel at Odessa and probably the first on the waters of the Black Sea.

Rumor raised the number of American sail at Odessa to forty, and the French ambassador was disturbed. The Russian government expressed great satisfaction with what it hoped was the opening of a new channel of trade with the United States. The Turk, however, was refused his grain no matter what the nationality of the errand boy he hired, and so Constantinople sulkily returned to the old policy of refusing American ships entry to the Black Sea. The winter opening of Russo-American trade of 1810 was a false alarm.²⁰

As spring spread north from the Black Sea and turned the steppes green, the inhabitants of St. Petersburg began to lay wagers as to the time the ice of the Neva would break, a habit they had picked up from the English merchants. On 12 May, about two or three in the morning, the ice of the Neva groaned, split, ground into blocks, and began to move toward the sea. At three o'clock that afternoon, the first boat of the year passed the fortress with the governor aboard, and the guns boomed. Adams was told that, as was traditional, the governor carried a glass of water to the tsar to drink, and would receive one hundred ducats in return.

On this day the summer season began. The double windows were taken off the houses. The nobility and wealthier merchants began to move from their town houses to their country

homes. The boat replaced the sleigh for river travel, and crisis was free from its cage of ice.²¹

American merchants ordering their ships to Russia or anywhere else in Europe in the spring of 1810 were either deluded or desperate. No one could predict what sort of dangers Americans in European waters would have to face. Even the London House of Baring, which profited from American trade in Europe, confided to a Baltimore client, "We perfectly agree with you that in the present situation of American commerce, all that prudent men have to do is to remain quiet and wait for better times."²² There was, of course, the gauntlet of the Danes to run. There was the possibility that the British, in retaliation against the exclusion of the Union Jack from the ports of the Baltic, would turn back *all* ships bound for those ports.²³ And there existed the chilling possibility that an American merchant vessel on the way to or from Russia would find that the Danes were the least of her dangers. At any moment news of yet another cavalier outrage against America's neutral rights might precipitate the United States into war against either France or Britain, which would put American ships in European waters in extreme jeopardy. Tempers in the United States were hot enough for war. Benjamin Rush, the usually cool-headed successor to Franklin as intellectual leader of Philadelphia, wrote to John Quincy Adams on 4 July 1810 describing Napoleon as the "great hammer of the earth" and George III as the "great hammer of the ocean." "I consider them both," he added, "as the scourge of the human race."²⁴

All the dictates of self-preservation and manhood demanded that Americans not permit themselves to be bludgeoned by these two hammers without making some defense, but what

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

course of action was open to the United States? The United States again turned to retaliatory economic warfare. The embargo and the Non-Intercourse Act had failed, but perhaps that was only because they hadn't been subtle enough. Perhaps the United States could *tempt* Great Britain and France into treating American merchantmen properly. On 1 May 1810, Congress replaced the Non-Intercourse Act with Macon's Bill, Number 2. By this bill trade with England and France was reopened; but if either Britain or France revoked or modified its edicts of economic warfare so as to stop violating America's neutral rights, the United States would revive the Non-Intercourse Act against the other. For example, if France promised to stop seizing bona fide American ships and their bona fide cargoes, then the United States would stop exporting goods to England. If it were Britain that turned benevolent, then the United States would voluntarily acquiesce in her blockade of the Continent.

Macon's Bill, Number 2, was obviously an American attempt to eat her cake and have it too. We would have all the profits of trading with each of the two great belligerents, and at the same time would slyly coerce each to allow us to trade with the other. The history of the early nineteenth century is cluttered with the shell-shocked wraiths of nations that tried to be sly with Napoleon, and we nearly became one of them—of which more in another chapter.

The sagacious American merchant thinking of sending a ship to Russia might do well to bide his time and see what would be the effects of the Macon Bill. But there was the temptation of the high prices that Russian goods continued to bring in American markets. Russian manufactures had fallen

off sharply since 1809—in the spring of 1810, Russian duck was down to \$29.00 a bolt from a high of \$44.00 a year before—but hemp was still selling for well over half again its usual price. The price in Boston was \$435.00 a ton in May, 1810.²⁵ And there was the truism that a merchant whose ships remain in port is a merchant losing money.

Ships would go out from Salem, Boston, Newburyport, and Philadelphia as certainly as men prefer the long chance to slow bankruptcy. And where better to go than Russia?

The success of American trade with Russia depended, as always, less on the United States and Russia than on those powers that controlled the waters between them: Great Britain, Sweden, and Denmark. Britain nearly blighted Russo-American trade of 1810 before it really began. In May, Admiral Saumarez, the colossus of the Kattegat, announced that only neutrals with British licenses would be allowed to pass to or from ports that excluded the British flag. If this edict should continue in force, it would be difficult indeed for any American arriving at Kronstadt to claim with a straight face that he had not consorted with the British. Fortunately, the Admiral soon heard of the Macon Bill and the reopening of trade between the United States and England and resumed his original benign policy toward American sail passing his flagship into the Baltic. Complete legalization of the presence of American ships in British ports might well mean that 1810 would be the greatest year yet for English utilization of the American flag in the Baltic.²⁶

Saumarez and the British government for the time being even took a benevolent attitude toward American ships seeking to pass orthodoxly through the Sound, pay Sound dues, and

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

thus escape Danish enmity. In 1810, the British allowed 133 American sail to pass through the Sound. By summer, however, Danish depredations of shipping put this innovation in British policy in an unfavorable light. Thereafter in 1810, the blockade of the Sound was resumed, although with many, many interruptions. This spasmodic resumption of the blockade probably goes far to explain the strange fact that while 133 American sail passed into the Baltic through the Sound in 1810, only *sixteen* returned that way. A supplementary explanation, suggested by contemporaries, was that an extraordinary number of those 133 were sailing on British account, and therefore were careful to return by convoy through the Belt.²⁷

The Swedes, like the English, also continued to smile on American traders. The only exception to this rule took place in Stralsund, the port of that last fragment of Sweden's trans-Baltic empire, Swedish Pomerania. A roaring trade in smuggled goods poured through Stralsund, but that port was on the same side of the Baltic as Napoleon's armies, and Swedish officials there didn't dare continually to cheat on their allegiance to the Continental System. In early spring of 1810, they seized all American property in Stralsund.²⁸

On the other side, the "safe" side of the Baltic, the Swedes, as we noted in the last chapter, treated the Continental System as if Napoleon were the emperor of Bali rather than of Europe. At the height of the shipping season in 1810, there were perhaps one hundred American sail lying in Gothenburg harbor, waiting for news of a safe market on the Continent.²⁹ The situation was the same tantalizing one of the year before. The American consul reported from Gothenburg that "the trade of

the United States to this port has increased beyond anything that could have been expected,"³⁰ and a tidal wave of sugar, coffee, cotton, dyewood, etc., glutted whatever market for American cargoes there might have been in Sweden.

The number of Americans waiting at Gothenburg grew so large and many of them stayed so long that an American colony came into being. The American ship officers and supercargoes from Philadelphia and other ports south of Connecticut took rooms for the most part in Gothenburg itself. The New Englanders preferred a suburb called Massthuget, where they stayed at a small hotel run by a Scotchman named Todd. Todd set a good table, and many Americans came out from the city to dine with the Yankees, transforming Todd's Scandinavian hostelry for a few hours into as American an inn as one could find east of Passamaquoddy Bay.³¹

The Yankees in Todd's dining room were probably not an exceptionally cheerful lot, but they were undoubtedly less gloomy than their compatriots across the Kattegat and Skagerrak. The Danes brought little but woe to Americans in 1810. Tonningen was open to American shipping at the beginning of the season, but the steady constriction of a neutral's rights there diminished its attractions. In 1809, a pilot was able to extort four to six hundred dollars for guiding an American vessel from British-held Heligoland to Tonningen. In the spring of 1810, he only got \$50 for the same job. Finally, in midsummer Napoleon intimidated Denmark into closing all ports in Schleswig-Holstein to American ships.

As the shipping season opened, the Danes naturally went back on the job of snapping up passing merchantmen. The activity of the naval gunboats was again supplemented and

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

surpassed by that of the privateers. The neutral outcry against the indiscriminating voracity of the privateers had persuaded Frederick VI the previous August to call them off, but the inability of the privateersmen to support themselves any other way obliged him to restore their bellicose privileges in the spring.³² Americans were their chief victims. Between the winter of 1810 and Napoleon's defeat, Norwegian privateers, for instance, captured twice as many vessels of the United States as those of the next favorite victim, Sweden.³³

In 1810, Danes from Denmark proper and the Danish islands brought in sixty-eight American merchantmen. Fifty-four were carried into Norwegian ports, including Osgood's ill-fated bark "Mary," which escaped the ice at Reval only to be condemned at Christiansand for sailing in British convoy. The number of American seamen stranded in Denmark grew so large that Mr. Isaackson, the American consul at Christiansand, was obliged to charter a whole vessel, the ship "America," to send 181 of the Americans back home. The bill he presented to the United States government for their maintenance and passage came to \$10,500.³⁴

In some cases the Danish seizures were embarrassingly justifiable. Two of those American merchantmen brought into Christiansand were so obviously really not American that Mr. Isaackson didn't even want to include them in his accounting of captured United States vessels. Five others at Christiansand, while probably true Americans, were so obviously sailing on British account that they didn't appeal their cases when condemned.

The Danish courts continued to be surprisingly just, as compared with—let us say—the French prize courts. Of the

sixty-eight Americans brought into Denmark, at least forty-three were acquitted. Of Norway's fifty-four, at least twenty-six were freed.³⁵ Understandably, however, few Americans were grateful for the sustained "mildness" of Danish rapaciousness.

Official American representation in Denmark continued to be atrociously poor. Mr. Saabye was so busy with his own affairs that, for practical purposes, one can say he ceased to act as American consul at Copenhagen. Mr. Isaackson, at Christiansand, continued to earn American praise, but he was, after all, a Dane, and so far away from Copenhagen that he had little effect on the course of Danish policy.

The government of the United States had long since known of Danish maritime aggression, but the only action our government took in 1809 was to send John M. Forbes, United States consul at Hamburg, up to Copenhagen to see what he could do there. Being only a consul, and not even a consul to a Danish port, he accomplished little or nothing and returned to Hamburg in March, 1810, after an unrewarding winter in Copenhagen.³⁶

During the last month or so of the winter, Forbes was assisted at Copenhagen by the man who inherited his mantle as the nearest thing to a properly accredited diplomatic representative of the United States in Denmark. That man was George Joy, who, while on his way to fill the position of United States consul at Rotterdam, had been ordered to Copenhagen.³⁷ He, too, held only a consular appointment, and that not to Copenhagen or any other Danish port. He, however, was of a more inventive bent of mind than the orthodox Forbes.

Joy, a man of no little wit and background (he referred to his

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

task in Denmark as "going to Blefuscu to play Gulliver and bring away fifty ships by the strength of my under jaw."),³⁸ took no more than a few months to create among Americans detained in Copenhagen a climate of opinion in which, to use his own words, ". . . it was as much as a man's life was worth to open his lips in my favor."³⁹

According to testimony given by Americans to Joy's successor in Copenhagen, Joy demanded the promise of large commissions on seized American ships and cargoes before he would approach the Danish government to have that property liberated. Also, through an accomplice, the Danish king's secretary, Joy obtained ten licenses from the Danish government which were to be used by American vessels lying in Norway as safe conduct passes if they were accosted by Danish privateers or naval vessels on their way into the Baltic. Joy proceeded to Gothenburg where he offered the licenses to American captains and supercargoes there for a large percentage of the value of their cargoes.⁴⁰

It may be that, as he claimed, the money he extracted from those he had been sent to protect was used for bribing Danish officials, and it may well be that the Americans at Copenhagen were simply cursing him for not being able to free their property as quickly as they would like. All this may be true, but it is also true that an apologist for Mr. Joy certainly has a lot to explain away.⁴¹

The parsimonious and ostrich attitude of the Madison administration toward the crisis in our relations with Denmark brought John Quincy Adams, a member of Madison's own party, to write in August, 1810, "I believe that the want of a native American accredited agent of the government of the

United States at Copenhagen has cost our government ten times more than the cost would have been of maintaining one there, even with the character of a public minister." ⁴²

1. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 3.
2. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, Vol. III, n. 472; John Quincy Adams Diary, 17 February 1813, 9 June 1813, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, pp. 458, 488.
3. Bergh (ed.), *The Writings of Jefferson*, XI, 292.
4. Henry Adams, *History of the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), IV, 465-67; V, 11, 12, 86.
5. George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (London: Methuen and Co., 1953), p. 7.
6. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 3-48.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24, 36.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48.
9. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 362-63.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 353-54.
11. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 70-71.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
13. Henry Adams, *History of the United States*, V, 410; Albert Blanc (ed.), *Correspondance diplomatique de Joseph de Maistre, 1811-17* (Paris: Mechel Lévy Frères, 1860), pp. 4-5.
14. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 81-88.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
16. Henry Adams, *History of the United States*, V, 412; Blanc, *Correspondance diplomatique de Maistre*, p. 9.
17. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 50-53.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 59.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
20. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 411, 416-17, 442-43; *St. Petersburgische Zeitung*, 15 April 1810; John Quincy Adams Diary, 23 February 1810, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 84.
21. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 123-24.
22. Stuart W. Bruchey, *Robert Oliver: Merchant of Baltimore, 1783-1819* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), pp. 355-56.
23. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 391.
24. Benjamin Rush to John Quincy Adams, 4 July 1810, Philadelphia, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 410.

"A Bull-dog among Spaniels"

25. Cole, *Wholesale Commodity Prices*, pp. 154, 158; Mark-Dawes (ed.), Timothy William's Marine Notes, 1802-1812, p. 163 (Essex Institute).
26. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 452; Anna C. Clauder, *American Commerce as Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793-1812* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1932), p. 220.
27. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 506; Ross, *Memoirs of Saumarez*, II, 195; Letter to Secretary of State, 12 February 1812, Copenhagen, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.
28. Knute E. Carlson, *Relations of the United States with Sweden* (Allentown, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania, 1921), p. 51.
29. McMaster, *Girard*, II, 125.
30. Letter to Secretary of State, 26 October 1810, Gothenburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Gothenburg, Vol. I.
31. Smith, *Reminiscences*, pp. 40-41.
32. Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, pp. 66, 77; Ruppenthal, "Denmark and the Continental System," pp. 13, 20.
33. Oscar J. Falnes, Review of *Kaperfart Og Skipsfart, 1807-1814*, by Joh. N. Tønnessen, in *American Historical Review*, LXII (January, 1957), 393-94.
34. *American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation*, I, 822.
35. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 523, 530, 533.
36. George Joy to [?], 23 March 1810, Copenhagen, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. I; Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 430.
37. Letter to His Majesty the King of Denmark and Norway, 12 February 1810, Copenhagen, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. I.
38. Postscript to letter to William Eustis, August, 1810, Gothenburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Gothenburg, Vol. I.
39. Letter to Pinkney, 30 January 1811, Copenhagen, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. I.
40. Letter to James Madison, 23 June 1811, Copenhagen (Winthrop Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society), Vol. LIII.
41. *Ibid.*; Letter to Pinkney, 12 February 1810, Copenhagen, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. I.
42. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 480.

Adams in the Ascendancy

FORTUNATELY, at the other end of the Baltic the United States did have—in the person of Adams himself—proper diplomatic representation. The United States certainly had need of an astute diplomat in St. Petersburg because in 1810 Russia stood at a forking of the road. Her choice was between increasing subordination to Napoleon's will or increasing independence and estrangement from France. Russia would be forced to this decision by the urgent pleas of American captains for entry to her ports. The shield and spokesman of these sappers of the Continental System was John Quincy Adams of the house at the corner of Boylston and Nassau Streets, Boston, Massachusetts.

Happily, the rapprochement between the United States and Russia was by this time so strong that nothing *but* matters pertaining to the admission of American ships had much effect on it. In March the Russian envoy in Philadelphia gave a party to celebrate the birthday of the Tsar, and placed at the front of his home, according to the newspaper report, "a transparency representing the cities of St. Petersburg and Archangel, and an

American vessel in full sail, the whole surmounted by a crown and the letters AI," standing for Alexander Imperator. A gathering of passersby took up the notion that the placing of a crown over an American ship and colors was an insult, and a young man of the type that sends diplomats to early graves "came up, and, imbibing all the indignation of those around him, he discharged two pistol-balls through the transparency." The embarrassment of the United States government was doubled by the fact that the impulsive young man was an officer in "the United States service." When arraigned, he helped not at all by declaring patriotically "that he thought it his duty as an American officer to bring down all crowns."

The Russian government graciously accepted the apologies tendered by the United States and let the matter drop.¹

In January, 1810, the Russian chargé to America made the perennial Russian complaint to our Secretary of State that Americans cruising off what Russia claimed were her possessions on the Northwest coast of North America were trading firearms to the Indians. In August, Count Rumiantsev took up the same matter with Adams. On both occasions our representatives replied that the United States government could do nothing about such trading and the Russians would have to stop it themselves.²

In this important matter, as in the inane incident in Philadelphia, the Russian government ate its crow quietly. As Rumiantsev said to Adams at the end of a discussion on Yankee interference in Russian America, "Our attachment to the United States is *obstinate—more obstinate than you are aware of.*"³ The real grist of Russo-American diplomacy of 1810 lay elsewhere.

In the last days of May three American ships elbowed through ice floes and entered the harbor at Kronstadt.⁴ The most incredible year of Russo-American trade yet had begun.

In 1809, any American ship directed to Russia that survived the Danes, Russian inspection, and the storms and ice automatically made a very profitable voyage. In 1810, the task of American skippers and supercargoes was not that "simple." Now they had to fight the laws of supply and demand. The depredations of the Danes and Russian refusal to allow blatantly English ships to enter and unload did limit Russia's imports and thus did sustain the price of colonial goods in Russia—which was the salvation of most Americans—but the price of Russian goods rose steadily and steeply in response to the urgent demand of the arriving Americans. Captain Osgood especially bewailed the loss of his bark "Mary" because her cargo, which cost him 70,000 rubles in 1809, would have cost him 120,000 if he had tried to buy it in 1810.⁵ At the same time the unprecedented influx of goods from Russia drove down the price of these goods in U.S. markets. Hemp, \$435 a ton in Boston in May, was down to \$300 in September.⁶

The shrewdest merchants, of course, survived. Adams's friend, William Gray, made profit on every ship he sent to Russia in 1810.⁷ But the economic winds were turning cold. If the trends of 1810 extended in 1811 and continued to sweep toward the extremes to which they seemed destined, then 1811 would be an unpleasant year even for the sagacious Mr. Gray.

While Gray's merchant sail were unloading sugar, coffee,

indigo, cotton, etc., onto Russian quays, Adams and Harris were involved in a constant struggle to protect them and other American ships from confiscation. The opponent of Adams and Harris was, like Jacob's angelic wrestler, strong, clever, and, to them, invisible. Their opponent was French influence in Russia, and it operated above their station in St. Petersburg society. It impinged on Russian policy through two channels: the friendship of Caulaincourt with Alexander and the latter's fear of Napoleon.

Adams was constantly petitioning, almost nagging, the Russians about American shipping. He asked Rumiantsev to make an exception in the case of several American vessels in the Russian blanket refusal to receive ships from British-occupied Portugal. And there was his request for admission of American merchantmen coming from Marie Galante, once a French possession in India but now held by the British. Then there was the case of the American vessels at Riga which had cleared from ports that had Russian consuls, but did not have certificates from those consuls testifying to the neutrality of the cargoes. In such cases Russian consular certificates of origin were an absolute prerequisite for admission. And there was the *cause célèbre* of the American ships arriving with certificates of origin from French consuls, which the French government dishonestly swore were forged.⁸ The wrangling went on month after month.

The months of Russian procrastination and the equivocations and the barefaced lies of the officials who administered the inspection and admission of neutral vessels exasperated Adams so much that he wrote in his diary of the Russians that

"to promise and not perform is their polite mode of refusal." Their promises, he said, were "wind, too feeble instruments to bind." ⁹

Suffering similar torments was the French ambassador. Adams' frustration was ultimately resolved. Caulaincourt's never was. In March of 1811, shortly before Napoleon called him back to France as a move in the heightening crisis between France and Russia, Caulaincourt was informed that not a single one of the American vessels approved by the American minister and consul had been confiscated.¹⁰

This by no means meant that all Americans were lily-white in the eyes of the Russians or even in the eyes of Adams. This certainly didn't mean that a lot of exquisitely detailed trickery involving American ships didn't go on. Harris reported to the Secretary of State that he had to request the Russian government to confiscate three American merchantmen—the "Alpheus," Captain Crosdale, the "Colloden," Captain Woodward, and the "Catty," Captain Delano—which he had discovered had false papers. And even he admitted that some false Americans might have slipped into Russia without his knowing it.¹¹

The quality and quantity of unethical and illegal behavior in which transient Americans engaged in Russia in 1810 was at the very least equalled by Americans more permanently settled in that country. There was the case of Mr. Kelly whose wife came to Adams for help. According to her, Mr. Kelly, born in Maryland and veteran of glorious service in the United States navy during the Revolution, had joined the Russian navy in 1788 and performed his duties faithfully as an officer in the

Adams in the Ascendancy

Tsar's fleet for many years. Now a cripple, he was fobbed off with a paltry pension of a hundred rubles a year, not enough for even a life of poverty. Oh please, Mr. Adams, she begged, can't you intercede with the Tsar for my deserving husband? Adams, touched, reluctantly told her that such a case fell in no way within his jurisdiction, but did give her some money out of his own pocket. It was only later that he learned that Mr. Kelly had been dismissed from the Russian navy for embezzling public property, and that, although Kelly had begun his service in our Revolution as an American sailor, he had finished that war as an English sailor.¹²

Then there was the case of Mr. Donovan, an Irish-American of perhaps more rectitude than Mr. Kelly, and his troubles with Levett Harris. On 1 September, Adams wrote to William Gray praising Harris, saying: "My regard for him and confidence in him are such that for any business of my own, I should not only give a preference to the House [mercantile house] of which he was a partner upon the usual terms of transacting business, but even at some additional charge."¹³ On 19 September, Mr. Donovan called on Adams.

Mr. Donovan's bitter story was that Harris sold to the mercantile house that bid the highest the services and influence which his position as U.S. consul bestowed on him, and that Harris made the merchants he appointed as his consular agents in the ports of Russia pay him a commission on the goods that passed through their hands. Donovan further claimed that Harris was charging the masters of American vessels as much as 24,000 rubles apiece to obtain admission for them to the ports of Russia, and had done so in 1808 and 1809. The money

he split with his accomplice, Count Rumiantsev's secretary. No American obtained admission without such payment. Donovan avowed that he himself had paid Harris 3,000 rubles.¹⁴

When Adams wrote to the Secretary of State discussing these charges, he said of Harris:

. . . I am fully convinced he has invariably discharged his official duties here with zeal, fidelity and ability, that he has uniformly rendered to his countrymen without exception every service which they needed, and which was in his powers; and that by the peculiar consideration which he enjoys in the personal regard of the Emperor, and the esteem of his government he has often the means of rendering services which to a less acceptable officer would be impossible.¹⁵

Adams belied the Calvinism of his religion by maintaining his faith in the honesty of his personable colleague.

Russia's credulous and massive admission of American vessels also by no means indicates that Russia was purposefully or wholly shirking its obligations to the Continental System. In August, 1810, Captain Osgood wrote that "they are much more rigid in their examination of papers in this country than formerly."¹⁶ Osgood had strong justification for his remark. By the end of July over sixty vessels with cargoes worth 16,000,000 rubles had arrived in Russian ports from—their masters said—Teneriffe, an island in the Canaries—and had been sequestered by the Russians.¹⁷ Their papers were blatant forgeries, and Teneriffe was known widely as a euphemism for England. In the commercial circles of Russia the ruble's value was reckoned on its exchange value in the great banking centers of Amsterdam, Hamburg, and "Teneriffe." The "Teneriffe" exchange was reckoned in pence sterling.¹⁸

The battle was joined in the Council of State of the Russian Empire on the matter of the Teneriffe ships. All the persuasion of the merchants and all the anger and, we may guess, veiled threats of the great nobles swept against the determination of Alexander and Rumiantsev to enforce the precepts of the Continental System and confiscate the Teneriffe fleet.¹⁹

The debate raged through the summer and into the fall. All St. Petersburg, and all Paris and London, waited for the decision. When it came, slowly, bit by bit, equivocally, it was ostensibly a compromise. The cargoes of upwards of sixty-three Teneriffe vessels were confiscated, but the vessels themselves were permitted to load with Russian goods and return to England.²⁰ Ostensibly it was compromise, but the English party in Russia was not pacified. The confiscation of the sixty-three cargoes was a mortal blow to many English merchants and devastated the clandestine Russo-English commerce. The Council assented to the confiscations against the will of practically every one of its members. The greatest nobles of the land coldly requested permission to leave the capital and go to their estates. Commercial houses in Riga and St. Petersburg which had had an interest in the Teneriffe cargoes fell into ruin. Public opinion raged against Caulaincourt and against the weakness of Tsar Alexander.²¹

The French ambassador reported to Paris that power had now been centralized in the hand of the Tsar and Rumiantsev. Caulaincourt predicted that although Alexander's reign had been noted for its liberalism, it would end by being more absolute than its predecessors.²² French influence in Russia had reached its peak.

