PREFACE

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THE AMERICAN PURCHASE OF ALASKA AND CANADIAN EXPANSION TO THE PACIFIC

by

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ABSTRACT

In the national histories of both Canada and the United States the purchase of Alaska is most commonly represented as an interesting footnote to nineteenth century American expansion. But the purchase was an event of singular importance as it proved to be an impetus to Canadian expansion westward and a prelude to Great Britain's withdrawal from North America. In fact, the American purchase of Alaska was an important catalyst in the cumulative process of continental consolidation.

Significantly, the purchase coincided with the creation of the Dominion of Canada. The union of these British colonies was one large step towards the eventual formal retirement of Great Britain from the North American continent. Colonial union, a concept which appealed to the supremely rational Victorian mind, had been embraced as Imperial policy. Not until all British North America was united with Canada would the Mother Country recede.

The spectre of American expansion had haunted British North Americans for decades. Already stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the United States appeared to be consciously driving towards complete continental hegemony. The American Civil War had curbed expansion, but not necessarily the urge to expand, and the purchase of Alaska served to emphasize this fact. By surrounding British territory to the north and south, the purchase was perceived as a threat, or perhaps a challenge, to Canada and Great Britain.

The area in question was the British North American west. Many prominent Americans proudly proclaimed that the purchase of Alaska would hasten the annexation of British Columbia and Rupert's Land to the United States. But while the purchase was the source of great alarm in British North America, it produced a reaction which helped to prove American deductions false. Indeed, the purchase of Alaska generated great enthusiasm for and increased the momentum of Canadian expansion westward to the Pacific. It therefore helped to preserve the British North American west for Canada rather than destine it as American territory.

This study is divided into three chapters. Chapter one establishes the background to the Russian sale of the territory and examines the purchase itself. Chapter two explores the reaction to the purchase and its impact in the United States, Great Britain, Canada and British Columbia respectively. The third chapter attempts to assess the effect of the purchase of Alaska, especially upon Canadian expansion.

The thesis argues that by generating a sense of urgency to Anglo-Canadian plans of expansion, the American purchase facilitated the extension of Canada's boundaries to the Pacific coast of North America. The acquisition of Alaska by the United States greatly increased the fear that if Canada failed to gain control of the British North American west, the territory would fall to the United States by default. Canadian expansion to the Pacific was therefore consummated speedily, almost hastily, within four short years of Confederation.

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In the national histories of both Canada and the United States the purchase of Alaska is most commonly represented as an interesting footnote to nineteenth century American continental expansion. But the purchase was an event of singular importance as it proved to be an impetus to Canadian expansion westward and a prelude to Great Britain's withdrawal from North America. In fact, the American purchase of Alaska was an important catalyst in the cumulative process of continental consolidation.

When Russia decided to sell its North American territories to the United States in 1867 the gears were set in motion for an early settlement of the continent's political boundaries. American advocates of Manifest Destiny believed that the acquisition of Alaska was a further step in the eventual occupation of all of North America. What actually happened as a result of the purchase was a stimulation of the determined Anglo-Canadian policy of completing the union of British colonies from the Atlantic to the Pacific. By increasing the fear of American expansion into the British North American west the purchase of Alaska helped bring Canadian expansion to a swift and successful conclusion. Rather than hasten the realization of Manifest Destiny, the purchase helped to thwart it.

The questions to which this study addresses itself are manifold. What motives rested behind Russia's decision to sell Alaska and why did the United States purchase the territory?

What impact did the purchase of Alaska make in the United States? In Great Britain? In British North America? Did the purchase constitute a real threat to the planned union of all British North America? And finally, does a causal relationship exist between the American purchase of Alaska and Canadian expansion to the Pacific?