Napoleon's hegemony over Europe was seemingly near

completion. Only England and those areas whose defenses were stiffened by the presence or proximity of English troops remained outside his sway. And England was staggering under the regimen inflicted on her economy by the Continental System. By tightening the mesh of the Continental System, Napoleon could starve his island enemy into surrender in a matter of months. In July, 1810, after a year and more of squabbling with the king of Holland about his studiously faulty administration of the Continental System (particularly in the cases of American ships), Napoleon annexed that commercial land to the French Empire.²³ In July he obliged Frederick VI to close the ports of Schleswig-Holstein to American vessels. In that same month the Prussian government succumbed to French pressure and issued a proclamation stating that "no vessel coming from an American port, or belonging to an American citizen or subject, shall be admitted and received into the ports of this country. . . ." Mecklenburg followed with a similar announcement.²⁴ In August Napoleon ordered his troops into Hamburg, Lubeck, Lauenburg, and the whole coast between Holland and the Elbe, including the tiny state of Oldenburg, duchy of the Duke of Oldenburg, uncle of the Tsar.²⁵

On 5 August, Napoleon issued the Tariff of Trianon to supplement the decrees that had founded the Continental System. Experience had taught him the impossibility of completely excluding colonial goods, so by this decree they were to be allowed entrance, but only after their owners paid a colossal tariff of 50 per cent of their value. By this Napoleon hoped to ruin the English, American, and Continental smugglers by scooping their illicit profits into his treasury and the

treasuries of his allies. Napoleon's allies began dutifully to enact the tariff within their boundaries.²⁶ The mesh of the Continental System tightened all across the northern half of Europe.

On 6 August, Harris told Adams that he had heard that Tsar Alexander had said to Rumiantsev, "The Emperor Napoleon may do as he pleases—I will not quarrel with the Americans."²⁷ Alexander had faithfully followed Napoleon's wishes in the matter of the Teneriffe ships, which had angered his volatile nobility and lamed his nation's economy as had nothing since the last years of his murdered father, Paul I. In September, Alexander petulantly claimed to Caulaincourt that ninety-six ships had been confiscated in Russia in 1810 (we must allow royalty poetic license), but that he would not ruin his own subjects and the merchants of neutral lands by adopting Napoleon's new tariff policy.²⁸

As the autumn progressed, gigantic forces moved to test Alexander's courage. At the end of summer a steady west wind had begun to blow across the Skagerrak, briskly pushing convoys into the westward-facing harbor of Gothenburg, but permitting none to leave. In September, Axel Pontus von Rosen, the governor of Gothenburg, took a careful count and discovered that a fantastic total of 1,124 merchantmen and 19 British men-of-war were anchored in his harbor.²⁹

On Sunday, 7 October 1810, the wind veered around to east-northeast and a convoy of some six hundred merchantmen and their escort got underweigh for the Baltic.³⁰ Fifty or so Americans came down from Gothenburg and mounted a high point of land to watch the huge fleet move out of the harbor.³¹

In the convoy itself were perhaps two hundred other Americans on board more than a score of assorted vessels flying the American flag.

Captain Coggeshall of the "Eliza," whom we met in the last chapter, was in Gothenburg harbor waiting for convoy to Russia at this time. Years later, he wrote of the convoy of six hundred that left on 7 October:

This whole vast fleet were nominally neutral ships, sailing under the different flags of nearly all the petty states of Germany, and their cargoes purporting to be the bona fide property of their respective countries, while in point of fact, most of them were English property, cloaked or covered by the flags of these different nations by simulated or counterfeit papers.³²

A few days after clearing Gothenburg, a violent gale struck the great convoy. Over one hundred of its vessels were wrecked or captured by the Danes while the British men-of-war battled the winds and heavy seas. More than two hundred others turned back to Gothenburg. The scattered survivors continued on into the Baltic.³³

On 23 October, Emperor Napoleon wrote to Emperor Alexander:

Six hundred merchant ships, wandering in the Baltic, have been refused admission to Prussian ports and those of Mecklenburg, and have steered for your Majesty's states. If you admit them the war still lasts. . . . Whatever their papers, under whatever names they are masked, French, German, Spanish, Danish, Russian, Your Majesty may be sure they are English.³⁴

On 4 November, Napoleon sent off a complaint to Russia (this through normal diplomatic channels) that part of the

great convoy was discharging its cargoes in Russian ports. He prefaced this complaint with a growl "that the colonial merchandise which appeared at the last Leipzig fair was brought there by 700 wagons coming from Russia; that today all the traffic in that merchandise is done through Russia. . . ." ³⁵ Napoleon exaggerated for effect, as was usual when he berated a wayward subordinate. The statement, however, did perfectly reflect his growing impatience with Russia.

In November the "*Moniteur*," the leading Parisian newspaper, announced that none of the vessels belonging to the convoy of six hundred would be admitted to Russian ports. ³⁶

While Napoleon berated Russia via the diplomatic pouch, Caulaincourt was attempting more quietly to bend Russia to French policy via his influence with Alexander. No one knew at the time, probably not even Alexander, that Caulaincourt's task was an impossible one. His task was singlehandedly to prevent the slow titanic movement of Russia out of the Continental System. Like a peg driven into a snowbank to prevent it from drifting, he was admirably upstanding in his devotion to duty and, of necessity, unsuccessful.

On 6 November, Caulaincourt dined with the Tsar, as he had many times before and would continue to do. The light flow of conversation, unfortunately for the diners' digestion, grounded on the subject of American trade with Russia. This was an unpleasant but perennial subject of discussion between the two. The French ambassador began with a claim that British goods were coming to Russia in American bottoms. Alexander replied that no American sail except those approved by John Quincy Adams were admitted, and that Adams had honorably rejected many. Besides, Alexander said, the number

of confiscations proved Russia's loyalty to the Continental System. Caulaincourt countered by saying that the Americans did not produce colonial goods in such quantities as they were bringing to Russia. Alexander parried by saying that it was not for Caulaincourt or him to say what the Americans could produce.

This phase of the conversation finished with Alexander replying his allegiance to France in her economic war against Britain, but adding that conditions in Russia did not permit him to conduct that warfare in the same way as Napoleon did in France. "*Je ne puis pas,*" he said, "*me faire faire un habit à votre taille.*"³⁷

While Caulaincourt mused over his fruitless talk with the Tsar, Captain Coggeshall was guiding the "Eliza," of New York, through snow squalls in the Baltic, desperately hoping to get her into a port before winter closed all ports. The "Eliza" had left Gothenburg in the convoy following the convoy of six hundred.

On 20 November, the "Eliza" slipped into Riga harbor, and two days later winter froze her fast. She was one of the last of seventy to one hundred "neutral" merchantmen that arrived in Riga, Reval, and lesser Russian ports at the end of the season after ice sealed off Kronstadt. Most of them were presumably survivors of the convoy of six hundred. Twenty-three were American—eight at Riga, one at Libau, and fourteen at Reval and the other ports. All of them, American, Swedish, Pappenburgian, and what have you, were fixed immobile by government sequestration as well as by the ice.³⁸

On 2 December, Napoleon dispatched a letter curtly reminding Russia that:

Adams in the Ascendancy

Of 2,000 ships which entered the Baltic this year, not one was neutral; all were sent by the English; all were loaded in London, loaded on English account. They were, it is true, disguised under American, Spanish or Swedish flags; they had papers and dispatches of each country and perhaps false certificates of French consuls, certificates manufactured in London. If one went on appearance, one would think that they came from America, but they all came from England.⁸⁹

That communiqué probably crossed en route a personal letter from Alexander to Napoleon boasting of how severely Russia was enforcing the Continental System and of how many ships Russia had confiscated. The Tsar also mentioned the mere sixty-odd late arrivals in his ports and noted that "the 600 ships that Your Majesty spoke to me about have returned to England."⁹⁰

On 7 December, Caulaincourt was again dining with Alexander. The conversation took the same course as before. Caulaincourt led off by insisting that the Americans were bringing English goods to Russia. Alexander said he refused to close his ports to Americans, explaining that Russia's commerce was so reduced that she could not renounce trade with America, practically her only remaining good customer.

Then the Tsar took the initiative, pointing to France's equivocal enforcement of her own Continental System. Russia's enthusiasm for the war against England certainly was not increased by the open issuance of licenses by the French government to its subjects to trade with the English. The French claim that these licenses were only issued for such trade as was more to the advantage of France than Britain did nothing to lessen Russian dissatisfaction.

This "don't-do-as-I-do,-do-as-I-say" policy put Caulaincourt

in a very uncomfortable position. The story of the vessel "William Gustave," of Bordeaux, is a case in point. At the beginning of 1810, that vessel appeared in Russia flying the flag of a neutral. She had come to Russia from France via England. The Russian authorities, following the precepts of the Continental System, sequestered it. The "William Gustave" then presented a French license authorizing it to trade with England. Following instructions from Paris, Caulaincourt obtained the vessel's liberation in October, 1810.⁴¹ This was a very embarrassing episode for Caulaincourt, and one which Alexander did not forget or forgive.

Nor did Caulaincourt. When he returned to France, he candidly told Napoleon that the Continental System would have been rigidly enforced from Archangel to Danzig if only Napoleon "had frankly imposed upon himself those privations and sacrifices which he wished to demand of others."⁴²

The complaint of Alexander's which Caulaincourt found most difficult to answer during the 7 December exchange had to do with French dalliance with neutral traders. It was a widely known fact that, whenever Napoleon thought it politic, France recognized neutral vessels and traded for the colonial goods they brought. "Let us speak frankly," said Alexander. "What is the object for France of the measures that you take? It is to have alone the benefits of the commerce in colonial goods, to have a monopoly of it. . . . Why haven't I the right to receive sugar from the Americans . . . ?"⁴³

As Alexander and Caulaincourt chatted over wine of Europe's fate, Captain Coggeshall and his fellow American skippers were busy finding comfortable winter quarters for

their crews and themselves. The captain and supercargoes hired apartments in Riga, Coggeshall rooming with Captain William Colwell of the ship "Venus," of Boston. The two men hired a coachman, with horse and sleigh, to attend them night and day. This service cost them only eight dollars a month and was a great convenience both for business—flying down the frozen Dvina River to their ships in the ivory harbor—or pleasure—trotting to the supper and whist parties that the hospitable burghers of Riga arranged for the foreign officers stranded so far from home.⁴⁴

The rest of the Americans at Riga stayed eight or nine miles away at Boldera, the port of Riga near the mouth of the Dvina.

At this place there were many cheap houses, built expressly to rent to the ship-masters that winter here, to shelter their mates and crews from the severity of this climate, it always being too cold to live on shipboard. These houses were in line at a convenient distance from each other; and thus each American captain in port hired one for their mates and seamen, at a rent of ten dollars per month; and were tolerably well built, and as firewood was plenty and cheap, they were comfortable residences for the winter. We unbent our sails and stripped the masts of all the rigging, and in a warm and comfortable room by the side of a large fire, my mate and sailors overhauled the rigging, repaired all the old, and made an entire new suit of sails during the winter. The sailors gave names to these houses according to their own fancy, sometimes after their ship or vessel; others were called New-York, Boston, or Salem, corresponding to the places where they belonged; and after the labor of the day, they would visit their respective neighbors at New-York, Boston, or Salem, and as there was no want for female society among the lower classes, balls and dances were very frequent. The mates and petty officers also enjoyed

the society of each other, and in this manner contrived to spend their time pleasantly during the long cold evenings in this dreary climate.⁴⁵

The Yankee seamen settled down to wait out the snows. There was plenty of food, fuel, and women, and so they were content enough, caring little that their fate rolled like dice across the polished tables of palaces in St. Petersburg and Paris.

Few beyond the innermost circles of Alexander's court knew just how much influence these seamen from the briny coves of the Merrimac, Charles, Hudson, and Delaware rivers had with the policy makers of the Russian Empire. American diplomats certainly entertained no optimistic views as to any increase of American influence in Russia at the expense of Napoleon. Jonathan Russell, the United States chargé d'affaires in Paris, wrote on 4 December that Russia "must promptly decide on hostilities against commerce or against France. She must confiscate or fight and there is much reason to believe that she will elect the former."⁴⁶

On 17 December, John Quincy Adams wrote to William Gray, whose bark "Leopard" was one of the crucial twenty-three American merchantmen awaiting either admission or confiscation, that there was little justification for believing that any of the vessels arrived at the close of navigation would be admitted.⁴⁷ On the same day Adams reported to the Secretary of State that the determination of Alexander, Rumiantsev, and the Council of State in favor of continuing trade with America "is said to be fixed and unalterable . . . , but . . . the necessity of commerce and the real regard for the United States, which is undissembled and unimpaired, may yield to the first

principle of the Russian policy at this time, which is at all events to keep on good terms with France." ⁴⁸

On the last day of 1810, the government of Alexander I handed down a ukase setting forth a new policy for foreign commerce. A year and a half after, when Napoleon launched his invasion of Russia, he declared to his armies, "At the end of 1810, Russia changed her political system; the English spirit recovered its influence; the ukase on commerce was the first act." ⁴⁹

The ukase set up neutral maritime committees in each of Russia's ports to facilitate the handling of the papers of neutral merchantmen.

The ukase listed all those things which could legally be imported into Russia. All else was prohibited. Not included in the list were silk cloth, velvet, and lace. Importation by land of all grape wine, with the exception of Hungarian and Wallachian wine, was forbidden. Wine must come by sea, or not at all.

For all practical purposes, all importation from France was thus forbidden. All the chief exports from France to Russia—silks, velvets, laces, wines, etc.—were either debarred completely or to be refused entrance if they came by land. Since the British navy controlled the sea approach to Russia, any French wine dispatched by ship to Russia would only end up gracing the tables of Admiral Saumarez and his captains.

Paragraph eleven of the ukase was of great interest to Americans. It proclaimed that only American and Brazilian ships were to be "admitted with bills of lading, wherein the name of the consignee is not inserted. . . ." This meant that only

American and Brazilian skippers could bring cargoes to Russia without first receiving specific orders for those cargoes for specific merchants in Russia. Considering how slow and faulty were communications in 1810, this section of the ukase gave American and Brazilian merchants considerable advantage over merchants of other nations. Considering how few ships came to Russia from Brazil at this time, we may say that American shippers reaped that advantage nearly exclusively.⁵⁰

When Napoleon first read the new ukase, he was confused and surprised. "Here is a great planet taking a wrong direction," he said. "I do not understand its course at all."⁵¹ Shortly after, he recovered sufficiently to croon implications of bloody reprisal in a personal letter to Alexander: "For myself, I am always the same; but I am struck by the evidences of these facts, and by the thought that Your Majesty is wholly disposed, as soon as circumstances permit it, to make arrangement with England, which is the same thing as to kindle a war between the two Empires."⁵²

Alexander answered in what he hoped was a disarmingly frank letter. The objects of the commercial ukase were two, he said. The first was to give greater facility to American commerce, because it was the only channel remaining by which Russia could export her accumulating iron, hemp, linens, etc., which France and her allies either would not or could not come to buy.

The second object of the ukase, according to Alexander, was to reduce to a minimum importations by land. By land came the luxury goods, the goods from France. These velvets and wines were many, many times more valuable per unit of weight than hemp or iron, and thus were very suitable for land trans-

port. Therefore, while Russia's allegiance to the Continental System cut her off from her chief customer and source of hard cash, Great Britain, very expensive imports from the West continued to come in. Russia had always been blessed with a very advantageous balance of trade. Since the alliance with France, the opposite had been true. Russia's most important export had become gold and silver from her dwindling supply of specie.⁶³

The ruble, in obedience to the most basic laws of economics, had tumbled steadily in value. In 1805, it had been worth as high as 31.5 pence sterling. In October, 1809, it was worth 21 pence. By September of 1810, it had plummeted to 14 pence.⁶⁴ Russia's hard cash was bleeding away to the west, and Alexander and his advisors felt that she was on the brink of disastrous inflation. The commercial ukase was essential to stop the exodus of gold in payment for her land imports from western Europe.

So you can see, Alexander smiled, that the ukase is no more directed against your France than against any other European nation.⁶⁵

Ever since the arrival of the twenty-three American sail that lay in the outer ports of Russia's Baltic coast, John Quincy Adams had been hounding the Russian government to win their admittance. The American masters and supercargoes, living under the sword of confiscation, petitioned Adams, cursed the French, cursed the Continental System, cursed the Russians, and waited and waited. One of the American supercargoes at Riga, a Mr. Kenyon of only twenty-two years, took up gambling with members of the rich mercantile families of that port to while away the long winter. He won many thou-

sand rubles, then lost them, then lost most of the cargo entrusted to him. After several weeks of despair, he shot himself.⁵⁶

The others, most likely older, certainly wiser, contented themselves with waiting . . . and waiting. On 23 January, Count Rumiantsev told Adams that the papers authorizing the admission of the Americans only needed the Tsar's signature. There the matter stood for several days. Then, in early February, permission was granted for seventeen of the American merchantmen to discharge their cargoes in part or whole. Coggeshall unloaded his cargo, and it was sledged to St. Petersburg. "The sugars and other articles composing our cargo, were sold at the capital at very high prices." Caulaincourt remarked to Adams on 15 February with gracious bitterness that "it seems you are great favorites here. You have found powerful protection, for most of your vessels have been admitted." In March the remainder of the American cargoes were admitted.⁵⁷

Captain Coggeshall loaded his "Eliza" with bar iron, eighty casks of tallow, several tons of hemp, filled her up with sheetings, drillings, diaper, canvas, and ravensduck, and, on 25 May 1811, after six months and four days at Riga, cleared for New York. The "Eliza" passed through the Belt in British convoy and entered New York harbor on 9 August. She was one of the very first ships from Russia in 1811, and so her voyage was a profitable one.⁵⁸

In 1810, there had come to Kronstadt 107 American merchantmen, a full one-fourth of the total entries—410—at that port in that year, and over one and a half times as many vessels as came from any other single nation.⁵⁹ Fifty-six American sail

Adams in the Ascendancy

entered at Archangel.⁶⁰ To Riga, Reval, Libau, and the lesser Russian ports came forty or so additional American ships, making the total of American vessels entering Russian ports in 1810 something in the vicinity of two hundred.⁶¹

The impact of these two hundred on Russia's economy and on the Continental System was magnified by the fact that American ships now habitually arrived in Russia loaded with goods and not in ballast as in normal times.⁶² The commercial warfare between France and England had robbed Americans of so many of their markets that Russia was one of the few countries left to which Americans could export. The total of exports from the United States to Russia in 1810 amounted in value to nearly four million dollars, well over four times the amount of 1809, the previous all-time high.⁶³

If, as Napoleon believed, all Americans coming to Russia were smuggling for the British, then a great breach had been torn in the wall of the Continental System in 1810.

1. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, Vol. II, n. 136; letter to Secretary of State, 31 July 1810, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 136, p. 131.

2. Hildt, *Early Diplomatic Negotiations*, pp. 47, 48, 50.

3. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 180.

4. John Quincy Adams Diary, 28 May 1810, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 113.

5. Letter to Charles Saunders, 3 August 1810, St. Petersburg; letter to Pickman and Derby, 11 October 1810, Gothenburg, Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood (Peabody Museum).

6. Dawes (ed.), *William's Marine Notes*, pp. 163, 164 (Essex Institute).

7. Letter to William Gray, 12 June 1811, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 135.

8. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 143, 169, 199-200; Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 13, 18.

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

9. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 232.
10. John Quincy Adams Diary, 10 March 1811, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 222.
11. Letter to Secretary of State, 12/25 September 1810, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches--St. Petersburg, Vol. II.
12. John Quincy Adams Diary, 7 October 1810, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 163.
13. Letter to William Gray, 1 September 1810, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 135, p. 211.
14. John Quincy Adams Diary, 19 September 1810, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 158.
15. Letter to Secretary of State, 11 March 1811, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 136, p. 226.
16. Letter to Pickman and Derby, 19 August 1810, St. Petersburg, Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood (Peabody Museum).
17. Nikola Mikhailowitch (ed.), *Les Relations diplomatiques de la Russie et de la France d'après les rapports des ambassadeurs d'Alexandre et Napoléon, 1808-1812* (St. Petersburg: Manufacture des Papiers de l'Etat, 1905-8), V, 75-76.
18. Letter to Albert Gallatin, 15/27 September 1810, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 136, p. 168.
19. Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, V, 76.
20. There is some confusion here. Adams gives this version. Caulaincourt seemed to think that the vessels, too, were confiscated. This confusion is not surprising, considering the amount of double-dealing going on in the ports and chancellory of Russia in these years.
21. John Quincy Adams Diary, 6 July 1810, 11 July 1810, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, pp. 123, 124; letter to Secretary of State, 19/31 October 1810, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, *ibid.*, Reel 136, p. 186; Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, V, 93.
22. *Ibid.*, V, 93.
23. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, II, 300, 320-21.
24. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 467-77.
25. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, II, 325, 330.
26. Louis Thiers, *History of the Consulate and the Empire of France under Napoleon* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894), VII, 165-67.
27. John Quincy Adams Diary, 6 August 1810, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 133.
28. Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, V, 148.
29. Eli F. Heckscher, *The Continental System: An Economic Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), p. 236.
30. Log of brig "Independence," 12 August 1810 to 17 August 1811 (Essex Institute).

Adams in the Ascendancy

31. Smith, *Reminiscences*, pp. 37-38.
32. Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, p. 83.
33. Smith, *Reminiscences*, pp. 38-39.
34. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (Paris: H. Plon, J. Dumaine, 1858-70), XXI, 234.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
36. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 549; IV, 8.
37. Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, V, 186-87.
38. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 194; Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, pp. 94-95; Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, V, 290.
39. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, XXI, 298.
40. Serge Tatistcheff, *Alexander I^{er} et Napoléon d'après leur correspondance inédite, 1801-1812* (Paris: Librairie Académique Didier, Perrin et C^{ie}, Libraires-Editeurs, 1891), p. 543.
41. Jean Hanoteau (ed.), *Memoires du Général Caulaincourt, Duc de Vincence, Grand Ecuyer de l'Empereur* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1933), Vol. I, 282-83 n.
42. Caulaincourt, *With Napoleon in Russia* (New York: William Murrow & Co., 1935), p. 25.
43. Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, V, 221-28; see also *Lettres et papiers du Chancelier Comte Nesselrode, 1760-1850* (Paris: A. Lahure, 1904-12[?]), III, 286, 384.
44. Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, pp. 97-98, 100.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.
46. Halvdan Koht, "Bernadotte and Swedish-American Relations, 1810-1814," *Journal of Modern History*, XVI (December, 1944), 269.
47. Letter to William Gray, 5/17 December 1810, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 135, p. 264.
48. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, III, 552.
49. Frank E. Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1919), p. 233; see also Nesselrode, *op. cit.*, III, 317; and *Sbornik, Russkoe Istoricheskoe Obshchestvo* (St. Petersburg: n.p., 1867-1916), XXI, 70, 73-75, 146.
50. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 4; Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, V, 262; "Manifest of the Import and Export Trade of the Empire of Russia, for the Year 1811," enclosed with letter to Secretary of State, 27 January 1811, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Russia, Vol. I.
51. Rose, *Napoleon*, II, 216.
52. Henry Adams, *History of the United States*, V, 419.
53. It may be interesting to the reader to know that J. Jepson Oddy, a British merchant experienced in trading with Russia, predicted this situation

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

in 1805: "... We cannot help observing how amazingly advantageous its [Russia's] trade is with the British dominions. Not only the amount of the sales is equal nearly to those of all other nations, but it is from Britain only that Russia receives a balance of cash. Were the trade suspended, the importation of wines, brandies, and foreign produce and manufactures, from other countries, would totally absorb the monied capital of Russia; and it is not going too far to say, that such an event would do it more harm than any other that could take place."—Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 209.

54. Oddy, *European Commerce*, p. 135; Benjamin Shreve, "Accounts and Papers Concerning My Voyage to Russia in the Bark 'William Gray'" (Peabody Museum); Penn Townsend, *Accountbook*, 1810–1812 (Peabody Museum).

55. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 3–4; Tatistcheff, *Alexander I^{er} et Napoleon*, pp. 548–49; *Oeuvres complètes de J. de Maistre* (Lyon: Librairie Générale Catholique et Classique, 1885), XI, 289.

56. Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, p. 101; John Quincy Adams Diary, 20 September 1811, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 292.

57. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 217, 226; Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, p. 98; Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 12–13, 35. I do not know what became of the fifty to eighty non-American late arrivals of 1810. On 3 February, Caulaincourt wrote that it had been announced that they were confiscated, but that he hadn't received official confirmation. On 15 March, Adams said scarcely any but the Americans had been admitted. (Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, V, 290; letter to Joy, 15 March 1811, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 135.

58. Coggeshall, *Second Series of Voyages*, pp. 102–6.

59. *St. Petersburgische Zeitung*, 6 December 1810.

60. Joseph V. Bacon, *Memorandum Book*, pp. 26–31 (Peabody Museum).

61. Letter to Mitchell, 5/18 December 1810, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 135, p. 272.

62. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 196.

63. *Miscellaneous Documents of the House of Representatives* . . . 1892–93, XXVI, xvi; letter to Secretary of State, 28 October/9 November 1810, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. II.

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

IN SOME WAYS 1810 had been a good year for Englishmen trading with Russia and the north of Europe. Britain had officially imported £752,295 worth of hemp, more in value than in any year since the bombardment of Copenhagen. Indeed, imports of Baltic products had been so great and England's stockpiles of these now so large that their prices fell, along with England's frantic demand for them.¹

England's ability to export to North Europe was also quite impressive. In 1810, she sent off to North Europe (including France) nearly £14,000,000 worth of goods, actually a few hundred thousand pounds worth more than in the comparatively "normal" year of 1806.²

In other ways 1810 had been Britain's worst year of the war yet. It was the year in which Napoleon dedicated—for the first time, really—a full measure of his intellect, energy, diplomacy, and armies to the enforcement of the Continental System. To ensure its enforcement, he extended the French Empire to the

borders of Denmark, startling his allies into more assiduous examination of "neutral" property arriving in their ports than ever before. In 1810, greater quantities of English property were confiscated than ever before. In the latter months of the year, Napoleon had even set his customs agents and those of his obedient allies to making great bonfires of all the British manufactures they seized. (*Auto-da-fés*, John Quincy Adams called them³). The heat from these fires was as a raw wind to the Briton who, for lack of customers for his products, was going hungry in the midst of plenty.

And 1810 was the peak year of the English license trade. The British government issued 18,356 licenses for illicit trade with France and her allies in that single twelve-month period.⁴ It was also the year that disillusioned England with the license trade. So many of these licenses were issued to foreigners that British shippers complained that the license trade was an ill-founded scheme whereby fees for freighting British goods were taken away from the British merchant marine.⁵ Some Britons also complained of the power which the British government gained over the merchant class by granting or withholding licenses. Everyone bewailed the cultivation of forgery and perjury which was part and parcel of the license trade.

None of these, however, was the real motive for English disillusionment with the license trade. The real cause was the enormous confiscations on the Continent of shipping provided with these licenses, ruining some of the wealthiest merchants in London and filling Napoleon's coffers.⁶ Captain Osgood, of the ill-fated "Mary," who arrived in London in the fall of 1810, reported, "There is a total stagnation of business owing to the great and increasing number of bankrupts and the difficulty of

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

trading with the Continent." In the spring this unfortunate Jonah of a captain witnessed the bankruptcy of Messrs. Le Mesurier and Company, the London house which handled the funds of the Massachusetts merchants who employed him.⁷

In 1811, most British merchants withdrew from the license trade, and only 7,602 licenses were issued, less than half the previous year's total. This diminishment was especially apparent in the category of licenses issued for export to the Baltic. Gorged with the Baltic's products, fearful of confiscation of whatever cargoes they might send out, and discouraged by the sinking prices of colonial produce in Sweden and Russia, most British merchants avoided that sea's cold waters. In August of 1811, Captain John March, one of the Americans languishing in Gothenburg, wrote home that the quantity of colonial produce sent by England into the Baltic was "I suppose not more than one-third what was last year."⁸ This constriction of her export commerce in 1811 brought Great Britain closer to defeat than she would be again until the days of the Kaiser's U-boats.

France's annexation of many of the little states whose flags were utilized by smugglers for cover severely limited the English merchants in their choice of disguises. John Quincy Adams reported to the Secretary of State at the end of the 1811 shipping season that "the abolition of the Hamburg, Lubeck, Bremen, Pappenburg and Oldenburg flags has much increased the necessity under which the English have found themselves of resorting to that of the United States to carry their merchandise. . . ." ⁹ Just how often the English must have so abused the American flag was something Adams never realized until some years later.

British utilization of the Stars and Stripes during 1811 was even more unethical than during 1810, if that is possible. In 1810, American trade with Britain had at least been legal. In 1811, all such trade was forbidden by the American government. Napoleon had used the Macon Act as a lever to twist the United States out of its neutral position and turn her against Great Britain.

Our Macon Act, you will remember, promised the two great protagonists of the European war that if either of them granted the United States full rights as a neutral trader, then the United States would stop trading with the other. In July, 1810, Napoleon, a poker player always ready to bluff, declared that the Berlin and Milan Decrees, the basic documents of the Continental System, would no longer apply to American shipping after the first of November.

James Madison credulously accepted Napoleon's word and announced that non-intercourse would be revived against Britain in three months unless Britain revoked her onerous orders in council against American shipping. Britain saw no evidence that the Berlin and Milan Decrees had been modified, and so made no change in her policy.

Neither could Americans on the scene in Europe see any change in the French attitude toward American shipping. One American wrote to Girard, the Philadelphia merchant prince, on the next to the last day of 1810, that "I am afraid that we have been the dupes of the French government; three American vessels have lately arrived in France, of which one, the New Orleans packet, is already condemned. . . . The other two still remain under seizure in execution of the Berlin and Milan Decrees." ¹⁰

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

On 11 February 1811, Madison forbade further commerce with Great Britain. Shortly afterward, Congress expressed its approval. For practical purposes, Napoleon now had a trans-Atlantic member of the Continental System, and at the cost of only words.

John Quincy Adams, thousands of miles and several months distant from the latest news in Washington, D.C., wrote from St. Petersburg in April like an *ex post facto* Cassandra:

the policy of France is at this time as hostile to the United States as it ever was, since our existence as a nation. We hear, and I most sincerely hope, that the non-importation act [cutting off our trade with England] . . . did not eventually pass. It was a trap to catch us into a war with England; a war which England most richly deserves, but which would on our part be more than ever impolitic at this time.¹¹

Tensions between the United States and Britain were drawn so tautly in the spring of 1811 that war seemed a possibility any day. The forty-four-gun American frigate "President," cruising off Sandy Hook in May, sighted what she thought was a British frigate and pursued. Overtaking the mysterious vessel at dusk and receiving no identifying signal, the "President" raked her stem and stern with broadsides. When the brief battle was over, the battered loser was revealed as the twenty-gun British corvette "Little Belt," barely half the size of the "President."

In Russia, Americans held their breaths while the United States and Britain teetered on the edge of war. War would mean sure capture for American ships trying to get home from Russia. As a matter of fact, practically the only British obstruction of Russo-American trade in 1811 came as a direct result of

the "Little Belt" incident. Saumarez's fleet seized and held several American vessels at Wingo Bay and Hano Harbor until orders came through from London that all was well and that peace still existed between the two English-speaking powers.¹²

The Russians were no less nervous about the state of Anglo-American relations than the English or Americans. Russia knew that war between Britain and the United States would bring a sudden end to Russo-American trade and thus force her to a stark choice between economic catastrophe or war with France. With United States ships, now by any measure Russia's best customers, gone from her harbors, she would either have to accept a profound reduction of her commerce or would have to take up direct trade with Britain again, which would shortly bring Napoleon's armies surging across her frontiers.¹³ No one could be more concerned about America's rights vis-à-vis the British navy than Alexander, Tsar of Russia.

Alexander had many additional reasons for sleepless nights in 1811. His war with Britain was not going poorly, but there seemed to be no end to it. Napoleon continued to harangue for a tighter administration of the Continental System, and at the same time the Russian nobility, who well remembered how to assassinate a Tsar, pressed for more trade. Alexander seemed caught in a situation in which there seemed no path of least resistance.

Napoleon certainly did little to bolster Alexander's ardor for the alliance with France. In December, 1810, Napoleon had annexed Hamburg, Bremen, Lubeck, and the coast between France and Denmark—the territory he had occupied the pre-

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

vious summer. This annexation included the duchy of Alexander's uncle, the Duke of Oldenburg, which angered the Tsar more than anything Napoleon had ever done. Napoleon had also extended the borders of his satellite, Poland, reviving the traditional Russian aversion to a foreign-dominated Poland. In the Fall of 1810, Napoleon had approved the nomination by the Swedish Estates-General of General Bernadotte as the crown prince of Sweden. From the day he arrived in Sweden, Bernadotte controlled the course of Swedish military and foreign policy. This was not a state of affairs Napoleon liked, for he properly judged Bernadotte to be too independent to be safely given that much power that far from Paris; but to Russia, Bernadotte's arrival in Sweden seemed another move in the ominous approach of France toward the territories of Russia. At Russia's front, Napoleon seized whole states; at her northern flank, he insinuated himself into power through his protégé.¹⁴

Russia's fears of these advances and Napoleon's extreme irritation at the commercial ukase of December brought France and Russia very close to war in the spring of 1811. (In the spring of 1811, all our protagonists, Russia, France, Britain, and the United States, seemed to be rehearsing for the hecatombs of 1812.)

As spring opened, Alexander and Napoleon sent several hundred thousand men to glare suspiciously at each other over their mutual border.¹⁵ The day after Easter, Adams, taking his constitutional on the quay, met General Pardo, the minister from Spain, and chatted with him about the crisis. The general felt immediate war between France and Russia inevitable, chalking it up to Russia's "commercial system" and the Olden-

burg seizure.¹⁶ A few weeks later, news reached St. Petersburg of an extemporaneous speech Napoleon had given before the Council of Commerce of Paris in which he openly threatened Russia. One account of the speech quoted him as saying, "The Emperor of Russia had not indeed as yet enforced my decrees in his ports, but he will do it within six months or I declare war against him. Who could hinder me, after Tilsit, from marching to Petersburg? What I did not do, I can do."¹⁷

On 19 May, Caulaincourt departed St. Petersburg for France. "He leaves this place," wrote Adams, "regretted I believe as much as a French ambassador possibly could be—loaded with the distinctions and favors of the Emperor Alexander beyond all example."¹⁸ Napoleon, as a method of expressing his displeasure with Russia, recalled this friend of Alexander and replaced him with Count Lauriston, an able man, but one inferior in rank and ability to Caulaincourt.¹⁹

In the winter Caulaincourt had carefully reckoned the sum of the results of his efforts to enforce the Continental System in Russia. The Russians assured him that two hundred ships' cargoes had been confiscated since the beginning of 1809, but he had unimpeachable evidence of only one hundred and seventeen confiscations. And even that figure was obscure and misleading. Caulaincourt judged that, in reality, the total should be reduced by two-thirds because of the careful incompetence of the Russian officials who looked the other way while the "confiscated" cargoes were spirited off the vessels and into the night.²⁰

What thought troubled Caulaincourt's mind as his carriage lurched over the roads leading south and west away from St.

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

Petersburg? Could it have been: How, how do you persuade a whole people to enforce a law they do not want enforced?

Long before the roads in Russia dried enough for invasion, Napoleon permitted the tensions between France and Russia to relax. Alexander had called his bluff. "The apprehensions of war," Adams said, "have vanished like a frightful vision of the night; though here and there a doubter insinuates that the catastrophe is not for any length of time delayed."²¹

If Alexander had been clairvoyant, one of the events which had led to the crisis in Franco-Russian relations in the winter and spring of 1811 would have filled him with joy rather than apprehension. Bernadotte's accession to power in Sweden was not an extension of Napoleon's power, but rather an omen that it had passed its maturity. Bernadotte was like Caulaincourt in energy and ability, but superior to him in talent for self-advancement. Bernadotte had started as a sergeant major and had learned on the way up that loyalty to one's chief is often too much baggage for a climber to carry.

On his journey from the Continent to Sweden to accept the nomination of the Swedish Estates-General as heir to the throne, Bernadotte received an excellent lesson in the difference between being on the Continent and being practically anywhere else in the world. When he reached the shore of the Great Belt, a British convoy of some hundreds of merchantmen was passing through, shepherded by Saumarez's "Victory," six other ships of the line, six frigates, and an assortment of sloops of war. In order to cross over, Bernadotte was obliged to request permission of Admiral Saumarez, which was graciously granted by that sly maritime statesman. Bernadotte subsequently told

one of the British officers of Saumarez's command that that enormous fleet, as omnipotent on its watery plain as ever Napoleon was on the fields of Austerlitz or Jena, "was the most beautiful and wonderful sight he had ever beheld, being one of which he had never formed an idea."²²

When Bernadotte reached Sweden, he was rapidly introduced to a few more of the realities of the Swedish situation. Sweden's economy depended on overseas commerce. Her greatest industry was iron production. Without export of iron, her miners, ironmongers, and merchants would simply have no way to make a living. To export meant to coddle the British and cultivate the Americans. But first there was Napoleon to coddle and cultivate.

Before Bernadotte had been in Sweden a month, the government of that nation had issued a set of regulations stringently enforcing the Continental System, and had declared war on Britain. According to these new regulations, the two million dollars worth of American property in warehouses at Gothenburg could not be exported. Its owners were condemned either to sell it at the current Swedish prices, which, as had been true for two years, would mean vast loss; or simply let the warehouse mice feed on it. In compliance with Bernadotte's new regulations, the Swedish officials also seized the papers of six American ships in Swedish ports, in effect sequestering them.²³ All boded ill for American traders who would touch at Swedish ports in the coming season.

On 1 March 1811, Bernadotte granted audience to John Speyer, a New York merchant appointed by the American envoy to France to be the "commercial agent" of the United States at Stockholm. (Like the Forbes and Joy appointments,

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

this was another of the United States government's *ad hoc* arrangements to save money and keep the number of permanent diplomatic representatives abroad to a minimum.) Speyer found Bernadotte practically effusive in his declarations of affection for America:

I know through my friends that my election had alarmed the people of the United States, who considered their property here as lost, but they are mistaken. The Swedish nation has no disposition to treat you as you are treated close by. [i.e., by Denmark] Tell your government that we do not want to enrich ourselves at the expense of our friends. I love the Americans. Tell them they will always be treated here as friends. The King and myself and the constituted authorities will do all we can for you. We have been the advocates of the United States. We have been much importuned but have refused everything that could affect your interest. . . . Inform the President that you may safely come to Sweden, bring your produce and take ours in return.

Speyer staggered from the interview and reported to Washington that "the French party has lost nearly all its former influence." ²⁴

Within two months, the seized papers were returned to the six waiting American merchantmen, and they were under way, several of them for Russia. At the same time the Swedish government granted Americans permission to export their property stored at Gothenburg, ostensibly only back to America but in reality to anywhere they wished. Later in the year, American ships were permitted to sail in Swedish convoys, which they did—right past the noses of Napoleon's privateers. ²⁵

As for Bernadotte's dutiful declaration of war against

England, it was one thing to get him to declare it and quite another to get him to wage it. At the end of the 1811 shipping season, Speyer reported that the English had never molested the Swedish coastal trade, that Swedish vessels had even sailed in British convoys, and that considerable shipments had been smuggled from Sweden to England. "France," he wrote, "often remonstrates against this intercourse, and in vain importunes this government to adopt measures of decided hostility against the English fleets and trade in these seas."²⁶

Bernadotte, safe behind the shield of Admiral Saumarez and his fleet, could afford to treat Napoleon cavalierly. Frederick VI of Denmark, on the wrong side of that shield, still jumped nervously whenever Napoleon grumbled. In the past year the French Empire had advanced to the borders of Denmark. What would prevent it from advancing further? Rumors darted through Paris about impending annexation of Denmark and the possibility of a precautionary transfer by Frederick VI of his government to Norway.²⁷

Yet even the frightened Danes were growing restive and sullen under the domination of France. Privateering was no substitute for regular commerce. The British were brutal and hateful, but they *did* control the seas from which Denmark had drawn such a large part of its wealth. The empty expanse of the harbor of Copenhagen meant economic ruin for Denmark.

At this favorable conjunction of the planets, George W. Erving was dispatched by the United States government to Copenhagen, arriving at noon on 30 May 1811.²⁸ Erving wasn't a permanently appointed minister to the Danish court. His, too, was an *ad hoc* mission to try to settle the matter of seizures of American property, but he wasn't just an unknown

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

picked to go to Copenhagen simply because he was near Denmark when the seizure problem occurred to Madison. Erving was a man of skill and high diplomatic reputation. And he arrived at the right time.

He got down to work immediately. He quickly decided that Saabye, though perhaps honorable, was useless as an American consul because of his nationality and his inactivity. Joy, he had decided at the end of three weeks in Copenhagen, "is entirely undeserving of any kind of confidence."²⁸

Erving was equally keen in his handling of United States relations with the Danes. Rapport between him and the officials of the Danish court was immediate. Erving was apparently a catalyst which precipitated out of solution all the desires of Danes for a return of normal commerce with neutrals.

On 23 June, Erving happily wrote the Secretary of State that "the evils which our commerce has suffered here, though very considerable, yet have not been quite so extensive as has been generally believed; and you will learn also, with particular pleasure, that the depredations of the Danish privateers have been discontinued since my arrival." In the last dozen days, upward of forty American sail had passed through the Sound with little or no delay en route.²⁹

Erving's efforts were not rewarded with total success, of course. Fear of Napoleon made the Danes reluctant to free previously captured Americans. And there continued to be Danish seizures of American vessels. In all, the Danes brought thirty-seven American sail into their ports in 1811, but now the proportion of those condemned to those freed was smaller, and the speed of the courts in expediting the cases of detained

Americans was greater. As of 12 April 1812, only four of the thirty-seven had been condemned, and three of these four were so blatantly sailing for the English that Erving wasted little sympathy on them. The only *legal* American vessel seized by the Danes in 1811 and condemned in the courts of Denmark was the "Brutus," Captain Fenno, of Boston, bound from New Orleans to St. Petersburg.³¹

At the other end of the Baltic, the love affair between Russia and America continued to bloom. On 24 April 1811, the day the ice broke in the Neva, Adams was told by one of the Russian officials handling the examination of American merchantmen suspected of trading for the English that the ships in question had only to produce papers proving the neutrality of themselves and their cargoes to be released. Adams noted that "as to the *time* which had been given for producing the papers, a year and a day had been fixed on . . . ; but if longer time was wanting, he was as willing that they should have two or three years as one."³² And so it went throughout the entire shipping season of 1811.

The Russians, however, did not completely ignore their obligations to the Continental System. The alliance with France continued to exist. Forty to fifty arriving merchant sail were confiscated. Five American ships were seized.³³ But the administration of the Continental System in Russia was much looser than ever before, and everyone knew it. For Americans the exasperation of the long delays before admission was a thing of the past, along with the constant worry that the wavering Tsar would suddenly acquiesce to French policy and confiscate every American ship and cargo in his ports. The honest American on his way to Russia could now be sure that the Russian government would accord him every courtesy and

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

justice. The dishonest American on his way to Russia could be sure that the prejudice of a large portion of the officials with whom he would have to deal would be in his favor.

The benign attitude of the English, Swedes, Danes, and Russians toward Americans guiding their vessels into the Baltic was, paradoxically, ruinous for the Americans. The night of 11 May the first vessel of the season arrived at Kronstadt. She was an American, last from Denmark where she had wintered.³⁴ Although she was the very first of the year, she found the market for colonial goods at St. Petersburg already overstocked. The commerce of 1810 had left Russia with such a superfluity of sugar, coffee, cotton, etc., that their prices had dropped during the winter, some as much as 20 per cent.³⁵

But the Americans, with nowhere else to go, came like lemmings to the ports of Russia. On 25 June, John Quincy Adams wrote to his father, John Adams, that already the fortieth American vessel had entered at Kronstadt. Her name, the son was proud to write, was the "John Adams." His pride, however, was tempered by his knowledge of the state of the market in Russia.³⁶

On 21 July, Adams wrote his father again:

American vessels are now pouring upon us in floods. I wrote you less than a month since that there had then arrived at Cronstadt forty since the opening of the year's navigation, and already the number exceeds ninety, besides as many more at Archangel and other Russia ports. . . . I hear that they are still coming by the hundred. I am sorry for the adventurers. They will almost universally make ruinous voyages.³⁷

By August the bottom of the Russian market for American imports had seemingly dropped out. Coffee, sixty-three to seventy-five rubles per pood in January, was down to forty to

fifty-two rubles. Cotton, fifty-four rubles a pood in January, was twenty to twenty-five in August. And so it went for all the other colonial goods.

The level of Russian tariffs, and the prices of Russian services and goods moved in the other direction: up. The tariffs under the commercial ukase of December, 1810, were higher than before, and some Americans were forced to sell their cargoes at tremendous losses just to pay the tariffs on them. Interest charged for bank loans went up. Hemp, the bellwether of Russian exports, rose from eighty-eight rubles per berkovets in January to a hundred and eight or a hundred and ten in August.³⁸

Some Americans hoped to offset their losses in selling colonial goods in Russia by the profits of selling Russian goods in America. They were grasping at straws. The United States was as glutted with imports from Russia as Russia was with imports from America. Russian duck, which had been twenty-nine dollars a bolt in July, 1810, was \$23.50 in July, 1811. The very best hemp, which had sold for as much as \$320.00 a ton in the fall of 1810, was down to \$250.00 in July of 1811. Ordinary hemp plummeted as low as \$200.00 a ton.³⁹

The story of the ship "John," of Salem, is a good example of the unfortunate state of an American vessel involved in Russo-American trade in 1811. In May the "John" cleared Salem harbor for Archangel loaded with cotton, coffee, and Arabian gum and drugs. She arrived at Archangel on 4 July, after a fast passage of thirty-six days, and immediately discovered that cotton would not sell at any price, nor would the gums, and the coffee only if it were of a special high quality. "Alloes, sandarac and myrrh"—presumably what was meant by "drugs"—sold

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

well, but the "John" had only small quantities aboard. The master of the "John," a Yankee by the name of Francis Boardman, put her cargo into the hands of a local merchant to be sold if and when the market improved. The merchant advanced him enough credit for one hundred tons of cordage, and in early autumn the "John" cleared Archangel.

Her owners had guessed in the spring that the market for Russian goods in the United States would grow worse rather than better, and so had made up a letter of instructions which now directed the "John" not back to the United States, but "say to South America, or even India. . . ."

Practically no amount of foresight could make the voyage of the "John" profitable. Wherever American ships could legally enter in 1811 and 1812, there seemed to be an oversupply of the goods they carried. The economic war had so distorted world trade in 1811 that one of the more common neutral cargoes was Russian goods.

First the "John" sailed to Lisbon. She sold thirty coils of her cordage there at a decent price, but then two ships arrived from St. Petersburg with cordage. The "John" next crossed the Atlantic and put into Pernambuco, Brazil, and found the market there "completely cluttered with naval stores." Next she sailed to Bahia, Brazil, and found conditions no different there. "I believe cordage is the dullest article in market at this place or any on the coast," cried Francis Boardman. On 25 April 1812, he wrote to Salem that he had finally sold the cordage, though at a very low price. His excuse was that there was "no sale whatever for cordage and several vessels were . . . laying in port partly loaded with it. . . ." The "John" took on a cargo of sugar and cleared for home. For all the wisdom and energy

expended by her owners and officers, hers had been a thoroughly unprofitable voyage.⁴⁰

There was *one* way in which an American trading with Russia could be sure of a pretty profit in 1811, though the record of history contains only oblique reference to it. An American could always sail for the British. There was a possibility that the English market for Russian goods would revive, and some English merchants, deprived by Napoleon of nearly every other market, were willing, even anxious, to pay enormous fees to a bona fide neutral to ship their goods to Russia.