CHAPTER 1

THE AMERICAN PURCHASE OF ALASKA

Expansion was a keynote of American history throughout the nineteenth century. From a young fledgling country couched along the Atlantic seaboard of North America, the United States confidently grew into the dominant power in the New World and then emerged as a major power on an international level. During the crucial middle decades of the nineteenth century Manifest Destiny, a rather inexplicit dogma of American expansion, came to the fore. It suggested that the incorporation of all adjacent lands by the United States was virtually the inevitable fulfillment of a mission delegated to the nation by Providence. Perhaps it was inevitable that a young, rapidly growing, nation, with a great frontier to expand into, should come to define its national goals in external terms. For many Americans expansion across the continent not only seemed natural, but was declared to be a natural right.

During the 1840's, expansionist sentiment in the United States had reached its apogee. It was hardly a coincidence that the same decade also witnessed the extension of the American boundaries to the Pacific Ocean. Thus, one aspect of the American expansionist's dream had been satisfied; the United States had become a transcontinental nation. Partly an outgrowth of the great territorial enlargements of the 1840's, sectional conflicts soon came to dominate American affairs. These disputes only sharpened the latent division which existed between the North and South in the United States and were consequently a

contributing factor to the American Civil War. This great internal conflict could have only one effect upon the course of American expansion. But while the Civil War effectively curbed expansionism, it did not completely destroy the American dream of continental domain. Indeed, in the post-Civil War period several apostles of America's providential mission to expand were prominent in national affairs. But, despite this fact, expansionist sentiment never regained the large and seemingly wholehearted support it had enjoyed in an earlier era.

Undoubtedly, the complexities of Reconstruction politics and the great energies devoted to railway building and other economic enterprises during the "Great Barbecue" of the post-Civil War era diminished inducements to further territorial gain. The internal problems which beset the United States during this period were so great that the idea of expansion itself appeared aberrational. Nevertheless, it was against this backdrop that the American purchase of Alaska occurred in 1867.

Certainly, the purchase of Alaska from Russia proves to be a remarkable and somewhat anomalous event. There had been no popular quest in the United States for the acquisition of Russian America. Unlike Oregon, it had never achieved the distinction of becoming a national election campaign issue, and neither was its purchase preceded by an onrush of American frontiersmen into the region. Moreover, Alaska was not even contiguous to the United States. Therefore, the purchase of Alaska does not fit into established trends of American expansion. In essence, the purchase was a business transaction,

conducted secretly between two governments for different reasons.

The idea of selling Alaska[1] to the United States was first seriously considered during the Crimean War, 1854-1856. However, American interest in Alaska was evident even prior to those years. Suggestions of the possible transfer of Alaska to the United States can be traced back to the time of the Oregon boundary dispute.

In 1845, Robert J. Walker, Secretary of the Treasury in the Polk administration, had actively agitated for the acquisition of Alaska.[2] A year later, Walker claimed that Russia was willing to cede the territory to the United States provided that the entire Oregon territory was acquired from Great Britain.[3] There is little evidence to support Walker's assertion and in any event the settlement of the Oregon boundary in 1846 is testimony to the fact that Britain was not willing to surrender her position on the Pacific coast of North America. Yet intermittent American interest in the Russian colony persisted from that date onward. Apparently the early settlers of Washington territory were among the first to display an active interest in acquiring Alaska.[4] California fishing interests were also vocal in their support for the acquisition of the territory.[5]

But it seems clear that during these years Russia gave little or no serious consideration toward the cession of her North American territories to any power. While these territories were by no means a central branch of Russia's expanding empire, they were firmly established and there could have been little advantage to giving them up.

Earlier, Russia had been the first and most successful power to establish permanent bases on which to build a North Pacific empire.[6] Kodiak had become an established Russian base as early as 1788. Alexander Baranoff had established a settlement at Sitka in 1799. That same year, Baranoff became the first Governor of the Russian - American Company, which was formed to administer Russia's North American territories as the Hudson's Bay Company administered parts of British North America. Russian interests had penetrated as far south as Upper California where Fort Ross, a fur-trading and agricultural settlement was built in 1812.