Most of these Anglo-American smugglers came to Russia in ballast, as did perhaps one-third of all Americans arriving in Russia in 1811. Not having a cargo reduced the amount of property the English who employed these ships would lose if the ships were confiscated. Moreover, being in ballast safeguarded these ships from seizure. The Russians were twice-over motivated to allow ships in ballast to enter with impunity. Once, because the mercantilist theory of the day taught that selling to an enemy while not buying from him would quickly draw off all his gold, and thus destroy his economy. Twice, because the ships that entered empty and left loaded with Russian goods did most to restore Russia's favorable balance of trade. Near the end of the shipping season, Adams reported to his Secretary of State that the Russian minister of finance had said "that if a ship came empty, he did not care when she came, and was not inclined to scrutinize what she was."

The Russian economic policy of 1811—the reduction of land imports and encouragement of *all* overseas trade—was crude but effective. By August the specie ruble had risen 30 to

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

40 per cent in value in the financial marts of London, Hamburg, Paris, and Amsterdam, and the depreciation of the paper ruble, the ruble with which most business was transacted and therefore the ruble with which most Americans usually dealt, slowed, halted, and was beginning to inch upward.⁴¹ Because of the arrival of scores and scores of American vessels, Russian economy was easing back upright, back toward England, and back from its dangerous list toward France.

By the latter months of 1811, Adams was becoming conscious of the magnitude of American involvement in the clandestine trade between Russia and England. When quizzed in September by Lauriston, the new French ambassador, on that subject, he answered, "Well, between us two . . . , there are many American vessels which I believe came from England, but they all came in ballast." Adams was not absolutely sure of that last. "Of loaded vessels," he added, "I assure you, not that there have been *none*, but, to my full persuasion, scarcely any."⁴²

To his own government he was more candid, admitting in October that he had his suspicions that more than one of the American merchantmen arriving in Russia came loaded with English property, "although the vessel and papers and even the master and crew were really American . . . and I am not sure there were not cases in which everything was English but the papers."⁴³

Adams' famous devotion to duty protects him from the cruder forms of criticism, but it does seem that he was rather long in accepting the certainty that many Americans, some in high places, were deeply involved in smuggling for the British. The fact that he did most of his work in official circles, never

mixed with any Americans except those who voluntarily came to see him, and depended on Levett Harris for most of his information on the commercial life of Russia's ports helps to explain Adams' uncharacteristic obtuseness.

Dreadful hints came to Adams, but he did not give them the obvious interpretation. He never investigated Levett Harris and studiously avoided any interference in the consular duties of examining and pronouncing on the authenticity of the papers of arriving Americans unless Harris requested his assistance. The only criticism of his consul that he ever made in his diary in 1811 was the mild "I hope Harris will not forget that he is an American consul as well as a commission merchant." ⁴⁴

Adams' sojourn in Russia was probably the only time in his life when he thought better of his colleagues than his colleagues deserved.

There was an additional factor that may have clouded Adams' mind in the critical months of the summer and fall of 1811. On the evening of Monday, 12 August 1811, "I had a daughter born, the first example I believe of an American a native of Russia." ⁴⁵ Mrs. Adams' pregnancy and labor had both been difficult, and she emerged from the ordeal in a dangerously exhausted condition. The child was weak and sickly. The tremendous act of becoming had been nearly enough to bring it to death without first passing through life.

The child was baptized Louisa Catherine Adams. Among her sponsors at the baptism were Harris, a Quaker, and the wife of the Portuguese minister, a Roman Catholic. "That a Quaker," wrote Adams happily to his own mother, "and a Portuguese Roman Catholic should join a church clergyman to

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

baptize the child of a New England Congregationalist at St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia, is an incident rather extraordinary in the annals of the world." ⁴⁶

As John Quincy Adams and his wife looked with wonder and hope at the fretful child their union had brought into the world, the world churned toward wilder and cruder events than any Adams had yet known. The birth of the Adams' newest heir had added one more to a larger population of resident Americans than Russia had ever known before. Hundreds of Americans jostled through the waterfront streets of Russia's ports. Some American supercargoes went far into the interior in search of markets, buttonholing prospective customers in the cool shadow of the Kremlin. When Louisa Catherine was born, one hundred vessels flying the American flag were moored in Kronstadt harbor—more American ships than had ever come to Kronstadt in any single entire season before 1810, and approximately as many had come in the entire year of 1810.⁴⁷

Unless something were to happen to reduce the constant stream of arriving Americans, and, even more important, unless some outlet were found for the plethora of colonial goods in Russia, the 1811 season would be uniformly disastrous for all Americans engaged in trade with Russia who were not employed by the British.

In 1811, for the first time, French privateers began to show real activity in the Baltic and its approaches. By the end of May, French privateers sailing from Danzig had seized four American sail. One of their unfortunate skippers wrote to St. Petersburg that twenty-two American seamen from the four captured sail were being compelled to march from Danzig to

Antwerp, where they were to be forced to serve in the French fleet. Adams reacted with waspish anger: "I suppose that we shall be told this is a retaliation upon the British for their impressment of our men."⁴⁸

Happily, this threat from Danzig was ephemeral. Cruisers from the British fleet soon chased the privateers into Danzig and kept them there.⁴⁹ The French next turned to waters where Admiral Saumarez would give them no such trouble.

The brigs "Hero," of Marblehead, and "Radius," of Boston, arrived in British waters in the early days of August. Like most Americans in 1811, they did not take English convoy but proceeded through the Sound, the blockade of which had been lifted by Saumarez. On 7 August, the wind being ahead, they dropped anchor off Copenhagen. On 8 August, they were captured by a French privateer, "La Minute No. 2," an open boat with four small swivels, manned by nineteen men (three of whom, incidentally, were Americans). The captain of "La Minute No. 2" declared the American brigs prizes *under French law* and brought them into Copenhagen. They were the first prizes ever sent into Copenhagen by a French cruiser. Their papers were sent to the prize courts in Paris, which meant sure condemnation.⁵⁰

"La Minute No. 2" had come upon a sea wolf's paradise: no British men-of-war to worry about, for they rarely if ever entered the Sound, and a steady supply of defenseless merchantmen to prey on. Her master seems to have soon worked out unsavory little deals with certain Danish privateers. The change of policy of the Danish government had made it very difficult for Danish privateers to get their American prizes condemned in Danish courts, so certain of these privateers

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

were glad to hunt for "La Minute No. 2." The procedure was that the Danes would capture a neutral sail, and then, on the way back to Copenhagen, the French ship would wrest the prize from the suddenly numb grasp of the Dane. A split of the prize money was presumably made after the automatic condemnation in the French courts.⁵¹

Perhaps the saddest American victim of this collusion between the French and the Danes was Captain Dennis of the brig "Hannah." She had been captured by a Norwegian privateer in July, 1810, condemned by a prize court at Christiansand, and then released by a higher court. She cleared Christiansand in June, 1811, for Russia, and was presently captured by a British sloop of war and sent into Yarmouth. After six weeks there, she was released and set out again. On 29 August, a Danish privateer seized her and then supinely surrendered her to "La Minute No. 2."⁵²

Americans could do little to combat this threat of the French privateers. Erving hired a Swedish boat to cruise from the island of Anholt in the Kattegat to warn all American vessels to take the Belt and pay their dues at Nyborg. Adams warned the hundred American sail at Kronstadt. Thus alerted, the great majority of Americans in Russia must have taken British convoy back through the Belt, rather than chance an encounter with the French in the Sound. Other Americans caught in the Baltic who were either unwarned or too ethical to take British convoy came, one by one, and anchored in Copenhagen roads to await developments. Some of these began to arm their vessels.⁵³

American tempers were fraying badly by the fall of 1811. For example, Danish privateers had put prize crews on two

American vessels bound to Archangel to bring them into Norwegian ports, but the vessels never came to Norway . . . nor were the prize crews ever seen again.⁵⁴ If Americans were becoming that short-tempered with the comparatively innocent Danes, they certainly wouldn't hesitate to fire on the blatantly hostile French of "La Minute No. 2."

The Russians were very unhappy about this new danger to their trade with the United States. Per order of the Tsar, Count Rumiantsev sent stiff messages to the Danes about the matter, although all knew that the Danes were not to blame. The nearest Rumiantsev came to a constructive suggestion was a lame recommendation to Adams that hereafter most Americans take the Archangel route to Russia.⁵⁵

The Swedes also took a very dim view of the appearance of French privateers in their vicinity. Having vessels of the enemy, Great Britain, off their coast was one thing, but having vessels of an ally, France, was quite something else—especially as the French privateers grabbed Swedish merchantmen as readily as American. The Swedish navy granted American merchantmen asylum in its convoys and met the belligerent incursions of the French privateers with threat of powder and ball. Napoleon's reaction to Bernadotte's policy was quick: "I want to preserve peace with Sweden—this wish is palpable—but I prefer war to such a state of peace." He would soon have his preference.⁵⁶

The Danish government was just as angry about the French privateers as anyone; perhaps even more angry because Frederick VI had been so delighted with the renewal of the steady income of Sound dues from American shipping. The French were driving the Americans back into the British convoys. And

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

not only did the French embarrass the Danes by taking vessels that had passed legally through the Sound but even vessels, such as the "Hannah," which had been tried and freed by Danish courts. Poor Denmark was back in her usual situation of being the rope in a tug of war.

In a clear example of how commerce and hopes of commerce fought against Napoleon's purposes, Denmark turned her meager forces against the French privateers and in favor of the neutral ships. Denmark by no manner of means went over to the English. In fact, she remained to the end one of Napoleon's most loyal satellites, but her faltering economy did force her out of the role of an unquestioning creature of the Continental System.

Whenever the wind was fair for sailing, Danish gunboats and a gun-brig put out from Copenhagen to lie in the Sound, not to prey on the neutral ships, but to protect them. By the third week of September, a cluster of twenty-odd American vessels was anchored in Copenhagen road, afraid to sail for fear of the French and afraid to stay for fear of the equinoctial storms. To get them safely through the Sound called for an escort of determined war ships. On 21 September, twenty-three American sail put out into the Sound and passed through to the Kattegat under the convoy of Danish gunboats. One Danish privateer "was considered to be acting improperly" and was fired upon by a gunboat. Two men were wounded and one killed aboard the privateer. The Danish navy was serious in its accomplishment of the unaccustomed task of protecting neutrals against its erstwhile allies.

The French privateers gave chase, firing continually to bring the fleet to, but all the Americans escaped their clutches. Of the

twenty-three, only two were brought back to Copenhagen. They were the "Augustus" and "Horace," of Salem, and were brought in by the Danes for carrying muskets and cannon. Their captains acquiesced in the capture, and the ships were released shortly after Erving made a representation of their case to the Danish king.⁵⁷ If it had been the French who had tried to seize them, the Americans might well have made use of their illegal muskets and cannon, which would have made formulating a foreign policy even more difficult than it was for President Madison and his secretary of state.

Recourse to British convoy, characteristic assistance from the Swedes, and uncharacteristic assistance from the Danes had saved the Americans returning from Russia from decimating losses, but the problem of the French privateers had not been solved. It had been only temporarily and partially circumvented. All in all, eight American merchantmen had fallen victim to French privateering in Danish waters. Despite the belligerency of the Swedes and Danes, the number of French privateers cruising in the Sound and its approaches grew to seven by October, and the Danish privateers were taking new heart from their example. Erving reported to Washington that "I consider it as perfectly certain that we cannot have any commerce with Russia next year—this place will swarm with French privateers. . . ." Adams wrote that if the United States government thought the trade with Russia worth having, it must send its own warships to convoy American merchantmen in and out of the Baltic.⁵⁸

It is, however, true that only the rarest of winds fails to blow someone some good. On 23 October, practically at the end of the shipping season, Adams noted that since the appearance of

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

the French privateers in the Sound "only one vessel has found her way here from that quarter." ⁵⁹ The weight of constantly arriving cargoes was removed from the depressed prices of colonial goods in Russia. Ships continued to arrive at Archangel, of course, but the main avenue of approach to Russia had been cut off. Now the only problem was to find a buyer for the mountains of colonial goods already in Russia.

In the latter part of August and the first weeks of September, the price of sugar and cotton in St. Petersburg leapt nearly 50 per cent. ⁶⁰ The bursting abundance of colonial goods in Russia had breached the ramparts of Napoleon's Europe at the Prussian and Austrian frontiers. Fear of the French soon intimidated the Prussians into again sealing their borders against colonial goods, but Austrians were more attracted by the trains of coffee, sugar, indigo, and rice coming into Vienna for the first time in months and months than they were frightened of Napoleon's armies. ⁶¹

This strange trade from St. Petersburg and Archangel and the other North Russian ports to Vienna lasted only a year, if that long, but it stands out as one of the more significant and certainly as one of the most fantastic examples of commerce in the history of the Napoleonic Era. The colonial goods, almost all brought to Russia in American ships, were loaded on wagons, or, in winter, sledges, and each was pulled by one horse. There was one driver to every six wagons or sledges. The trains of these vehicles jingled out of Archangel and St. Petersburg and headed south and east through piney forests to Moscow. There they turned southwest to Kiev on the Dnieper. As they moved south, the pines thinned, disappeared, and were replaced entirely by hardwood trees. Then the hardwoods

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

thinned and the stands of timber became farther and farther apart, for Kiev is on the edge of the great treeless steppes. At Kiev the trains turned west to distant Brody on the border of that part of Austria which was once Poland. There Anton Harwik, the Austrian customs inspector, waved them on to Vienna. Anton had never seen so much cotton and sugar and pepper in his life. His figures on imports from Russia into the area of his jurisdiction bear him out: ⁶²

	1811		1812	
	3rd Quarter (in Pounds)	4th Quarter (in Pounds)	1st Quarter (in Pounds)	2nd Quarter (in Pounds)
Cotton	660,300	1,130,444	1,091,300	1,896,910
Coffee		1,825	11,150	12,925
Dyewoods	153,870	767,275	589,825	1,177,775
Pepper	94,975	289,690	276,600	81,625
Sugar	554,505	909,325	1,570,700	2,496,675

At Vienna the tired teamsters and horses were relieved of their precious burdens by sensible Viennese merchants to whom commerce meant more than any war ever could. The entire journey from St. Petersburg to Vienna took about sixty days. The prices of coffee and sugar and indigo in Austria made every step of the journey profitable.

The Austrians took what they wanted of the colonial goods and shipped the rest to the south, west, and north, to Italy, Bavaria, Saxony, Prussia, and to France itself. In Berlin, Munich, Milan, and Paris the very rich sipped coffee brought them from South America via Salem, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Vienna.⁶³

The great bulk of the profits of this extraordinary commerce

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

unfortunately did not go to Americans. A very few Americans, shrewd, lucky, and wealthy enough to have delayed selling their property deposited in Russia until improvement in the market, reaped a good harvest, but most of the profits went to the Russian merchants who had bought the coffee and sugar on speculation from the Americans in the summer when prices were abysmally low.⁶⁴

The Russian nation as a whole profited as much from the Vienna trade as did individual merchants. This trade completely restored the favorable balance of trade that Russia had been moving toward since the commercial ukase of December, 1810, and the exchange value of the ruble in the world market soared. In January, 1810, the ruble was worth 85 centimes; in August, 98; in October, 103; and at the end of the year, 132 centimes. This precipitous rise was the same in every financial mart of Europe—London, Hamburg, Amsterdam, etc.⁶⁵

The Continental System had been outflanked. John Quincy Adams wrote its eulogy:

The Emperor Napoleon has been preaching abstinence of *sugar* and *coffee* to the people of Europe, with as much zeal as the hermit Peter once preached the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels. Finding his eloquence less persuasive than that of Peter, he has invaded, conquered, incorporated, and good cited, half a dozen sovereignties of the old school, merely to teach the people abstinence of sugar and coffee. He has offered them grape sugar, turnip sugar, maple sugar, and I know not how many more sugars and coffees in proportion, as substitutes for the pure sugar and coffee. He has taxed these delicious dainties beyond all endurance, and he has threatened fire and sword against whoever would not proscribe them like himself. Notwithstanding all which sugar and coffee still make their way even into France. First they

went in from Holland, then from Heligoland, then from Holstein, then from Prussia, and after having been driven from all these stages they have now found a vent through the very northern extremity of Europe. This channel of colonial trade has been barely opened during the present year; but it has proved so advantageous, not only to the individual merchants, but to the revenues, the finances, and the credit of this empire, that it will probably be continued on a much more extensive scale the next summer, unless a new war should come and break it up altogether.⁶⁶

Napoleon was perfectly conscious of the existence of this "vent through the very northern extremity of Europe." In a February, 1812, interview with Chernychev, a Russian nobleman, Napoleon insisted again that Russia and England were carrying on illicit trade through the medium of ships flying the American flag, and that Brody had become the entrepôt for English commerce with the Continent, just as Amsterdam had been.⁶⁷

The fuse leading to a Franco-Russian war had been reduced to a stub. Levett Harris, a man who if not wise was certainly shrewd, wrote to the Secretary of State, "I consider it almost impossible for Russia to retain for another year, the exclusive benefit of transmitting colonial supplies to nearly the whole continent. . . ." He sadly looked forward to spring and "a new appeal to the sword."⁶⁸

In 1811, something in the vicinity of 225 vessels flying the American flag came to Russia, more than ever before. According to Harris, 138 of these came to Kronstadt. According to Samuel Hazard, an American appointed consul at Archangel in August, 1811, sixty-five American sail arrived at Archangel. The total of all ships coming to Archangel that year was only

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

137, and the American entries amounted to the greatest number from any single nation by far. The remaining thirty or so American arrivals came to Riga, Reval, and such lesser ports.⁶⁹

The American merchantmen had an even greater influence on Russia than their numbers would indicate because they most often arrived loaded. In September the French consul at St. Petersburg told Adams that, of the one hundred and twenty-one American entries at Kronstadt he had thus far recorded, eighty-eight came with cargo. Of the entries of other nations, only eleven had arrived with cargo. At Archangel only three American vessels arrived in ballast, and only one vessel *not* flying American colors arrived with cargo in 1811.⁷⁰

In the year ending 30 September 1811, the United States exported six million dollars worth of goods to Russia, more than she ever had before in one year or would again in a single year until the middle of the century. This six million dollars amounted in value to one-tenth of the entire exports of the United States for 1811.⁷¹

In the year ending 30 September 1811, the United States imported far more than it ever had before from Russia. For instance, hemp imports for that year were in excess of 200,000 hundredweight.⁷²

In no previous year, and in no year until World War II, did the American and Russian peoples dedicate such a large portion of their attention, energy, and goods to each other.

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America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

to August 1810, LXV, 647-48; *Journals of the House of Commons from November 1812 to November 1813*, LXVIII, 805-6.

2. *Journals of the House of Commons from January 1812 to July 1812*, LXVII, 766.

3. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 38.

4. "Account of the Number of Commercial Licenses," *Parliamentary Papers*, 1812, Vol. IX.

5. "Memorial Against the License Trade, presented by the Merchants and Ship Owners of the Town of Kingston upon Hull, to the Board of Trade, 4 April 1811," *Parliamentary Papers*, 1812, *Miscellaneous*.

6. T. C. Hansard, *The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, XXI, 845-46.

7. Letter to Pickman and Derby, 13 November 1810, London; letter to Holterman and Sons, 8 May 1811, London, in *Letterbook of Captain Thomas B. Osgood*, 1809-11 (Peabody Museum).

8. "Account of the Number of Commercial Licenses," *Parliamentary Papers*, 1812, Vol. IX; letter to Rollins, 29 August 1811, Gothenburg, *Letterbook of John March* (Massachusetts Historical Society); Crouzet, *L'Economie Britannique*, II, 656.

9. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 270.

10. McMaster, *Girard*, II, 145.

11. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 64-65.

12. John Quincy Adams Diary, 20 August 1811, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 281; letter to T. B. Adams, 21 October 1811, St. Petersburg, *ibid.*, Reel 135.

13. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 252.

14. Gottschalk, *Era of the French Revolution*, pp. 385, 395, 484.

15. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 245-46.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

17. Henry Adams, *History of the United States*, V, 398; "Discourse Delivered by the Emperor Napoleon at the Meeting of the Council of Commerce," National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Russia, Vol. I.

18. Letter to Russell, 5 May 1811, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 136, p. 246; see also Blanc, *Correspondance diplomatique de Maistre*, p. 9.

19. Honoteau, *Caulaincourt*, Vol. I, n. 280.

20. Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatique*, V, 289-90.

21. Letter to Russell, 5 May 1811, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 136, p. 246.

22. Ross, *Memoirs of Saumarez*, II, 215.

23. Halydan Koht, "Bernadotte and Swedish-American Relations, 1810-1814," *Journal of Modern History*, XVI (December, 1944), 269, 271; letter to Russell, 18 April 1811, Stockholm, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Stockholm, Vol. I.

The United States, Darling of the Baltic

24. Koht, "Bernadotte and Swedish-American Relations, 1810-1814," p. 270.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 271; letter to Russell, 18 April 1811, Stockholm; letter to Secretary of State, 22 April 1811, Stockholm, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Stockholm.
26. Koht, "Bernadotte and Swedish-American Relations, 1810-1814," p. 271.
27. Letter to Secretary of State, 14 May 1811, Paris, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.
28. Letter to Forbes, 31 May 1811, Copenhagen, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. II.
29. Letter to Secretary of State, 19 September 1811, Copenhagen, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I; letter to President Madison, 23 June 1811, Copenhagen, in Winthrop Collection, Vol. LIII (Massachusetts Historical Society).
30. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, III, 521.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 561; letter to Secretary of State, 12 April 1812, Copenhagen, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.
32. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 257.
33. Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatique*, VI, Pt. II, 129; letter to Secretary of State, 11/23 May 1812, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. II.
34. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 81.
35. Letter to Coolidge and Co., 6 April 1811, Gothenburg, in Letterbook of John March (Massachusetts Historical Society).
36. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 117.
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38. "Prices Current, Imports, St. Petersburg, 24 January 1811, 8 August 1811" (Essex Institute); Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 269; John Quincy Adams Diary, 12 August 1811, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 279; "Prices Current, Exports, St. Petersburg, 24 January 1811, 8 August 1811" (Essex Institute).
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42. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 308.
43. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 235.
44. John Quincy Adams Diary, 24 June 1811, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 263.

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

45. Letter to President Madison, 17 August 1811, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 135, p. 403.

46. Letter to Abigail Adams, 10 September 1811, St. Petersburg, in *ibid.*, p. 437.

47. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 185.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82, 88, 124.

49. Letter to T. B. Adams, 21 October 1811, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 135, p. 473.

50. Adams, *loc. cit.*; letter to John Quincy Adams, 9 August 1811, Copenhagen, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.

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54. Letter to Secretary of State, 24 November/6 December 1811, Archangel, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Archangel, Vol. I.

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56. Henry Adams, *History of the United States*, V, 426; Carlson, *Relations of the United States with Sweden*, p. 52.

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The United States, Darling of the Baltic

65. *Intelligenzblatt der St. Petersburgischen Zeitung*, 3 January 1811, 1 August 1811, 3 October 1811, 12 January 1812.

66. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 281-82.

67. *Sbornik*, XXI, 128.

68. Letter to Secretary of State, 10/22 December 1811, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. II.

69. Letter to Secretary of State, 14/26 October 1811, St. Petersburg, *ibid.*; list of American ships arrived and sailed from the Port of Archangel in the year 1811, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Archangel, Vol. I; Joseph V. Bacon, *Memorandum Book*, pp. 32-41 (Peabody Museum).

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The Challenge of 1812

AT THE BEGINNING of 1812, Napoleon could nearly taste victory. 1811 had been the worst year of the war for Great Britain. The Emperor had reduced the number of her customers—especially her North European customers—until her economy sputtered and gasped. The statistics tell the story.¹

	1810	1811
British exports to the world	£62,702,409	£43,939,620
British exports to North Europe (including France)	£13,857,946	£ 3,483,091

The precipitous decline of trade with North Europe—a decline of over 75 per cent—was a tribute to Napoleon's concentration on enforcement of the Continental System in that area. Even Russia, for all her alleged infractions of the Continental System, contributed to England's economic troubles. Official exports from Great Britain to Russia sank from £877,000 in

The Challenge of 1812

1810 to £731,000 in 1811.² (The drop was by no means as sharp as in those parts of North Europe directly under Napoleon's control, but it is obvious that Britain's and Russia's economic rapprochement was not one of such passionate abandonment as the Corsican imagined.)

In the United States at the beginning of 1812, President Madison was succumbing to the blandishments of the War Hawks, who swore to fight to protect America's maritime rights.

On 1 April 1812, Madison, in order to insure the maximum economic pressure on England, called for an immediate and general embargo on America's trade with the world. Congress hurried to comply, and on 4 April the embargo was law.

The number of ships clearing United States ports for Russia in the spring of 1812 was much lower than in the spring of 1811, but news of Madison's embargo came too late to be completely credited with this decrease. Another motive was fear of what the impending war with England would mean to American ships not safe at home. Even more important was the memory of what an unpleasant and unprofitable year 1811 had been for American traders.

The tale of the "Golden Age," owned by John Crowninshield and captained by William Fairfield, is a case in point. In January, 1811, she had been at Minorca in the Mediterranean with a cargo of rum and tobacco. Prices at Minorca were bad, so Fairfield sailed the "Golden Age" to Terragona, off the south coast of Spain. Rumor had it that the Berlin and Milan decrees no longer applied to American shipping, but Fairfield was wary of approaching the French-held areas. At Terragona the mar-

ket was also bad, and Fairfield sacrificed the cargo of the "Golden Age" at a very low price in order to take on wine, which was reported to be in demand in Spain and England. A few weeks later, he reported from Lisbon that there was little demand for wine there. (And, incidentally, that "the markets in this quarter are over-stocked with colonial produce and also the productions of our country.") In July the "Golden Age" was at an English port, and Fairfield was writing home that her wine had been rejected there for being of poor quality. After long wrangling, however, he managed to get a pittance for it, and with that he purchased a load of fish and headed back for the Mediterranean. The price of fish was tremendously high in French-dominated Italy, he had heard, and by this time he had convinced himself that Napoleon spoke the truth when he said the Berlin and Milan decrees no longer applied to American vessels and cargoes. On 19 February 1812, the "Golden Age" arrived at Naples, where she was immediately seized and her cargo confiscated.⁸

Rare was the American who had come home from Europe with a full purse in 1811, and the trade with Russia had been no better than with any other port of Europe. Losses in trade with Russia had nudged more than one American merchant into ruin in 1811. Now, of course, there was the trade from Russia to Vienna, but how long would it last? Russia would soon either have to truly enforce the Continental System or face war with France. Either eventuality would be disastrous for American traders. The first would mean exclusion or confiscation. The second would mean peace between Russia and England, and the arrival of hundreds of English vessels at the

The Challenge of 1812

quays of every Russian port, driving the prices of all imports down. And, in case of peace between England and Russia, wouldn't Saumarez be likely to refuse Americans permission to sail in his convoys? Why should he extend the protection of the British navy to rivals of his own merchant marine? Without British protection, American ships would fall victim to the French privateers by the score.⁴

By the end of May only four American sail had passed Gothenburg on the way into the Baltic. Mr. Pitcairn, the acting American consul at Hamburg, called the number of Americans coming to North Europe in 1812 "a puny representation of our former trade, but in the present time a proof of the judgement and prudence of the traders." Taking into consideration the delays, over-supplied markets, and threats of confiscation, Pitcairn judged that remaining at home in America "will, to the whole mass of the nation, merchants and underwriters, leave at the end of the year more profit than by voyages so unfavorably circumstanced."⁵

Prices of colonial goods in Sweden remained as unattractively low as ever, but the Swedish government itself couldn't be blamed for any part of Pitcairn's gloom. Events were hurrying Sweden down the road toward war with Napoleon; and the farther along she went, the better she liked neutrals.

On 7 January, Bernadotte made an official speech in which he bemoaned the fact that the Continental System and war with England had reduced the commerce of his adopted homeland to a meager coasting trade. He went on to complain that French and Danish privateers had taken nearly fifty Swedish merchantmen. As to neutrals, he remarked that "such of their

ships as have touched upon our coasts, have been allowed to continue their voyages, whatever might be their destinations." As to the United States in particular, he said:

About fifty American ships, driven on our coasts by successive tempests, have been released. This act of justice, founded upon the rights of nations, has been appreciated by the United States, and appearances promise us, that better understood relations with their government will facilitate the exportation of the numerous piles of iron with which our public places are now filled.⁶

Speyer relayed a copy of the speech to Washington and noted that, to his knowledge, no more than twelve United States vessels had entered Swedish ports in distress since November, 1811. He guessed that Bernadotte selected the larger number of fifty in order "to cover the release of such as were not American."⁷

In the same month as Bernadotte's speech, Napoleon, supremely annoyed with Sweden's foreign policy, sent his troops to occupy Swedish Pomerania in order to cut off smuggling through that province and to teach Sweden a lesson.⁸ Sweden took the lesson to heart, but interpreted it differently than Napoleon hoped.

On 5 April 1812, Bernadotte concluded a secret alliance with Russia, abandoning all Swedish claims to Finland in return for a promise of Russian help in adding Norway to Sweden's possessions, and agreeing to lead a Swedish corps against France in case of war between Russia and France.⁹

On 4 May, Bernadotte officially ordered the Swedish navy to take into its convoys all vessels belonging to neutral nations at peace with England. Americans were quick to take advantage of that courtesy. The Swedish navy continued to do its

best to clear the waters around Sweden of the swarming French privateers that were decimating her coasting trade. By the end of spring it had captured several and sent them into Swedish ports. It was probably at this time that the Swedes captured "La Minute No. 2," the pioneer of the French privateers.¹⁰

Denmark also continued to cultivate what, if it can't be called a rapprochement, can be called a *détente* with the United States. During the winter, the Danish courts freed almost all the captured American vessels whose cases had not already been decided.

Of course, Denmark didn't dare follow her new policy to its natural extreme. When, in February, Erving requested Danish convoy from Copenhagen to Elsinore for two American vessels, he was refused. Frederick VI had apparently been informed that Napoleon reserved the lowest circle of Hades for allies who protected neutrals from French privateers, as the Danish navy had in the case of the fleet of twenty-three American sail the previous September.¹¹

The disparity between Denmark's real interests and the course of action forced on her by Napoleon became so great in 1812 that in July of that year Frederick VI said to John Forbes, American agent at Copenhagen, "I would rather be the United States consul at Copenhagen than . . . the king of Denmark."¹²

If the Danes didn't dare do anything *for* American ships, they didn't do much *against* them. They couldn't. In May, Erving reported that the Danes had already captured an American vessel, the brig "Orange," but he judged that there would be no further captures of American vessels that year. "They all

call at Gothenburg," he said, "and take English or Swedish convoy. . . ." ¹³ With the exception of a tiny handful of cases, Erving proved to be correct.

The problem of Danish seizures of American shipping had been solved by a *détente* between the United States and Danish governments and, at the same time, rendered academic by the fact that the French privateers drove all Americans into convoys, so Erving prepared to depart. He had admirably performed his duty. When he left, only one American case remained to be decided upon by the courts of Denmark.¹⁴

Erving wrote to the Secretary of State that the United States government should establish a legation at Copenhagen headed by a *chargé d'affaires*. "Really, my dear sir," he said, "the expences of such establishments should not be thought of for a moment. Very great interests may be sacrificed for a miserable saving of a few thousand dollars. A single note or a . . . smile or a bow have sometimes obtained more than would pay the expences of a legation for forty years. . . ." ¹⁵

On 26 May, Erving departed for Paris. He was replaced by John Forbes, returned to Copenhagen with the ambiguous diplomatic rank of "agent for the United States in all matters pertaining to the seizures and prize courts." ¹⁶

When Erving left, seventeen American citizens at Copenhagen addressed to him the following letter:

From your first appearance among us, by the frank and manly manner in which you placed yourself at the head of our shepherdless flock, you gave us a name, and by the spirit of your early communications . . . you defined and asserted our rights and ensured to us that subsequent protection which was due to the fairness of our views and the neutrality of our commerce.¹⁷

The Challenge of 1812

In Russia "the neutrality of our commerce" continued to protect the diminished number of arriving American sail. The number of these American merchantmen was half that of the previous year. In total, only sixty-six American sail came to Kronstadt in 1812; but until the war between the United States and England cut off Russo-American trade, most of the vessels entering at Kronstadt flew the American flag, as had been the case since 1808.¹⁸

The trains of sledges continued to leave St. Petersburg and Archangel for Vienna all through the winter. In the spring, wheels replaced the runners under the loads of colonial goods, and the trade went on. The only question was how long would the trade go on before war between Russia and France cut it off.

Through the winter and spring of 1812, France prepared for the invasion of Russia, building up stockpiles of supplies, gathering fleets of wagons and enormous herds of horses, and marching hundreds of thousands of French and satellite troops east to camp on the banks of the Niemen River, the boundary between Poland and Russia.

Caulaincourt, now back at the side of Napoleon, used all his abilities of persuasion and logic to turn his Emperor from the course he was taking. Napoleon answered that to force England to make peace it was necessary to force Russia to close her ports to English goods. For a year, he complained angrily, Russia had been admitting English goods under the American flag.¹⁹

The matter of trade with the United States was a subject for conversation in St. Petersburg, also. On 11 April, Lauriston dined with Alexander. As always when they met, Lauriston

brought up the subject of Russia's admission of neutrals allegedly loaded with English goods. Alexander answered that Russia was a loyal member of the Continental System and was confiscating scores of false neutrals. He ended by saying, "I proclaim: I do not want to trade with England, I have promised that; but I do want to trade with the neutrals. To require the contrary, is to close the ports of Russia absolutely and take from her the means of existing." As Alexander pronounced these last phrases, his eyes filled with tears.²⁰

On 9 May, Napoleon left Paris to take command of his army in Poland.²¹

While Alexander and Napoleon approached the denouement of their tragedy, Adams and Harris continued their farce.

By 1812, even Lauriston, who, we can guess, would be one of the last to learn the techniques of British smuggling, knew Harris' secret. In January, Lauriston was writing that, although he had great respect for Adams' honesty, Harris was not to be trusted. The actions of Harris and the indiscreet boastfulness of English agents pointed unmistakably to collusion between the American consul and English smugglers. "I also believe," Lauriston reported to Paris, "that if the United States consul were anti-English, the Russian government could not avoid confiscating the vessels which he would show to be non-American."²² By some insane trick of fate, Levett Harris had become one of the most influential men in Europe!

Adams went on like a cuckold husband, never suspecting—or, rather, suppressing his suspicions.

In 1811, the Russian government had seized five vessels flying the American flag: the "Philadelphia Packet," "Anger-

The Challenge of 1812

ona," "Brothers," "Monticello," and "Frederick."²³ In December, 1811, and March, 1812, American sailors from these vessels visited Adams to complain that their captains would not pay them their wages. Adams explained that this was a matter for a consul to handle, and sent them to Harris.

In May the matter came up again. It seems that the Russian government was quietly restoring four of the five false American vessels to their owners. The seamen's wages were still not paid, and the captains of the false American sail were trying to coerce the unpaid sailors to stay on as members of the crews.

The affair reached a crisis on 3 June when several American sailors from the "Monticello" came to see Adams and presented him with the same old complaints. Adams sent them off to Harris, and that same day Harris called and read to Adams a letter from Mr. Sparrow, the Englishman who was Harris' consular agent at Kronstadt.²⁴ Sparrow was the man who was supposed to be handling the affairs of the unfortunate sailors in question. His letter expressed marked disapproval of their cause, and Adams, who felt the sailors to be innocent victims of swindlers and smugglers, strongly criticized it. Harris took Sparrow's side; and soon he and Adams were shouting at each other about matters which had only distant connection with the affair at hand, but which had festered unspoken for months. Adams voiced his conviction that many ships had come to Russia from England in disguise in 1811, and that several of the most suspicious ships had arrived addressed precisely to Mr. Mayer, Harris' business partner. Harris refused to answer such imputations and said that Adams had no jurisdiction over him. Harris knew his rights. The jurisdictions of minister and consul were independent of each other. "From

this moment, sir, all relations between you and me have entirely ceased," finished Harris. Adams replied, "Perfectly content, sir. Your very humble servant," and Harris left.

Harris quickly moved to repair the breach. Later that very same day, he wrote to Adams. The next day he wrote again, and the next day, and the next. In the last letter he proposed that he come and talk with Adams. Adams, his pride mollified by Harris' attentions, answered that he would be glad to see him. When they met, Harris further apologized, and Adams said that he "was desirous of forgetting everything of an unpleasant nature" that had passed between them. Harris showed him letters he had written on behalf of the unfortunate American seamen about whom the argument had begun.

Forgetting the unpleasantness wasn't easy. Before June was done, sailors from the "Monticello" called on Adams twice again with more complaints of non-payment of wages.

On 17 June, Adams sent Peter Cook, a penniless American seaman off the false American "Angerona" whom Adams had taken on as a servant, to Sparrow with a letter about the non-payment of wages to Cook and the seamen of the "Monticello." On 6 July, Cook returned with his wages and an assortment of bruises. His story was that Captain Marks of the "Angerona" had beat him and tried to force him to ship on the "Angerona" again. Other sailors had told Adams that Captain Marks had had Cook thrown in jail for a while. Sparrow's story was that Cook had arrived drunk and had made a great ruckus. Further details Sparrow did not supply. Adams accepted Sparrow's version. Cook was a Negro and known to be a drinker.

Along with his wages and bruises, Cook brought a letter from Sparrow saying that the whole crew of the "Monticello"

The Challenge of 1812

had been paid off. On 9 July, Charles Drew of the "Monticello" appeared at Adams' house and proclaimed that only one man of his vessel had received his wages. Adams couldn't ignore Drew as easily as he had Cook. Drew was just a common seaman, but also a man of considerable intelligence and stubbornness.

When, a bit later, Adams asked Harris about Drew's complaint, Harris produced an account sent him by Sparrow showing a payment of nearly three thousand rubles to the crew of the "Monticello" as a whole and three hundred and forty-one rubles, forty-four copecks, to Drew in particular. Adams took this account and showed it to Drew, who "solemnly protested and swore he had not received a copeck, and he indulged himself in reflections upon Sparrow and Harris natural enough on such an occasion, and which though I did not encourage them, I could not blame."

On 11 July, Adams had from Sparrow an entirely new account of payments of wages to the crew of the "Monticello." Adams was satisfied. "I am very sure," said Adams to Harris, "that if it had not been for Drew, not a man of them would have received a ruble." Harris promised that the matter would be settled with no further trouble to Adams. (One wonders if Drew and his fellows ever did really receive their wages or not.)²⁵

Why didn't Adams follow up with an investigation of what was so blatantly collusion between the masters of the false American vessels and Sparrow and, probably, Harris? Adams' suspicions about Harris, which apparently had existed for months and perhaps years, must have been inflamed by this affair of Cook and Drew and their poor fellow seamen.

John Quincy Adams was better equipped than most men to withstand the onslaught of tragedy, but he was also human. He was a Puritan, but not a stone statue. In the latter weeks of the summer of 1812, Adams did not devote the usual portion of his mind and energy to his duties as United States minister.

Louisa Adams, his first daughter, his only daughter, was dying. She did so slowly, painfully, calling up resonances of agony in the hearts of her parents.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. At twenty-five minutes past one this morning expired my daughter, Louisa Catherine, as lovely an infant as ever breathed the air of Heaven. It becomes me not to murmur at the dispensations of divine Providence. Believing in the existence of another and a better world than this, I humbly trust in the hope that her agonies, long and severe as they were, have atoned for all the imperfections of her nature, derived from earthly parents, and that her transition from the pangs of death to the bliss of Heaven was instantaneous and complete.²⁶

Two days later she was buried in an English churchyard on the Wasili-Ostroh. The inscription on her gravestone read:

Louisa Catherine Adams: Born 12 August 1811

Died 15 September 1812. Aged 13 months and 3 days.²⁷

Louisa's was not the only death that distracted Adams from Harris' speculations in the summer of 1812. She had had but three months to live when the wars of 1812 began, and the mounting lists of casualties and atrocities reduced any sin Harris might commit to inconsequentiality.

In England the economic crisis, aggravated by America's

The Challenge of 1812

non-intercourse and new embargo, had become nearly intolerable. Popular unrest, expressed by the merchants in petitions to Parliament and by the lower classes in riots, prodded the government toward some radical ameliorative action. At least, the commercial classes demanded, let us have trade with the United States. After infinite delay and with infinite reluctance, the government acquiesced. On 16 June, Lord Castlereagh announced to the House of Commons that the orders in council—the orders directing the British navy to seize all unlicensed neutral vessels on their way to the Continent—would no longer apply to American shipping. Madison's policy was crowned with success. He had forced Britain to recognize America's neutral rights on the high seas.

Knowing nothing of this, on 18 June the United States Senate, in response to Madison's message of 1 June calling for war with Great Britain to protect United States maritime rights, voted nineteen to thirteen in favor of war. The House had done likewise two weeks before. The senators from the coastal states from Delaware north, the states which sent out the vessels and sailors this war was supposed to protect from violation, voted for peace, to no avail.

In the evening of 23 June, the armies of Napoleon began to cross the Niemen River into Russia. The two wars of 1812 had begun.

1. *Journal of the House of Commons*, LXVII, 766.

2. Crouzet, *L'Economie Britannique*, II, 883.

3. Reinoehl, "Impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon on the Crowninshield Family," pp. 170-74.

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

4. Letter to Secretary of State, 12 April 1812, Copenhagen, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.

5. Clauder, *American Commerce and the French Revolution and Napoleon*, p. 225.

6. *Weekly Register*, II (28 March 1812), 57.

7. Letter to Secretary of State, 10 January 1812, Stockholm, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Stockholm, Vol. I.

8. Franklin D. Scott, *Bernadotte and the Fall of Napoleon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 11.

9. Koht, "Bernadotte and Swedish-American Relations, 1810-1814," p. 271.

10. Carlson, *Relations of the United States with Sweden*, p. 52; letter to T. B. Adams, 14 June 1812, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 139; letter to Secretary of State, 18 May 1812, Oerebro, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Stockholm, Vol. I; letter to Coolidge and Co., 2 May 1812, Gothenburg, Letterbook of John March (Massachusetts Historical Society).

11. Letter to Secretary of State, 10 February 1812, Copenhagen, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.

12. Ruppenthal, "Denmark and the Continental System," p. 14.

13. Letter to Secretary of State, 14 May 1812, Copenhagen, National Archives, Diplomatic Dispatches—Denmark, Vol. I.

14. Letter to Secretary of State, 12 April 1812, Copenhagen, *ibid.*

15. Letter to Secretary of State, 17 April 1812, Copenhagen, *ibid.*

16. Letter to Secretary of State, 31 May 1812, Copenhagen, *ibid.*, Vol. II.

17. *Weekly Register*, III (31 October 1812), 137.

18. Letter to Secretary of State, 15/27 October 1812, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. II; Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, VI, Pt. II, 290.

19. Caulaincourt, *With Napoleon in Russia*, pp. 5, 24. English sources seem to bear out Napoleon for the year 1811: see *Annual Register for 1811*, p. 137; *Gentleman's Magazine*, LXXXI, No. 2 (August, 1811), 180.

Those who think that Caulaincourt's hindsight might have been a good deal better than he said his foresight was are referred to John Quincy Adams' Diary, 10 March 1811, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 222, which reports of a Mr. Montreal's conversation that day with Caulaincourt. Caulaincourt, said Montreal, "dwelt with great earnestness on the evils and the dangers of a war with Russia; which he said would prove a second Spanish war."

20. Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, VI, Pt. II, 262-63.

21. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, II, 351.

22. Mikhailowitch, *Les Relations diplomatiques*, VI, Pt. II, 173, 187.

23. Letter to Secretary of State, 4/16 May 1812, St. Petersburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—St. Petersburg, Vol. II.

The Challenge of 1812

24. C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, II, 46.

25. John Quincy Adams Diary, 28 December 1811, 18 March 1812, 2 May 1812, 3 June 1812, 7 June 1812, 17 June 1812, 9 July 1812, 11 July 1812, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, pp. 327, 356, 369-70, 382, 383, 385, 393-94; letters to Sparrow, 24 June/6 July 1812, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 139.

26. John Quincy Adams Diary, 15 September 1812, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 413.

27. *Ibid.*, 17 September 1812, 9 June 1813, pp. 413, 488.

The Wars of 1812

WHEN THE NEWS of the declaration of war against Great Britain reached New York and Boston and the other ports of the northeast, the merchants raised a wail of protest. Their view was the same as that of John Quincy Adams, half a world away. "The only object for which we could engage in a war," he had written in May, "would be commerce, and from the moment war would take place our commerce would be annihilated."¹ And how dare Madison start his war in the middle of the North European shipping season, when scores of American ships lay directly beneath the guns of Saumarez's fleet?

Take, for instance, the case of the "Golden Age" and Captain Fairfield, whose misadventures we followed in the last chapter. After the cargo of fish was confiscated from the "Golden Age" at Naples, Fairfield loaded her with a cargo of wine, obtained her release, and headed back for England. Wine, again, proved a drug on the English market; and after several frustrating months at Plymouth, Fairfield decided to try elsewhere. On 3 July, two weeks after America's declaration of war but still several weeks before the news reached

England, he wrote from Plymouth that he was taking the "Golden Age" to Russia in an English convoy. "The prospects," he said, "of obtaining a good price for the wine at St. Petersburg appear flattering." Last seen, the lamb was off to the Baltic with an escort of wolves.²

At the first news of the war, American merchants sent their fastest vessels to warn their captains and supercargoes of the danger. It was a race against the official dispatch vessels. If only the news of the war could reach the Americans in Saumarez's convoys before Saumarez himself learned of the war!

Boston sent a pilot boat schooner, the "Good Intent," Captain Russell, speeding out past Deer Island under a full press of sail, bound to the Baltic. The New York house of Minturn and Champlin sent out the pilot boat schooner "Champlin." The existence of the embargo obliged her master, Captain Summers, to declare to the harbor officials that her destination was Eastport, Maine. Once outside the harbor, he laid a course for Gothenburg and set every stitch of canvas weather would permit.

Twenty-eight days out of Boston, the "Good Intent" was captured by a Danish privateer and carried into Farsund, Norway.³

Everything depended on the "Champlin." The little schooner sped into the Skagarrak, white water purling at her bow.

In the latter part of July as many as forty American ships lay in the roads of Gothenburg in British convoy. Neither the Americans nor their British escorts nor anyone in Gothenburg knew of the war between the United States and England.

The American consul at Gothenburg was Richard S.

Smith. In 1810, while still a few months short of his twenty-first birthday, Smith had shipped from Philadelphia as supercargo of the ship "Eclipse," property of a firm in which his father was partner. The first port of call for the "Eclipse" was Long Hope Sound in the Orkneys, from which she took British convoy to Gothenburg. On the way she nearly fell into the hands of five Danish gun-brigs, the account of which you may find in Chapter IX.

Well convinced of the dangers of Danish capture, Smith decided the wisest plan was to deposit the cargo of the "Eclipse" at Gothenburg, load the ship with iron, and send her back home. He remained in Gothenburg with the cargo. The "Eclipse" cleared at the same time as the famous 1810 convoy of six hundred.

With convoys of hundreds moving in and out containing many vessels flying the American flag—some legally, some illegally—the American consul at Gothenburg was a very important man. However, that office was not one to which the American government paid much attention. The office had existed for many years, but the number of American vessels coming to Gothenburg had never been very large until 1809, and therefore the United States government had never taken the trouble to see that the American consul at Gothenburg be a qualified American citizen. As a result, a string of assorted foreign nationals held the title of American consul at Gothenburg.

In the spring of 1811, the Americans at Gothenburg became dissatisfied with the acting American consul. It seems that he held the office only because he had worked for the former consul and married his widow. And he was an Englishman!

The Americans at Gothenburg nominated one of their number, John Diamond, of Philadelphia, as consul, and soon persuaded Speyer (the American agent at Stockholm, you will remember) to appoint him. But after three months, Diamond left for home.

The Americans then nominated Richard Smith and obtained Speyer's blessing for him. Smith had picked up the Swedish language and a good knowledge of Swedish customs since he arrived, and so was a logical choice, despite his youth.

For all practical purposes, Smith continued as consul through the rest of 1811 and 1812. In November, 1811, a consul appointed by Washington, James Anderson, arrived in Gothenburg, but he disliked the job, the salary, and the Swedish climate so much that he rarely left his lodgings and had his meals brought to him. Smith continued to perform the duties of consul and took over the office again when Anderson left in the spring.⁴

This office was an enormous responsibility for a young man with no diplomatic experience, but Smith seems to have handled himself well. When he announced that he intended to leave for home by July, 1812, twelve of the Americans at Gothenburg petitioned their secretary of state for an official replacement, and in doing so implied high praise of Smith:

We respectfully beg leave to call the attention of the President to the political situation of this place which we have no hesitation in saying is, at this moment, the most important consulate in Europe. It is not an unusual sight to witness five to six hundred sail of vessels of different nations at anchor in the vicinity of this port. In fine, Gothenburg may be considered as the Grand Depot of the commerce of the North and the key to the continent. Of the neutrality of our flag the

subjects of the belligerent powers are anxious to avail themselves. An application was made a short time since to Mr. Smith to prostitute the seal of the United States to give currency to forgery, which was spurned with merited indignation. Applications of this nature would be daily, if they received the smallest countenance.⁵

Fortunately, Smith did not leave Gothenburg by July.

In July of 1812, the Swedish government issued a law that all American vessels coming to Gothenburg must anchor in the quarantine harbor, fourteen miles down the estuary toward the sea, where their papers would be examined and notification of their arrival sent by boat to the proper health officer in Gothenburg. Smith, assiduous in his performance of consular duties, arranged with the master of the boat which shuttled between the quarantine harbor and the city that the news of American arrivals be brought to the American consul even before the health officer was notified. Thus it happened that on the morning of 23 July 1812, between five and six o'clock, a boy from that boat called on Smith with news of the schooner "Champlin," arrived *in ballast* from New York.

Smith rushed from his lodgings and in less than an hour was in a skiff on his way to the quarantine grounds.

The Swedish officer in charge there would not let Smith board the "Champlin," but did allow him to talk to her captain from the skiff. Captain Summers, fearing that his news might get to the British before the Americans, refused to tell Smith anything, saying that he could only divulge his message to those to whom the owners of the "Champlin" had directed him. Smith requested the Swedish officer to go on shore so he could speak to Summers privately. When the officer was gone,

Smith told Summers that there were forty-odd American sail in British convoy in Wingo Bay which would be seized immediately if the British received news of war between the United States and Britain before they did. I think, said Smith, that you have come with that news.

Captain Summers then told of the declaration of war, gave Smith dispatches from his employers to Copenhagen and St. Petersburg, and Smith set sail for Gothenburg with, luckily, "a strong and fair wind" behind him. The "Champlin" cleared for Copenhagen as soon as possible.

Once back in Gothenburg, Smith assembled in his office all the Americans he could contact, and told them the message the "Champlin" had brought. The news was a bombshell. Some of the Americans there were captains of the vessels lying in the roads in British convoy. They were crazy to get to their ships, but the "strong and fair wind"—now almost gale force—which carried Smith swiftly up from the quarantine grounds was dead against any vessel that might try to sail down the harbor. Two or three of the Americans went by horse and carriage to Marstrand, a small port a few miles to windward, and took a boat out from there to the American ships. Before the next morning, some forty American sail eased out of the anchored convoy and in under the protection of the Swedish shore batteries, "to the great surprise of the British officers, who wondered what had got into the Yankees that they had all gone up the river."⁶

Immediately after the meeting of the Americans at Smith's office broke up, Smith dispatched letters to Speyer and Adams, and left for Carlshamn, the port nearest the island of Hano, where American sail returning from Russia would be waiting

for convoy. The journey was three hundred miles and took him two days and three nights. It was Sunday morning when he arrived.

As he had expected, there was a convoy gathering off the landward shore of Hano island, including three American vessels: the "Caliban" and "Cuba," of Boston, and the "Galen," of New York. He hired a boat and was soon aboard the "Caliban," introducing himself to her captain and supercargo and asking them to summon the masters of the other American vessels in the convoy. They came, Smith made his terrible announcement—and no one seemed very impressed!

Smith, who hadn't let his eyes close for more than a few moments since the boy had come to his lodgings with news of the arrival of the "Champlin," was too tired to try to argue with them, and requested a place to sleep on the "Caliban." At noon, as he requested, he was awakened. He rose quickly to re-emphasize to the gathered captains the danger in which their vessels lay. His arguments again made no impression. The captains explained that, as Smith knew, the United States government had not known of Britain's suspension of her Orders of Council when it declared war, and that hostilities would cease just as soon as that news reached America. Therefore, why run from the British?

Smith, undoubtedly exasperated that his great effort had been to no avail, gave up and decided to return to Gothenburg. He had done all humanly possible to safeguard American property in the Baltic and its approaches. He had saved Americans hundreds of thousands of dollars, and as such should be remembered as a great folk-hero of the American consular service.⁷

The only American at Hano who seemed impressed by Smith's news was Charles Story, of Salem, supercargo of the "Cuba." He asked if he could go to Gothenburg with Smith. This was not easy to accomplish, as Story had no passport, but Smith managed to smuggle him across Sweden as his servant.

Story remained in Gothenburg only long enough to obtain absolute confirmation of the fact that hostilities had broken out between America and Britain, and then he turned and raced back to Carlshamn. The convoy was already under way when he got there, but he succeeded in getting on board the "Cuba," and confirmed Smith's news to her captain. Subsequently, he went on board every American vessel in the convoy and told them, too, of hostilities between America and Britain. To the three American sail in the convoy when he left with Smith were now added the "Halcyon" and "Cygnet," of Boston, the "William and Eliza," of New Bedford, and the "Edward," of Newburyport. Although the wind was favorable for escape several times, he could not persuade a single American vessel to run for a Swedish port.

Off Darshead, on 12 August, the convoy met a British frigate and exchanged signals with her. The commanding officer of the convoy then sent prize crews on board the seven American vessels of his flock and informed their captains that their ships and cargoes were spoils of war.

What accounts for the incredible reluctance of these Americans to save themselves? Their sad explanation after their capture, the same they had given Smith at Hano, was that they felt confident the war would end as soon as the news of the suspension of the Orders in Council reached the United

States. This seems rather a shaky prognosis to wager one's ship and cargo on, especially when one could sit safely in a Swedish port until news came of either a return to peace or the beginning of a real war.

There is another possible explanation, which Smith heard after the capture of the seven American sail. Rumor had it that some of the seven vessels in question had British licenses to load naval stores in Russia and carry them to Britain. Their masters thought these licenses protected their ships from capture.⁸

The "Champlin" entered the harbor of Copenhagen on 26 July and spread the news of the war to the Americans there. The report brought by the "Champlin" was the first the continent of Europe had of America's declaration of war. Forbes dispatched the news to the American minister in Paris, Joel Barlow, and the French legation at Copenhagen sent a similar message speeding off to Napoleon, now deep inside Russia.⁹

On 9 August, the "Champlin" dropped anchor at Kronstadt and rushed the news of the war to the Americans on shore and in the harbor.¹⁰

The "Champlin" had completed her assignment. She had warned the Americans at Gothenburg, Copenhagen, and Kronstadt, plus three American sail she had met in the Baltic Sea before Saumarez and his captains had any notification of the war. What would otherwise have been a vast haul of Americans captured by the British in the Baltic was reduced to a tiny number to whom the "Champlin" could not get in time,¹¹ and a few more who foolishly trusted the British lion more than events proved to justify. Captain Summers, his crew, and his swift little schooner deserve a commemorative

plaque in every marine underwriter's office in the United States. Rarely has so small a group of men and so small a vessel saved American merchants so much money.

Madison and the War Hawks had brought American participation in the 1812 Baltic shipping season to a sudden halt. The Americans and their ships which were in the Baltic when the news of the war arrived huddled into the ports of Russia, Sweden, and Denmark.

As of 22 August, thirty-five American vessels lay in Kronstadt, like fish hiding in some submarine gully from the fisherman's net. Levett Harris estimated that about three and a half million dollars worth of colonial goods, was stored in Russia. The stagnation of trade brought on by the French invasion meant that this American property would stay right where it was, rotting in the warehouses.¹²

Kronstadt had by no means a majority of the American sail stranded in the Baltic. Smith reported that, as of 18 August, Gothenburg had thirty-two American sail.¹³ On 5 September, Forbes reported that there were twelve American vessels hiding at Copenhagen, and, according to the last news he had received, seven at Carlsrona, three at Hano, two at Carlshamn, and one each at Nyberg and Kiel.¹⁴ On 25 September, Speyer reported three American vessels at Stockholm.¹⁵ One of these three was the tragi-comic "Golden Age," which had somehow extricated herself from the English convoy and scurried into Stockholm.¹⁶

The "Champlin" naturally had no opportunity to warn Americans at Archangel. There the bearer of the ill tidings was the ship "Glide," of Salem, which arrived at Archangel on 10 August with news that the declaration of war on England had

passed the House of Representatives. The wildly optimistic could hope that the declaration was rejected by the Senate. Captain Tucker of the "Glide" unloaded his ship and began to prepare her for a winter at Archangel.¹⁷

A number of American vessels which had sailed from Archangel just before the "Glide" arrived or whose masters decided to run for home despite the war escaped capture. The North Atlantic is a good bit larger and easier to hide in than the Baltic. Several, however, were captured by the British: the "Friendship" and "Dido," of Salem, and the "Joseph," bound to New York.¹⁸ The American ship "Antelope," bound from London to Archangel, was also captured, though she lived up to her name and the British had to chase her thirty-five miles up a Norwegian fiord to get her.¹⁹

Others, too meek, slow, or wise to try to slip past the British, stayed at Archangel. As of 18 January, nine American vessels were at Archangel, all hauled up for the winter.²⁰

All in all, there were at least one hundred and five American vessels stranded in the Baltic and at Archangel by the war. That meant something in the vicinity of one thousand Americans exiled in Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, like fish left flopping on the beach by neap tide.

Through no fault of their own, these Americans had been placed in an intolerable situation, a situation which left them open to all sorts of temptations. A bit of sly dealing with the British could mean a safe passage home. Strict loyalty to one's own government could only mean profitless exile for one's ship for the duration of the war. And maintaining strict loyalty to the Madison administration was not an easy thing for American seamen to do.

Madison's rather pro-French policy had always been unpopular among Americans in the Baltic. Richard Smith, certainly a loyal American, had castigated Madison in 1811 for glossing over the faults of the French "while every fault of England is magnified and depicted in the strongest colors, in order to excite the resentment of the people."²¹ What he had to say about Madison after the news of the war reached the Baltic is unavailable.

This dislike of Madison took the edge off the loyalty these stranded Americans had for their nation, and the British suspension of the Orders in Council divested most of them of their chief motive for disliking the British. Even Adams, a member of Madison's own party and certainly a man of unquestionable patriotism, could see no necessity for the war after the suspension of the Orders in Council.²² Forbes wrote from Copenhagen that the influence of the United States declaration of war among resident Americans "is naturally much lessened by the belief, cherished and most industriously inculcated by England, that the revocation of their Orders in Council will produce immediate pacification as soon as known in the United States." He could find no American disposed to accept a letter of marque sent up to Denmark from the American minister Barlow at Paris because "The opinion here is that before any prizes can be condemned, we shall have a peace and a mutual restitution of prizes. . . ." ²³

It is no wonder that many Americans were ready to make mutually convenient arrangements with the British. Harris, who certainly was the American official best qualified to speak on American collusion with the British, predicted on 22 August that many Americans "will endeavour to obtain

freights to England and thence get protection to the United States." ²⁴

Britain did her best to encourage these arrangements. On 31 July 1812, the British government issued an order which directed "the commanders of His Majesty's ships of war and privateers to detain and bring into port all ships and vessels belonging to the citizens of the United States of America . . . except such as may be furnished with British licenses, which vessels are allowed to proceed according to the tenor of such licenses." ²⁵

Many American ships which came to Russia in 1812 were sailing on English account, as it seems their masters freely admitted.²⁶ These American ships simply completed their contracts. American sail hiding behind British licenses continued to arrive in English ports for months after the war began. Many of them were permitted to clear for home. The shipping-news sections of Boston, New York, Salem, etc., newspapers all through the latter months of 1812 and even well into 1813 are full of reports of American vessels voluntarily entering British ports and sailing out scot-free. Take, for instance, the "Swift," Captain Howland. In July she was in Archangel; in December, in Liverpool. In the last week of January, 1813, she arrived in Boston, loaded with two hundred tons of salt, crates, hardware, and dry goods, whose origin the customs agent must have strained to ignore. Or the case of the brig "Factor," Captain Beal, of Newburyport, which entered Boston harbor on 1 February 1813, having come from Archangel via London. Or the corvette "Thomas," which cleared Archangel 22 September 1812 and arrived in New York in early January, having stopped at London on the way. Or the ships

The Wars of 1812

"Frederick" and "Catherine-Jane," of New York, "Eunice," of Charleston, "Arabella," of Boston, and "Brutus," of Weathersfield[?], which sailed on 28 August 1812 from Wingo Sound with licenses for England.²⁷ And so on and so on. Only fear of boring the reader unnecessarily brings this list to a close.

On 22 August 1813, there had been thirty-five American vessels at Kronstadt. By 27 October, the number had shrunk to seventeen.²⁸ Where the other eighteen went seems quite obvious.

No cries of treason greeted these vessels as they came sailing home from the ports of the enemy. The attitude of America's northeast was strongly antiwar and increasingly pro-British. As for the Yankee attitude toward British licenses, perhaps the story of the ship "Aurora" sufficiently illuminates the subject. The "Aurora," supposedly an American vessel bound for a neutral port, was captured by a New York privateer and sent into a Rhode Island port. Judge Howell, district judge for Rhode Island, condemned her because she was sailing under protection of a British license, which, he said, denationalized the "Aurora" and her cargo. The reaction of a local newspaper was one of horror: ". . . If the sentence of this Judge Howell is not reversed, our commerce is annihilated. The corrupt prize courts of Norway can do nothing worse."²⁹

Not all American sail caught in Russian and Scandinavian ports by the war were lucky enough to have British licenses. The two pilot boat schooners that had been sent out from the United States to warn Americans in the Baltic of the war certainly had no licenses, but they did have something nearly as good: speed.

On her way back from Kronstadt the "Champlin" joined the

"Good Intent," its fellow Paul Revere, as a Danish captive. The two of them, however, were soon released, and they showed a clean pair of heels to the whole British navy. The "Good Intent" arrived at Sandwich, Cape Cod, in November of 1813. There is some mystery about the "Champlin." One report says she safely put into Ocracock, North Carolina. Another says she was cast away between Cape Fear and Cape Lookout on the same coast. In either case, her crew and passengers all got ashore safely.⁸⁰

Other American ships without licenses did not dare follow the example of the "Champlin" and "Good Intent." Those two were swift dispatch schooners, built and rigged for speed, not applebowed merchantmen built for spaciousness and rigged for slow dependability. The average stranded American merchantmen could never hope to elude British cruisers in the Baltic. The underwriters of Boston, who certainly knew the odds, demanded 30 to 40 per cent to insure the voyage of a merchantman home from Russia.⁸¹

Some of these stranded American ships were sold for a pittance to local merchants. The exquisitely misnamed "Golden Age" ended that way.⁸² Others possibly were hired by local interests and sailed under the protection of foreign flags.⁸³ Some just sat where they were and didn't venture out to sea until the end of the war.

The plight of the crews of the ships that were exiled for the duration of the war was not a happy one. The officers of the ships could afford to pay for passage to the United States, and many of them did. Some of the officers had to stay in the Scandinavian and Russian ports through the war to look after their employers' property. There were at least sixteen of these

lonely souls left in St. Petersburg in July, 1813, because that number invited Adams to celebrate the Fourth of July with them. (He declined "chiefly because it was Sunday.")³⁴ These men and their fellows at Gothenburg, etc., were separated from their families and homes, but we may guess that otherwise they lived rather well.

The common American seamen had no such easy lot. In all the ports of which we have information—Kronstadt, Archangel, Gothenburg, and Copenhagen—the stranded American seamen were forced to accept either a sharp diminishment of their wages, or, in most cases, were fobbed off with just a few months' pay or perhaps none at all. In every port the poor rascals, something over six hundred in total number, became wards of the resident American consul. It was his responsibility to buy them enough provisions, clothing, and shelter to keep them alive, and to help them procure either passage home or a berth on some foreign ship. Berths for several hundred were found on Portuguese ships, Swedish ships, etc. At Archangel many of the stranded Americans signed on British vessels. In Copenhagen, Saabye, finally stirred from his lethargy, sent eighty to France to man privateers fitting out there under the American flag.

For all of this, however, scores of Americans apparently stayed in Denmark, Sweden, and Russia until the end of the war—or forever, for all we know. The whole story of the Americans stranded in North Europe in 1812 is a forlorn tribute to the effectiveness of British domination of the sea lanes between the Baltic and the United States.³⁵

Only a tiny number of American vessels sailed in the Baltic or thereabouts after the first year of the War of 1812. They

came under foreign colors, as in the case of the schooner "Eliza Ann," of Nantucket, which impudently sailed into Archangel harbor in 1813 with a Portuguese flag fluttering from her mast.³⁶ Or they were privateers. The United States sent three privateers to harass the trade routes between England and North Europe. The first was the "True Blooded Yankee," a privateer fitted out in France which captured eight English vessels on a cruise in the first half of 1813, two of which she sent into Norwegian ports.³⁷ The other two were the "Rattlesnake," Captain Maffet, of Philadelphia, and the "Scourge," Captain Nicoll, of Stratford, Connecticut. They were very successful, taking twenty-four English vessels sailing to and from Archangel in 1813, twenty-two of which were sent into Drontheim, Norway.³⁸

The only other vessels flying the American flag in the seas around North Europe were those to which the British deigned to grant special licenses. These vessels were very few in number. One was the United States frigate "John Adams," carrying the party of Americans which was sent to Russia to negotiate a peace treaty with Britain under the eye of Tsar Alexander. Another ship granted a special permit was the "Hannibal," property of Mr. Astor, of New York. She was furnished with a British license authorizing her to take a cargo to the Baltic and even to carry back another cargo, all in consideration of the special passenger she conveyed to Europe. Her passenger was General Moreau, famous French soldier who had fled to America when his part in a conspiracy against Napoleon's life was uncovered in 1804. The British wanted him back in Europe, hoping that his presence in the armies fighting Napoleon would undermine the morale of the French soldiers and perhaps encourage their defection. In July, 1813,

the "Hannibal" arrived at Gothenburg. Moreau disembarked and, after spending a few days with his old comrade Bernadotte, left to join Alexander as the Tsar's first aide-de-camp. On 27 August 1813, he was with Alexander before Dresden. A French cannonball smashed into Moreau's legs and killed the horse he rode. The next day his legs were amputated, and a few days later he died. His body was carried to St. Petersburg and buried with all honors. Seemingly the whole world had conspired to tempt Moreau from his safe American home and carry him a quarter of the way around the world to keep a terminal appointment with Napoleon.³⁹

While these odds and ends were rattling around in the void of what used to be Russo-American trade, vastly more important events were coming to pass in the lands to the east and south of the Baltic. Napoleon's enormous Grand Army, six hundred thousand strong, swung through Russia like a battle-axe through a feather mattress. Every encounter with the Russian army brought Napoleon another victory. On 14 September, the Grand Army occupied Moscow, the ancient mother-city of Russia.

Americans, searching for a market for their mountainous stores of unsold colonial goods in Russia, had sent large quantities of sugar, coffee, cotton, etc., to interior cities. Thus there was American property in Moscow when the French entered. Mr. Treadwell, an American merchant, had 100,000 rubles worth of cotton in the hands of a Moscow merchant by the name of Müller. An American merchant may even have been in Moscow during the French occupation. Adams mentions in his diary a Mr. Baer who was there. Adams never says Baer was not an American and always mentions him in relation to Americans staying in St. Petersburg.

Baer, American or not, was in Moscow looking after his property on the night of 15 September. Like Caulaincourt, who slept in the Kremlin that night, he must have started from sleep to see the red glow of fire reflecting from the wall of his bedroom. When the fire was done, a good part of Moscow was charred ruin. Mr. Baer had but smoldering remnants of his goods, Mr. Treadwell had the same of his cotton, and the French had a new and discomfoting realization of the strength of Russian determination to expel the invader.⁴⁰

In the middle of October, the retreat from Moscow began. Shortly after, the Russian winter, somewhat late this year, arrived, and the Grand Army found itself in a country deserted of everything but snow, ice, and invulnerable clouds of Cossack horsemen.

On 13 January 1813, John Quincy Adams attended a Te Deum in St. Petersburg in celebration of the total expulsion of Napoleon's army from Russia.⁴¹ Napoleon had invaded Russia at the head of a force of six hundred thousand men. Barely one hundred thousand remained when the army staggered out of Russia.

The Russian victories brought great joy to many in the United States, in spite of the minor fact that Russia was an ally of Great Britain, a nation with which America was at war. Opponents of Madison and the war were especially happy to dwell on the details and significance of Russia's triumph. Robert Goodhue Harper, arch-Federalist from Baltimore, gave a ringing speech giving special thanks to Russia for her victories because "enlightened patriotism" would "compel us to grieve over our own victories, which, but for those achieved by the arms of Alexander, would be but so many steps toward our own

ruin," i.e., the defeat of England and the extension of French hegemony over the entire North Atlantic community.⁴²

Boston, as one would expect, excelled in praising Russia's victories. The day of 25 March 1813 was set aside for a festival to "solemnize the glorious and important events the Almighty has vouchsafed to bring to pass in Russia." The celebration began at King's Chapel, where the crowded pews were regaled with prayers, recitations, choruses—the Hallelujah Chorus was particularly well received—and a discourse by the Reverend Dr. James Freeman. (Freeman was a member of the Yankee clergy who were so pro-Russian that Cobbett, the British journalist, called them the "Cossack Priesthood."⁴³) Dr. Freeman's address was woven all of Biblical passages, the whole being an analogy to the history of the United States and Europe since 1790 or so. In it the Federalist presidents, Washington and John Adams, rated together as "King Solomon," and the Republican presidents, Jefferson and Madison, rated together as a "bramble bush." In a flurry of Biblical quotations, Freeman next moved to Europe and managed to have Napoleon—"the King of the South"—invade the realm of Tsar Alexander—"the King of the North"—who, with the help of "the destroying angel," drove the invader off and defeated him. Freeman ended with "Sing hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth," and burst into tears.

At four in the afternoon, the subscribers to the festival and their guests assembled in the Exchange Coffee House. Harrison Gray Otis presided. Attending were many of the leading merchants of Boston, the justices of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, the secretary, and the treasurer of the state, etc., etc.

President Kirkland of Harvard asked the blessing of Heaven on the gathering and then the dinner was quickly consumed in anticipation of what was to follow. What followed was a speech by Otis, a speech by the Russian consul which he, for fear that his Russian accent would be too thick for Bostonian ears, had Otis read, then a succession of toasts such as: "The Commonwealth of Massachusetts: may the fire of its patriotism, like the flames of Moscow, expel what is French, and burn southward and westward, until it consumes all but native influence," and then a number of odes praising the Russians to such familiar tunes as "Ye Mariners of England" and "Commerce and Freedom."

Possibly the most popular ode of the evening was one called "Boney's Retreat," written by a lad of fifteen to the tune of "Yankee Doodle." It ended in a stanza of praise for individual Russian generals that must have been a supreme test for the Yankee tongue:

Smolensko's Prince then let us toast
with Winteistein and Platoff
Brave Beningsen, and Tchitchagoff,
Winzingerode, Tormazoff.
No longer to Napoleon's views
May we so vilely pander,
But join the Cossacks in their cry,
Hourra! for Alexander.

Hourra! Hourra! then let us cry,
Hourra! then, now or never,
For Alexander's conquered all
And Boney's *dished* forever.⁴⁴

The Wars of 1812

Another American poet wrote on Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Moscow. This poet was Joel Barlow, prince of the Hartford Wits and author of the famous "The Vision of Columbus."

In 1811, Madison had appointed Barlow minister to France. His task was to settle the confusion about Napoleon's suspension of the Milan and Berlin Decrees, to obtain indemnities for French spoliation of American shipping, and to assure that there would be normal trade relations with France in the future.

In Paris, Barlow received the same run-around that diplomats from the United States had been receiving in that city since the Revolution. The difficulties and delays in his negotiations were doubled after the invasion of Russia, because then all the necessary communications to Napoleon had to travel from Paris, to Wilno, and thence to Napoleon somewhere in the depths of Russia. This situation was exactly to Napoleon's liking, for he didn't want to settle with the United States, but only to keep Barlow dangling and the United States in the war against England.

By the fall of 1812, Barlow's and Madison's exasperation became so great that the French government feared that America's war effort against England might be affected. The French foreign minister wrote from Russia expressing Emperor Napoleon's regrets for the delays and inviting Barlow to come to Wilno: "When you arrive at Wilno . . . we may, sir, conclude, without delay, an arrangement so desirable, and so conformable to the mutually amicable views of our two governments." ⁴⁵

Wilno was fourteen hundred miles away in the midst of a

country torn by war. It was October, and winter was near. Barlow was fifty-eight years old. On Tuesday, 27 October 1812, he and his nephew, Thomas Barlow, climbed into a carriage and began the ride to Russia.

As they neared Russia, evidence of the war would be seen. Joel Barlow wrote from Koenigsburg of meeting on the road "those moving monuments of the wisdom of war—the hundreds of wagonloads of invalid soldiers returning from Russia, covered with glory, rags and mud."⁴⁸

On 18 November, the Barlows arrived in Wilno. It was a strange town, the streets full of soldiers and camp followers, the better quarters full of diplomats and high officials wining, dining, and dancing as if completely oblivious to the fact that the Grand Army was dying a few hundred miles to the east.

A week or so after the Barlows arrived, the Russians caught Napoleon's frozen, starved army at the Beresina River, about one hundred and fifty miles to the east of Wilno, smashed it into bloody fragments, and drove the fragments into wild flight.

On 4 December, a courier reached Wilno with the dreadful news. The Barlows and every other foreigner in the city who could beg a carriage, ride, or even walk, rushed to pack a few necessities and flee the impending onslaught of the Russians. The next day, 5 December, the Barlows joined the wild rush west.

The second night out from Wilno, the temperature dropped to thirteen or fourteen degrees below zero. In the nights that followed, the Americans learned that that temperature was to be normal. They traveled almost constantly, living on frozen bread and wine.

The Wars of 1812

The third night out of Wilno, the Barlows broke their flight west for the sake of a night's sleep at a convenient posthouse. As they slept, a nondescript vehicle swept past pulled by fresh horses. Huddled within was the Emperor Napoleon, racing back to Paris to gather together a new army to replace the one he left in Russia.⁴⁷

By 18 December, the Barlows had passed through Warsaw. Shortly after, Joel Barlow fell ill of "inflammation of the lungs." He was soon so ill that, despite fear of the Cossacks, the party had to stop at Zarnowiec, a little village near Cracow. Joel Barlow died there on 24 December 1812.

Thomas Barlow intended to have the body of his uncle embalmed and carried to Danzig, where a ship could take it to the United States to be buried in the soil of home. But the presence of Cossacks, to whom everyone not a Cossack was a Frenchman, in the neighborhood made further delay dangerous, perhaps suicidal.

Joel Barlow, poet and diplomat, was buried at Zarnowiec, Poland, where his remains still lie.

Some time in the last month of his life, Joel Barlow, deeply moved by the horror around him, wrote a poem entitled "Advice to a Raven in Russia," from which the following selection is made:

Imperial scavenger! but now you know,
Your work is vain amid these hills of snow.
His [Napoleon's] tentless troops are marbled through with frost
And change to crystal when the breath is lost.
Mere trunks of ice, tho limb'd like human frames,
And lately warm'd with life's endearing flames.

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

They cannot taint the air, the world impest,
Nor can you tear one fiber from their breast.
No! from their visual sockets as they lie,
With beak and claws you cannot pluck an eye.
The frozen orb, preserving still its form,
Defies your talons as it braves the storm,
But stands and stares to God, as if to know
In what curst hands he leaves his world below.⁴⁸

Hostilities never reached St. Petersburg, and there diplomats could play their queer game without being interrupted by the cold, famine, or Cossacks. The pro-American policy of the Russian government without faltering survived the news that the United States was waging war against Russia's chief ally, England. The last thing Alexander wanted was for England to crush America and bring that wayward colony back into her sphere of influence. Alexander knew well that a firm friendship between his nation and England would only last as long as Napoleon ruled France. Once Napoleon's power was broken, Russia would have to return to her policy of encouraging maritime rivals to Britain or submit to being Britain's economic vassal.

Thus it was that on 21 September 1812, when the fires of Moscow still smoldered, Count Rumiantsev asked John Quincy Adams if the government of the United States would object to an offer by the Russian government to mediate the war between the United States and Great Britain. Adams, of course, had no instructions on how to react to such an offer, but he sensibly answered that he thought his government would not object.⁴⁹ When the news of the offer reached Washington, Madison, who was discovering Canada not quite as ripe for

American conquest as had been advertised, accepted and dispatched James Bayard and Albert Gallatin to St. Petersburg on the frigate "John Adams." They, along with John Quincy Adams, were to act as America's peace negotiators. They reached St. Petersburg in July, 1813, and were very cordially received.

Britain, however, feared that Russia would be biased in favor of the United States. In September, 1814, for instance, Prime Minister Liverpool wrote to Castlereagh, "I fear the Emperor of Russia is half an American. . . ."⁵⁰ Liverpool's government refused Alexander's offer of mediation. Later, the offer was made again, and refused again.

Britain suggested direct negotiation between herself and the United States. Madison agreed, and Ghent in the Netherlands was chosen as the city in which the peace negotiations would take place. The diplomats Madison had sent to St. Petersburg turned about and left for Ghent. On 28 April 1814, John Quincy Adams followed them.⁵¹ He had been in Russia four and a half years.

The negotiations at Ghent proved to be long and hard. Adams and his confreres discovered that wars are much easier to start than to end. But in December, 1814, the peace was finally signed, and the passage of American vessels to and from Russia again became possible.

When the ice cleared in the Gulf of Finland in the spring of 1815, there were sixteen American vessels in Kronstadt harbor. They had lain there throughout the entire duration of the wars of 1812. Moscow had burned, Washington had burned, Europe had finally rid herself of the incubus of Napoleon, and Jackson had belatedly triumphed at New Orleans while these

America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon

sixteen sat peacefully in Kronstadt, as if exiled from the normal course of time as well as from their home ports.

Forty-three other American sail came to Kronstadt that year, making a total of fifty-nine American sail in that port in 1815.⁶² Russo-American trade picked up right where it had left off. Wars, depressions, revolutions, and mountainous upheavals of ideology have thrust between the United States and Russia since, but that trade has never ceased.

Commerce between the United States and Russia did not become one of the main branches of American trade after 1814. Russian demand for American exports remained low, and, as substitutes for hemp and linen came into wider use and Britain replaced the Baltic nations as the great source of high quality iron, Russia's exports became of lesser, rather than of greater, importance to the United States.

Russo-American trade never became one of the main channels of world commerce, but in time of world crisis it has twice had great importance. The most recent occasion was, of course, during the terrible years of World War II. The other was during those momentous years between the rape of Copenhagen and the gutting of Moscow, when peaceful Yankee merchants provoked Napoleon and Alexander I to mortal combat, when the world trembled to find itself turning on an axis that ran from the docks of Boston, United States of America, to the waterfront of Kronstadt, Russia.

1. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 69.

2. Reinoehl, "Impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon on the Crowninshield Family," pp. 174-76.

The Wars of 1812

3. Smith, *Reminiscences*, p. 60; *Boston Gazette*, 22 October 1812, 19 November 1812; John Quincy Adams Diary, 31 August 1812, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 31, p. 409.

4. Smith, *Reminiscences*, pp. 53-56.

5. Letter to Secretary of State, 24 May 1812, Gothenburg, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Gothenburg, Vol. I.

6. Smith, *Reminiscences*, pp. 60-64.

7. Smith wrote his account of his stay in Sweden and his adventures after the arrival of the "Champlin" when he was a very old man. Some might think that the years that intervened between the events of 1812 and his writing of them might have acted as a lens to magnify his own exploits. However, the *Boston Gazette*, 16 November 1812, and a letter from Forbes (to [?], 5 September 1812, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. II) corroborate Smith's later account on all the main points.

8. Smith, *Reminiscences*, pp. 65-70, 109-10.

9. Letter to [?], 4 September, 5 September 1812, Copenhagen, National Archives, Consular Dispatches—Copenhagen, Vol. II.

10. Letter to Secretary of State, 21 August 1812, St. Petersburg, in John Quincy Adams Letterbook, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 136, p. 405.

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Postscript: Levett Harris

WHEN JOHN QUINCY ADAMS LEFT RUSSIA in the spring of 1814 to go to Ghent, he went by way of Reval rather than Kronstadt because the latter port was still closed by ice. In Reval, Adams met Diedrich Rodde, the American vice-consul there by appointment of Levett Harris. Rodde complained to Adams that he and his brother had been treated badly by Harris, so badly, in fact, that Rodde told Adams all he could about Harris' peculations, even though in making the revelation he put himself in a bad light, too.

Diedrich Rodde said that he and his brother, who was American vice-consul at Riga, also by appointment of Harris, had agreed to pay Harris pensions of one thousand and five thousand rubles a year, respectively, plus half the profits they made on American vessels and cargoes. In return, they had received their appointments as consuls. The Roddes' current trouble with Harris stemmed from the fact that, although there had been no American business to do in either Reval or Riga in 1812 or 1813, and although the Rodde properties in Riga had been destroyed during the defense of that city against the French, Harris demanded his pensions.

Diedrich Rodde also stated that between 1807 and 1812 Harris received as high as 70,000 rubles apiece for ratifying as authentic papers of counterfeit American vessels. This money he shared with certain Russian officials, particularly those who were members of the Neutral Commission, the approval of which was also essential before a questionable vessel could enter a Russian port.¹

The matter of Harris' malpractice as a public servant did not come up again until 1818, when Harris, by that time a private citizen back in the United States, applied to President Monroe to be employed in the public service again. At approximately the same time, two American merchants, the brothers W. D. and J. D. Lewis, began to openly accuse Harris of having prostituted his office for personal gain. W. D. Lewis, and perhaps his brother, too, had been a resident merchant in St. Petersburg during Harris' consulate there. (Bad feelings between Harris and the Lewises probably date back as far as at least 1811; for in that year, Adams' diary mentions a merchant named Lewis in St. Petersburg as being an enemy of Harris.) In 1821, Harris sued W. D. Lewis for libel.

John Quincy Adams, now secretary of state, found himself again embroiled in the aromatic affairs of Levett Harris. Adams remonstrated with President Monroe against ever taking Harris back into the public service, and was also obliged to give the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, where the trial of Harris *v.* W. D. Lewis was held, a deposition discrediting Harris.

The trial proved an embarrassment to both Adams and Harris. Harris tried to weaken the influence of Adams' testimony by reference to Adams' former indulgence of his (Harris') actions while in Russia. Also, according to Adams,

Harris tried to "bully or buy off my testimony through the intervention of the President."

By this time, Adams, of course, realized what a dereliction of duty and sin of omission his apathy toward Harris' machinations in Russia had been. In his diary Adams wrote an explanation of why he hadn't taken action in 1814 when Rodde had exposed Harris. The reasons were four in number. One, Rodde's story had been told him in confidence. Two, most of the witnesses to Harris' guilt had shared with Harris in the spoils of that guilt, and therefore would probably testify falsely. Three, "The proof was far distant and precarious and I was going for an indefinite time to be far distant from the proof and the place where it was to be produced." Four, the Anglo-American war of 1812 was still going on in 1814, which cut off all American trade with Russia. The peace that would follow that war would legalize all American and all British trade with Russia. There was no longer nor would there again be any motive for smuggling. If Harris would never again be able to dabble in that pastime, why not let him continue as consul?

The trial brought Harris little satisfaction. The weight of testimony was so great in favor of Lewis' accusations that Harris' lawyers, the best in Philadelphia, admitted that their client had made a fortune in Russia, but explained it by saying that his intercessions with the Russian government in favor of certain vessels seeking entrance had been in his capacity as a merchant, not as the United States consul.

At the end of the trial, the court awarded Harris \$100 damages. Harris had sued for \$50,000. Lewis prided himself on having won a moral victory.

In 1821, Adams made his final judgment of Levett Harris,

his constant companion and colleague during four and a half gray years in Russia:

Harris is one of those mixed characters who, with some very good qualities and great address, has not the firmness to withstand the temptation of profitable venality. His situation at St. Petersburg and the situation of the times, gave him both temptation and opportunity such as perhaps was never presented to any other public officer of the United States; and he availed himself of it precisely to the extent which he thought he could do and escape detection. He made a princely fortune by selling his duty and his office at the most enormous prices.²

1. John Quincy Adams Diary, 13 May 1814, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 32, pp. 102-3.

2. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1949), n. 169; C. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, IV, 282-83; *ibid.*, V, 328-29; Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, VI, 346-47; John Quincy Adams Diary, 28 March 1814, in microfilms of Adams Papers, Reel 32, p. 80.

APPENDIX

Chronology of Events Affecting American Trade with the Baltic and Russia, 1789-1815

14 July 1789—Storming of the Bastille.

1 February 1793—France declares war on Britain.

22 April 1793—Neutrality Proclamation. George Washington calls for Americans to "adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial toward the belligerent powers," and prohibits Americans from "aiding or abetting hostilities against any of said powers, or . . . carrying to any of them those articles which are deemed contraband by the modern usage of nations. . . ." Those Americans who do so "will not receive the protection of the United States against . . . punishment or forfeiture; and further, . . . I have given instructions . . . to cause prosecutions to be instituted against all persons who shall within the cognizance of the courts of the United States, violate the law of nations with respect to the powers at war. . . ."

19 November 1794—Jay's Treaty. In return for a degree of British acceptance of trade with the United States, and a British promise to withdraw from posts in the northwest wilderness of the United States, Jay signs a treaty in which the outstanding griev-

Appendix

ances of the United States against Britain are not mentioned or are referred to arbitral commissions. The United States accepts the British claim that a belligerent's property is not safeguarded from seizure by being aboard a neutral ship, and tacitly acquiesces in the British Rule of 1756 that a European nation which has forbidden foreign trade with its colonies in time of peace cannot open those colonies to neutral trade in time of war. The United States also accepts the British definition of naval stores as contraband.

- 2 July 1796—France declares that neutrals shall be treated by France as they permit themselves to be treated by Britain.
- 2 March 1797—France declares her intention to seize enemy property even if on board neutral ships. The quasi-war between France and the United States follows.
- 24 December 1798—Alliance between Russia and Britain against France.
- 22 October 1799—Tsar Paul I takes Russia out of the anti-French coalition and takes leadership in the formation of the League of Armed Neutrality of the North. Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and Prussia join in an attempt to oblige Britain to respect their neutral rights of the high seas.
- 30 September 1800—Treaty of Mortefontaine. France releases the United States from its defensive alliance of 1778 with France, accepts the principle that free ships make free goods, grants United States shipping the right to trade between enemy ports in non-contraband goods, and accepts a definition of contraband which includes neither food stuffs nor naval stores. In return, the United States assumes the burden of reimbursing American citizens for property seized or destroyed by the French.
- 24 March 1801—Tsar Paul is murdered and Alexander I becomes tsar.
- 2 April 1801—Nelson attacks Copenhagen, forcing Denmark to withdraw from the League of Armed Neutrality of the North.

Appendix

- 25 *March* 1802—Treaty of Amiens. France and Britain sign a peace.
- 18 *May* 1803—Britain declares war on France.
- 21 *October* 1805—The battle of Trafalgar assures British naval supremacy.
- 23 *July* 1805—Essex Decision. The British Court of Appeals in Prize Causes declares that unless produce carried on a broken voyage between enemy ports pays a bona fide duty, the shipper has engaged in a continuous and, therefore, illegal voyage between enemy ports. For instance, an American shipper carrying goods from Martinique to Bordeaux can no longer fulfil the letter of British law by merely touching at Baltimore on his journey between the two French possessions.
- 2 *December* 1805—Battle of Austerlitz. Napoleon defeats the armies of Austria and Russia.
- 8 *April* 1806—Fox's blockade. Britain declares a blockade of northern Europe from Brest to the Elbe, but allows neutral vessels laden with goods not the property of Britain's enemies and not contraband by British definition to trade with ports between the Seine and Ostend. This partly ameliorates the effect of the Essex Decision.
- 14 *October* 1806—Napoleon defeats the Prussians at Jena and Auerstadt.
- 21 *November* 1806—Berlin Decree. Napoleon declares the British Isles in blockade, that all British property is lawful prize, that all trade in British merchandise is forbidden, and that any vessel coming from Britain or her colonies is to be seized as enemy property.
- 7 *January* 1807—British Order in Council prohibiting any vessel "to trade between one port and another, both of which ports shall belong to or be in possession of France or her allies."
- 14 *June* 1807—Napoleon defeats the Russian army at Friedland.
- 22 *June* 1807—United States frigate "Chesapeake" is battered into surrender by the British frigate "Leopard."

Appendix

- 7-9 July 1807—Treaties of Tilsit. In brief, Russia recognizes France's claim to hegemony in western and central Europe, and France recognizes Russia's similar claim in eastern Europe. In a secret article, Alexander I agrees to alliance with France against Britain in case the latter refuses to accept peace.
- 2-5 September 1807—British bombardment of Copenhagen and seizure of the Danish fleet.
- September, 1807—Danish government issues its first *Kaperreglement*—regulation for privateering.
- 8 November 1807—Russia declares war on Britain.
- 11 November 1807—British Order in Council prohibits all trade with ports from which the British flag is excluded, unless the vessel in question first calls at a British port, pays duty on her cargo, and secures a fresh clearance.
- 17 November 1807—Milan Decree. Napoleon declares as lawful prize any ship, along with its cargo, which sails to or from a British port or port occupied by the British, or which allows itself to be visited by a British naval officer, or which has paid any duty to the British government.
- 22 December 1807—The embargo. The United States interdicts all land and seaborne trade with foreign nations.
- February, 1808—The Russian army invades Swedish Finland.
- Spring, 1808—Admiral Saumarez of the British navy enters the Baltic with a fleet of sixty-two sail. For the remainder of the Napoleonic wars, the British navy dominates the Baltic and the waters around Denmark during the shipping seasons.
- 17 April 1808—Bayonne Decree. Napoleon orders seizure of all American vessels entering the ports of France, Italy, or the Hanseatic towns.
- 1 March 1809—Non-intercourse Act. United States Congress repeals the embargo, reopens trade with all except France and Britain, and authorizes the President to proclaim resumption of

Appendix

trade with France or Britain in the event that either power should cease violating American neutral rights.

19 April 1809—Madison issues a proclamation legalizing trade with Britain because of the assurance of Erskine, British minister to the United States, that the Orders in Council of 1807, as applicable to the United States, will be revoked. On 30 May 1809, the British Foreign Secretary Canning disavows Erskine's statements; and on 9 August 1809, Madison revives non-intercourse with Britain.

26 April 1809—British Order in Council lifts the blockade from all European ports north and east of the Ems River.

August, 1809—The Danish government limits its subjects' privateering to the waters around Heligoland. In the following March, full powers to sweep the seas around Denmark are restored to the Danish privateers.

17 September 1809—Peace of Frederikshavn brings an end to the war between Russia and Sweden. Sweden surrenders Finland and accepts nominal membership in the Continental System.

23 March 1810—Rambouillet Decree. Napoleon orders the seizure of all American vessels that have entered the ports of France since 20 May 1809.

1 May 1810—Macon's Bill No. 2. United States repeals the Non-intercourse Act. In the event that either France or Britain should revoke or modify its edicts so as to cease to interfere and injure the neutral commerce of the United States, then the President shall make a proclamation to that effect; "and if the other nation shall not within three months thereafter so revoke and modify her edicts in a like manner, then . . ." the Non-intercourse Act "shall, from and after the expiration of three months from the date of the proclamation aforesaid, be revived and have full force and effect, so far as relates to the dominions, colonies and dependencies," and products of that nation.

July, 1810—Napoleon annexes Holland to the French Empire.

Appendix

- 5 August 1810—Napoleon instructs his foreign minister to notify the United States that the Berlin and Milan Decrees, as applicable to the shipping of the United States, will be revoked on 1 November 1810.
- 5 August 1810—Decree of Trianon. Napoleon imposes enormous duties—usually 50 per cent *ad valorem*—on almost all colonial imports: coffee, sugar, tea, etc.
- 7 October 1810—The convoy of six hundred sails from Gothenburg.
- 2 November 1810—Madison declares that the French government has officially made known to the United States government that French edicts violating neutral American commerce have been revoked.
- 5 November 1810—Bernadotte accepts the offer of the Swedish Estates-General and becomes heir to the Swedish throne.
- 17 November 1810—Sweden declares war on Britain.
- December, 1810—Napoleon annexes Hamburg, Bremen, and Oldenburg to the French Empire.
- 31 December, 1810—Alexander I of Russia issues a ukase decreeing tariffs discouraging overland trade with Europe, and encouraging overseas trade with neutrals, especially the United States.
- 2 March 1811—The United States Congress officially renews commercial non-intercourse with Britain.
- 16 May 1811—"Little Belt" Incident. A one-sided battle between the forty-four gun U.S. frigate "President" and the twenty-gun British corvette "Little Belt."
- January, 1812—Napoleon occupies Swedish Pomerania.
- 5 April 1812—Alliance between Sweden and Russia.
- 3 May 1812—Britain joins Sweden and Russia in alliance.
- 18 June 1812—United States Congress declares war on Britain.

Appendix

24 June 1812—Napoleon invades Russia.

19 October–14 December 1812—Retreat from Moscow.

24 December 1814—Treaty of Ghent brings peace between Britain and the United States.

18 June 1815—Waterloo.

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* Without information sent to me by Messrs. Mikoletzky, of the Austrian State Archives, and Svend Aakjaer and Aage Rasch, of the Danish State Archives, some of the essential pieces of my jigsaw puzzle of a book would still be missing.

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ping season ran from winter to winter, and 30 September fell right in the middle of that shipping season. Most American exports to Russia in a given year arrived there by 30 September, so the *American State Papers'* statistics on exports to Russia are somewhat dependable. However, only one-half or so of imports from Russia in a given year arrived in America by 30 September. For instance, if in the astronomical year of 1800, America imported 100,000 hundredweight of hemp from Russia, and in the year 1801, only 50,000, the statistics in the *American State Papers* would show an importation of approximately 75,000 hundredweight of hemp for each of the two years.

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Index

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 Adams, John, 46, 209
 Adams, John Quincy, 3, 9, 51, 57, 62, 69 n., 104, 150, 151-52, 154-57, 167-68, 170, 173-76, 181, 189-90, 196, 199, 203, 209, 213-14, 216, 220-21, 223-24, 238-41, 246, 257, 264, 270, 271, 276-79
 Adams, Louisa C. (John Quincy Adams' wife), 150, 214-15
 Adams, Louisa Catherine (John Quincy Adams' daughter), 214-15, 242
 Adgate, William, 132, 134
 "Advice to a Raven in Russia," 269-70
 Alaska, 51
 Alexander I, 3, 87, 95-97, 101, 146, 150, 156-57, 173, 177, 179, 181-84, 200, 237-38, 263, 270, 271
 Allen, Jeremiah, 41-42, 43 n.
 Amsterdam, 42
 Anderson, James, 249
 Anholt, 217
 Archangel, 28, 56, 60, 80, 109, 112, 114, 127, 191, 210, 218, 221, 224-25, 255-56, 262
 Austerlitz, 99
 Austria, 221-24, 237
 Atlantic, the, 67
 Arabia and Arabian goods, 48, 210-11
 Arnold, Captain, 111
 Arctic Sea, 34
 Bacon, Joseph V., 30, 31
 Baer, Mr., 263, 264
 Bahia, 49, 211
 Bailey, Captain, 52
 Baltic Sea, 5, 28, 34, 37, 46-47, 60, 63, 64, 66, 71 n., 76, 102, 118, 146, 183, 197, 247 ff.
 Baring, House of, 55, 127, 160
 Barks, 33, 34, 35
 Barlow, Joel, 254, 267-70
 Barlow, Thomas, 268
 Batavia, 50
 Bavaria, 222
 Bayard, James, 271
 Beal, Captain, 258

Index

- Belts, Great and Little, 61, 140, 217
Bemis, Seth, 26 n.
Beresina River, 268
Berlin and Milan Decrees, 100, 198-99, 231-32, 267; *see also* Continental System
Bernadotte, Jean Baptiste Jules, 201, 203-5, 218, 233-34, 263
Bilbao, 49
Black Sea, 34, 159
Blandow and Co., 55
Boardman, Francis, 211
Boldera, 185
Bordeaux, 114
Bornholm, 142-43
Boston, 22, 42, 56, 84, 150, 265-67
Boston Gazette, 41-42
Bowdoin College, 130
Brazil, 49, 187-88, 211
Brigs, 57
Bristles, 24, 28, 31
Bristol, 52
Brody, 222, 224
Buffington, Nehemiah, 43

Cadiz, 42
Calcutta, 49, 50
Cape of Good Hope, 49
Carelia, 30
Carlshamn, 251, 253, 255
Caspian Sea, 34
Castlereagh, Lord, 243, 271
Catherine the Great, 8, 9, 11, 47, 72, 81, 97
Cattle, 31-32
Caulaincourt, Armand-Augustin-Louis de, Duc de Vincence, 155-56, 173, 174, 177, 179, 181-84, 190, 202, 237, 244 n., 264
Cavendish, Captain, 103
Champlin, Christopher, 52
Chernychev, 224
China, 32, 48, 50
Christiansand, 113, 114, 130-33, 152, 165
Clark, Alexander, 120
Clark, Captain, 80
Clay, Henry, 20
Cobbett, William, 104, 265
Coffee; *see* Colonial goods
Coggeshall, George, 32-33, 141-42, 180, 182, 184-86, 190
Colonial goods, 10, 17, 41, 43, 48, 49, 51, 74, 78, 92, 128, 136, 155, 164, 182, 197, 209-10, 221-24, 232, 233, 255
Columbian Centinel, 84
Connecticut, 22, 23
Consuls, 95-96, 133-34, 173, 224, 225, 239-40, 248-50, 266, 276; *see also* Harris, Levett
Constantinople; *see* Ottoman Empire
Constitution of the United States, 72, 97
Continental System, 100, 113, 118, 128, 135, 138, 143, 144, 154-56, 163, 176-78, 183-84, 191, 195-98, 200, 202-4, 208, 212, 223-24, 230-33, 238, 267
Contraband, 75, 76
Convoy of 600 (1810), 179 ff.
Convoys, 77, 118, 129, 137, 138, 140, 179, 180, 190, 205, 206, 217-20, 234-36, 248, 251-54
Cook, Peter, 240-41
Copenhagen, 44, 52, 53, 63, 78, 83, 86-88, 103, 104, 133, 152, 166, 254, 255
Cordage, 23, 53; *see also* Naval stores
Cotton, 48, 155, 210
Cracow, 269
Cramp and Co., 55
Cronberg Castle, 62
Crosdale, Captain, 174

- Crowninshield, Jacob, 91-92, 93, 231
 Culpeper, Thomas Lord, 4, 17, 22
- Dana, Francis, 8, 9 ff., 40, 42, 45 n., 47, 48
 Danish Sound, 7, 41, 61, 62, 63, 81, 88, 137, 140, 162-63, 216, 218
 Danzig, 143, 215-16
 Dardanelles, 96
 Darshead, 253
 Dashkoff, André, 122, 170-71
 Delano, Captain, 174
 Denmark, 44, 78, 82 ff., 102, 105, 118-21, 128-29, 131-34, 137, 140, 155, 164, 165, 206-8, 216-17, 219-20, 233, 235-36, 247, 254, 255, 259-60; *see also* Christiansand, Copenhagen, Frederick VI, Danish Sound
 Dennis, Captain, 217
 Derby, Elias Hasket, 43, 51, 55-56, 58
 Diamond, John, 249
 Diaper; *see* Linens
 Dnieper River, 32
 Don River, 32
 Donovan, Mr., 175-76
 Down Islands, 24
 Dresden, 263
 Drew, Charles, 241
 Drill; *see* Linens
 Drontheim, 262
 Duck (sailcloth), 14, 15, 22 ff., 26 n., 28, 30, 126, 162, 210
 Durnilov, 111-12
 Dutch Guiana, 49
 Dvina River, 32, 185
 Dyewoods; *see* Colonial goods
- East Indies, 48, 49, 50
 Eastport, Maine, 247
 Egypt, 81
 Elsinore, 61, 103
 Embargo, U.S., of 1807, 100, 110, 125
 Embargo, U.S., of 1812, 231
 Erie Canal, 34
 Erskine, D. M., and Erskine Agreement, 125-26
 Erving, George W., 206-7, 217, 220, 235-37
 Exeter, Mass., 22
- Fairfield, William, 231, 246
 Falmouth, England, 52
 Farsund, 247
 Fellows, John, 67
 Fenno, Captain, 208
 Finland, 135, 234
 Finland, Gulf of, 64
 Flax, 23, 28, 30, 39 n.
 Flem; *see* Linens
 Forbes, John M., 166, 235, 236, 254, 255, 257
 Forgery, 114-15, 116-17
 France, 41, 72 ff., 76, 93, 99, 101, 122, 127 ff., 143, 145-46, 173 ff., 177, 178, 183-84, 187-89, 200-204, 206, 215-22, 225, 233, 234, 237, 243, 263, 264; *see also* Napoleon
 Franklin, Benjamin, 132
 Frederick VI, 128-29, 131, 137, 165, 178, 206, 218, 235
 Freeman, James, 265
 Friedland, Battle of, 101
- Gale, Hill, Cazalet and Co., 55
 Gallatin, Albert, 271

Index

- George III, 160
 Germany, 78, 117, 222
 Ghent, 271
 Girard, Stephen, 127-28, 131, 198
 Gloucester, Mass., 56
 Godfrey, Martha, 150
 Gothenburg, 44, 52, 53, 114, 134-37, 163, 167, 179-80, 197, 204, 205, 233, 236, 247-51, 255
 Gotland, 143
 Graham, Archibald, 153
 Grain, 28, 31
 Grand Army, 263, 264, 268
 Gray, William, 152, 172
 Great Britain: British Navy, 79, 118 (*see also* Convoy, Saumarez); Denmark, 82-84, 86-88, 103-5, 118-21, 137, 138-42; and France, 91, 93, 101; naval stores, 85, 86, 101, 110, 144, 195; Orders in Council and License Trade, 100, 116-18, 127 ff., 196 ff., 254; and Russia, 8, 9, 32, 37, 39 n., 53, 54, 82 ff., 98, 99, 101, 105, 189, 193-94 n., 200; Smuggling and Russo-United States Trade, 7, 8, 43-44, 79, 85-86, 99, 109, 112-14, 117, 126, 144, 162, 163, 165, 174, 181, 197, 208, 212, 213-14, 237; and Sweden, 135 ff., 206, 233; trade and economy of, 46, 55-56, 110, 178, 195-97, 230-31, 242-43; and the United States, 4, 46, 73, 77, 125-26, 198, 199, 238-40, 243, 252, 253-54, 257, 258-59
 Greenland, 24
 Harris, Levett, 94-96, 113, 116, 144, 153-54, 174-76, 179, 214, 224, 238-41, 255, 257, 276-79
 Harvard College, 266
 Harwik, Anton, 222
 Haverhill, Mass., 22
 Hazard, Samuel, 224
 Heligoland, 137, 164
 Hemp, 14, 15, 17, 18-20, 26 n., 28, 30, 39 n., 53, 85, 86, 110, 126-27, 162, 172, 195, 210, 225, 272
 Hempseed and hempseed oil, 28
 Holmes, Captain, 159
 Howell, Judge, 259
 Howland, Captain, 258
 Humber Estuary, 139
 Hungary, 187
 Impressment, 76
 India, 48, 49, 50, 110, 173, 211
 Indian Ocean, 49
 Indigo; *see* Colonial goods
 Insurance, maritime, 80, 260
 Irkutsk, 32
 Iron, 14-17, 27, 28, 31, 39 n., 53, 204, 234
 Isaacson, Peter, 133-34, 165-66
 Isle de Bourbon, 50
 Isle de France, 49-50, 73
 Italy, 222, 232
 Ivan the Terrible, 27
 Java, 49, 50
 Jay Treaty, 75-76
 Jefferson, Thomas, 94-97, 125, 151
 Jones, John Paul, 47, 72
 Joy, George, 166-67, 207
 Hague, the, 9
 Hamburg, 52, 55, 78, 128, 178, 233
 Hamilton, Lady, 87
 Hano, 143, 200, 251-53, 255
 Harper, Robert Goodhue, 264

- Kama River, 33
Kaperreglement, 119
 Karlskrona, 143, 255
 Keef, M., 73
 Kelly, Mr., 174-75
 Kennebunk, Me., 57
 Kentucky, 19, 20, 21, 127
 Kenyon, Mr., 189-90
 Kiakta, 32
 Kiel, 255
 Kiev, 221-22
 King, Rufus, 79
 Kirkland, John Thornton, 266
 Knights of St. John, 81
 Knyphausen, 113
 Koenigsburg, 268
 Kostroma, 30
 Kronstadt, 3, 29, 55, 64, 65, 105,
 109, 121, 127, 136-37, 145, 146,
 172, 190, 209, 215, 224, 237,
 239-40, 254, 255, 259, 271, 272

 La Fayette, Marquis de, 47
 Lake Ladoga, 34
 Lanskoi, 11
 Lathrop, Captain, 57
 Lauenburg, 178
 Lauriston, Count, 202, 213, 237-38
 Le Mesurier and Co., 197
 League of Armed Neutrality
 (1780), 8-11
 League of Armed Neutrality
 (1800), 84 ff.
 Leipzig Fair, 181
 Leith, 139
 Letters of Marque, 257
 Lewis, W. D. and J. D., 277-78
 Libau, 182, 191
 License trade, 116-18, 196 ff., 258;
see also Smuggling
 Lincoln, Abraham, 35

 Linens, 14, 15, 28, 53, 272; *see*
also Duck
 Linseed and linseed oil, 24, 28
 Linsey, Captain, 104
 Lisbon, 41, 49, 52, 102, 211, 232
 "Little Belt" Incident, 199
 Littleton, W. H., 151-52
 Liverpool, Earl of, 271
 Long Hope Sound, 139
 Louisiana Purchase, 95
 Lubeck, 178
 Lund, Gabriel and Ebe, 132

 McNeill, Daniel, 41, 77
 Macon's Bill No. 2, 161, 162, 198
 Madison, James, 94, 112, 125, 151,
 198, 199, 231, 243, 255, 256-
 58, 264, 270-71
 Madeira Island, 49
 Madras, 50
 Maffet, Captain, 262
 Mahan, Alfred, 117-18
 Maine, 57
 Malta, 81, 82, 84
 Manila fiber, 17
 March, John, 56, 197
 Marie Galente, 173
 Maritime insurance; *see* Insurance,
 maritime
 Marks, Captain, 240
 Marstrand, 251
 Massachusetts, 56, 57
 Massthuget, 164
 Masts, 122; *see also* Naval stores
 Mayer, Mr., 239
 Mecklenburg, 178
 Memel, 122
 Minorca, 231
 Minturn and Champlin, 247

Index

- Moniteur*, 181
 Monroe, James, 277
 Montreal, 244 n.
 Moreau, General, 262-63
 Morfontaine, Treaty of, 81
 Moscow, 32, 263, 264
 Mossby, Joseph, 80
- Naples, 232, 246
 Napoleon, 82, 99, 101, 102, 128-29, 131, 160, 173, 178-83, 187, 188, 195, 198-99, 218, 224, 234, 237, 238, 243, 254, 263, 267, 269; *see also* France
 Narva, 28, 109
Naval Chronicle, 86
 Naval stores, 8, 28, 37, 76, 85, 101, 126, 144, 211; *see also* Duck, Cordage, Hemp, Timber
 Navigation Acts, 7
 Naze, 61, 139
 Nelson (Adams' servant), 150, 158
 Nelson, Horatio, 83 ff., 99, 118
 Netherlands, 5, 28, 178
 Neutrality Proclamation, 75
 Neva River, 29, 34, 65
 New England, 20, 22, 56; *see also individual states and cities*
 New Holland, 110
 New Orleans, 35
 New York City, 56
 Newburyport, 56
 Newport, 52
 Nicoll, Captain, 262
 Niemen River, 243
 Non-intercourse Act, 125, 126, 161
 Nore, 139
 Norway, 234; *see also* Denmark
 Norwood, Captain, 42
- Nova Zembla, 24
 Novgorod, 30
 Nyborg, 217, 255
- Oddy, J. Jepson, 193-94 n.
 Odessa, 159
 Oldenburg, 113, 178, 201, 202
 Orkney Islands, 139
 Orne, Josiah, 87
 Osgood, Thomas B., 134, 136, 138, 145, 146, 165, 172, 176, 196
 Ostend, 73
 Otis, Harrison Gray, 265-66
 Ottoman Empire, 96, 101, 107, 158-59
- Page, Martin, 51-52
 Pappenburg, 113, 153
 Pardo, General, 201
 Parish, John, and Co., 55
 Paul I of Russia, 81-88
 Pernambuco, 49, 211
 Peter the Great, 4, 5, 28
 Philadelphia, 17, 42, 56, 63
 Philippines, 17
 Phillips, James Duncan, 18
 Pitcairn, Consul, 233
 Plymouth, England, 246
 Plymouth, Mass., 17, 22
 Poland, 201, 238, 269
 Polotzk, 30
 Pood, 38
 Portland, Me., 56, 127
 Portugal, 173
Pristans, 32

Privateering, 119-21, 128 ff., 137, 143, 165, 206, 207-8, 216-17, 219, 233, 235, 236, 247, 259, 261, 262

Prize Courts, 129 ff., 137, 165-66, 207-8, 216-17, 235-36, 259

Providence, R. I., 56

Prussia, 53, 84, 178, 221, 222

Quasi-war, United States and France, 76 ff.

Ravensduck; *see* Linens

Razin, Stephen, 27

Retting, dew and wet, 20, 21, 23

Retusari, 29

Reval, 28, 146, 182, 191, 276

Rhode Island, 48

Rice, 10, 47; *see also* Colonial goods

Riga, 28, 32, 41, 42, 122, 146, 182, 185, 191, 276

Rodde, Diedrich, 276-77

Rogers, Robert, 133

Rosen, Axel Pontus von, 178

Rowan, Captain, 50, 51

Rumiantsev, Count, 99, 111, 122, 143, 146, 154-55, 171, 176, 177, 190, 270

Rush, Benjamin, 160

Russell, Captain, 247

Russell, Jonathan, 186

Russia: and Austria, 221-24, 232, 237; and Continental System, 143, 144, 145, 146, 153, 176 ff., 191, 202-3, 208, 212, 238, 277; and Denmark, 155, 218; and France, 101, 122, 145-46, 173, 177, 186-89, 201-4, 218, 243; and Great Britain, 5, 6, 37, 39 n., 53-54, 83 ff., 98, 101, 105, 112 ff., 117, 177, 189, 193-94 n., 195, 200, 230-35, 238 (*see also*

Smuggling); League of Armed Neutrality (1780), 8, 9, (1800), 84 ff.; middle class in, 36; navy of, 82; nobility of, 36, 37, 177, 200; products of, 5-6, 10, 14-16, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30-32, 39 n., 54; the ruble, 176, 188-89, 212-13, 223; and Second Coalition, 81 ff.; serfs of, 36; and Sweden, 110, 136, 137, 234; trade of, 28, 29, 35-37, 53-54, 110, 121, 136, 145, 187-89, with United States, 3 ff., 10, 11, 40, 42-44, 47 ff., 64-66, 70-71 n., 78-81, 84-85, 88, 93, 94, 99, 105, 109, 117, 122, 126, 127, 134, 136-37, 146, 157-59, 161-62, 172-74, 181-84, 189-91, 199-200, 208-10, 215, 220-25, 231-32, 237, 255, 271, 272; and Treaty of Tilsit, 101; Ukase of December, 1810, 187-89, 201, 210; and the United States, 8 ff., 97-98, 107, 110, 117, 122, 144, 155, 157, 170-71, 200, 264-66, 270-71 (*see also* Adams, John Quincy; Harris, Levett); *see also* Alexander I, Paul I, and the listings of Russian cities

Rust, John, 103

Ryberg and Co., 53, 55, 133

Saabye, Hans Rudolph, 133, 166, 207, 261

Sailcloth; *see* Duck

St. Petersburg, 23, 28, 29, 32, 34, 37, 39 n., 42, 48, 56, 64, 65, 121, 134, 145, 159, 209-10, 225, 247, 260-61

Salem, Mass., 18, 22, 42, 43, 56, 65, 105

Santo Domingo, 48, 49

Saumarez, James, 118, 135, 162, 200, 203-4, 233, 247, 254

Saxony, 222

Schleswig-Holstein, 128, 164, 178

Scott, William, 114

Second Coalition, 82

Index

- Sheffield, Lord, 46
 Sherburne, Jacob, 120
 Ships: "Alpheus," 174; "America," 165; "Angerona," 238-40; "Antelope," 256; "Arabella," 259; "Ariel," 103; "Arthur," 52; "Augustus," 200; "Aurora" (1808), 112, (1813), 259; "Bayonne," 52; "Belle Isle," 67; "Brothers," 239; "Brutus" (1811), 208, (1812), 259; "Caliban," 252; "Calumet," 159; "Camilla," 79; "Carmelite," 111, 112; "Catherine," 127; "Catherine-Jane," 259; "Catty," 174; "Cato," 273 n.; "Champlin," 247, 250-55, 259-60; "Colloden," 174; "Commerce," 107; "Constellation," 19, 77; "Constitution," 15, 77; "Cosack," 59; "Cuba," 252-53; "Cygnet," 253; "Diana," 112; "Dido," 256; "Eclipse," 139, 248; "Edward," 253; "Eliza" (1798), 50, (1810-11, Captain Coggeshall), 180, 182, 190, (1811, Captain Lathrop), 57; "Eliza Ann" (Nantucket), 262, (Salem), 273 n.; "Empress of Russia," 44 n.; "Enterprise," 80; "Eunice," 259; "Exchange," 87; "Factor" (brig), 258, (cutter), 105; "Fanny," 50; "Financier," 80; "Frederick," 239, 259; "Friendship," 256; "Galen" (1808), 120, 121, (1811), 252; "Georgia," 144; "Glide," 255-56; "Golden Age," 231-32, 246-47, 255, 260; "Good Friends," 131, 132, 134; "Good Intent," 247, 260; "Halcyon," 253; "Hannah," 217, 219; "Hannibal," 262-63; "Hector," 107; "Hero," 216; "Hopewell," 49; "Horace" (1809), 152, (1811), 220; "Industry," 67; "Intercourse," 144; "Jermina and Fanny," 120; "John," 49, 210; "John Adams" (ship), 209, (frigate), 262, 271; "Joseph," 256; "Kingston," 42, 45; "La Minute No. 2," 216-18, 235; "Leopard," 109; "Light Horse," 43, 51; "Little Belt," 199; "Little John," 79; "Live Oak," 121; "Lucy," 77; "Mador," 104; "Malvina," 144; "Manhattan," 115; "Margaret," 120; "Mary," 134, 136, 138, 145, 146, 165, 172, 196; "Monticello," 239, 240, 241; "Neptune," 83; "North America," 127; "Orange," 235; "Pallas," 92; "Perseverance," 80; "Philadelphia Packet," 238; "President," 199; "Radius," 216; "Rattlesnake," 262; "Rover," 103; "Sally," 77; "Scourge," 262; "Sukey Ann," 273; "Susan," 102-6; "Suwarrow," 130-31, 133; "Swift," 258; "Thomas" (1809), 115-16, (1812), 258; "True Blooded Yankee," 262; "Two Friends," 115; "United States," 77; "Victory," 118, 203; "Vigilant," 49, 73; "Weltha Ann," 144; "William and Eliza," 253; "William Gray," 138; "William Gustave," 184; "Wolodimer," 47
 Short, William, 151
 Shreve, Benjamin, 138
 Siberia, 30, 51
 Smith, Edward James, and Co., 53, 55
 Smith, Richard S., 139, 142, 247-52, 273 n.
 Smith, William Steuben, 150
 Smuggling, 85-86, 109, 112 ff., 126, 144, 153, 163, 165, 174, 181, 183, 196 ff., 208, 212-14, 237-40, 257-58, 277
 Soap, 23, 28
 Spain, 7, 42, 201, 232
 Sparrow, Mr., 239-40
 Specie, 52
 Spermaceti, 47
 Speyer, John, 204-6, 234, 249
 Spices, 48
 Springfield, Mass., 22
 Stamford, Conn., 22
 Stedman, Captain, 120-21
 Stockholm, 204, 255
 Story, Charles, 253
 Stralsund, 163

- Stratford, Conn., 22
 Sugar; *see* Colonial goods
 Summers, Captain, 247, 250
 Sweden, 5, 16, 28, 31, 40, 44, 69 n., 84, 110, 117, 134-37, 140, 143, 163-65, 201, 204-6, 218, 233-35; *see also* Bernadotte, Gothenburg
 Swedish Pomerania, 163, 234

 Tallow, 23, 24, 28, 39 n., 53
 Tariffs, 20, 178, 210
 Tate, George, 82
 Tea, 32, 48
 Tenerife, 176-77
 Terragona, 231
 Thomas, John, 115, 116
 Thompson, Captain, 134
 Thiringk, Anto. Fr., 48
 Thorndike, Commodore, 77
 Thorndike, George, 130
 Tilsit, Treaty of, 101, 116, 202
 Timber, 31, 54, 85
 Tobacco, 4, 5, 6, 10, 18, 28
 Tobolsk, 32
 Todd, 164
 Tonningen, 128-29, 164
 Trafalgar, Battle of, 99, 118
 Treadwell, Mr., 263, 264
 Triangular trade, 6, 10, 41, 48-49, 58 ff., 74
 Tripoli, 96
 Tripolian War, 41
 Tropical goods; *see* Colonial goods
 Tucker, Captain, 256

 Ukraine, 10, 30, 31
 United States of America: and the Danish Sound, 7, 88; and Denmark, 44, 78, 120-21, 128 ff., 131-34, 155, 164, 165, 206-8, 216-17, 219-20, 235-36, 247, 254, 255, 259-60; and France, 72 ff., 143, 215-21, 233, 235, 236, 257, 267 ff.; embargo of 1807, 100, 110-11, 125, of 1812, 231; and Great Britain, 4, 46-47, 85-86, 100, 109, 112, 117, 125-26, 129, 137 ff., 144, 161, 162, 163, 165, 174, 198, 199-200, 208, 212, 217, 218, 237, 238-40, 243, 251-54, 256-59; Macon's Bill No. 2, 161-62, 198; Non-intercourse Act, 125, 161; and Russia, 3, 8 ff., 14-15, 24, 49-50, 56, 97-98, 122, 170-71, 179, 187-88, 215, 225, 264-66 (*see also* Russia); trade of, 46-47, 49-50, 73, 74-75, 91, 92, 93, 100, 160; *see also* Adams, John Quincy; Harris, Levett; Madison, James; Sweden; wars of 1812
 Ural Mountains, 28, 31

 Van Sander, 115, 153
 Vander, Peter, 115
 Viatka, 30
 Vienna, 221-23, 232, 237
 Virginia, 4
 Vishney Volotshok Canal, 33-34
 Volga River, 32, 33
 Volkhov River, 32
 Vologda, 30
 Vorontsov, Count, 79, 94

 War Hawks, 231, 255
 Ward, Thomas, 51, 92
 Wars of 1812, 243, 246, 252, 254, 255 ff., 270-71

 Ukase of May, 1809, 143-44
 Ukase of December, 1810, 187-89, 201, 210

Index

- Warsaw, 269
Washington, George, 9, 75
Watertown, Mass., 26 n.
Webster, Daniel, 16, 33
Wellman, Captain, 50
West Indies, 10-11, 48, 50, 58-59, 61, 73, 74, 110
Westphalia, 146
Wheatland, Captain, 80
White Sea, 37
Wilno, 267-68
Wingo Sound, 140, 200, 251
Woodward, Captain, 174
Woronsow; see Vorontsov
Worthy, Mr., 115
Yarmouth, 22
Yaroslav, 30
Yellow fever, 62
Zarnowiec, 269
Zealand, 103

(Continued from front flap)

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