However, the Russians eventually abandoned Fort Ross. A convention was signed with the British on February 28, 1825 which established the southern boundary of Alaska at 54 40'.[7] These terms were essentially the same as those agreed upon by the Russian-American Convention of 1824.[8] Thus, Russia's interests in North America became confined, and yet recognizeably established, within the approximate present-day boundaries of Alaska.

The event that was to change all of this and set the gears in motion which would foretell the ultimate fate of Alaska was the Crimean War. It was that conflict between the struggling "Old World" empires which brought about a change in Russia's attitude toward her "New World" possessions. Events stemming from the Crimean War also served to heighten American interest in Alaska and just as significantly, brought about a re-emphasis of Great Britain's desire to maintain a foothold on the Pacific

coast of North America. Britain was also concerned about the future of Alaska and it was the Crimean conflict which helped to illustrate that she was none too eager to see it slip into American hands.

Russia's role in the Crimean War brought about a change in the position of the Russian empire as a colonial power in the Pacific. Indeed, as one European historian has noted, the Crimean War was "rich in unintended consequences."[9] For Russia, one such consequence was the problem of retaining and administering Alaska as a colony.

The prospect of a direct conflict with Great Britain suggested to some Russians that Alaska was vulnerable. That Britain could have seized the colony in a war with Russia with relative ease, goes without saying. But the British government appeared to be aware that such an act would have been a potential source of future conflict with the United States.[10] Perhaps of more immediate importance, Britain's hands were tied. Both the Crimean War and the Taiping Rebellion, which had broken out in 1853, had kept Britain busy enough without the problem of making further military commitments in North America. In the light of these facts, it seems rather doubtful that Great Britain posed any real threat to Russia's North Pacific colony. But whether or not the fear which motivated Russia to pursue the course of actions which it did was real or imaginary is of little importance. The fact that a distinct threat was perceived on Russia's part, or at the least, considered to be within the realm of possibility, was what mattered.

Representatives of the Russian - American Company realized that the territories over which it governed were, in the event of a military assault, almost completely indefensible.[11] The fortifications of the chief posts of Alaska had been built to withstand possible Indian attack only; they would have been of little defensive purpose in the event of an attack by a "civilized" power. Russia, because of heavy military commitments elsewhere, was unable to provide any real defense for her North American possessions. It was clear then that other means would have to be relied upon to safeguard Alaska.

On January 14, 1854, when the first news was received in St. Petersburg of the appearance of the Allied fleet in the Black Sea, the Governing Board of the Russian - American Company submitted to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the draft of a plan of action intended to assure the security of Alaska.[12] What the Company proposed was the negotiation of a neutrality pact between the two great trading monopolies which shared the Northwest quarter of the North American continent. The pact was to specify that in the event of a major European war, the territories administered by both the Russian - American Company and the Hudson's Bay Company would be declared neutral. Both companies traded with each other extensively, leased land from each other and understood each others' problems. Indeed, an agreement had been entered into by both companies earlier, in 1839, which formed the basis of an understanding which lasted until 1867.[13]

The Russian Foreign Ministry accepted the Russian - American

Company's plan and, as war seemed a certainty, arrangements were made for representatives of both companies to meet in London "to consult on the exigencies of the case."[14] Apparently some Russians, particularly agents of the Russian - American Company, did not believe in the possibility of such an agreement with the British.[15] Since the negotiations for neutrality in London were conducted under conditions of great secrecy, little was known of their chances of success. Before any definite arrangements could have been agreed upon, an alternate plan to save Alaska had been devised by officials of the Russian fur trading monopoly.

P.S. Kostromitinov, an agent of the Russian - American Company and also Russian Vice - Consul in California, had come into possession of information which suggested that the British were taking steps to seize Alaska.[16] After conferring with the Russian Ambassador to the United States, Edouard de Stoeckl, Kostromitinov quickly set about drafting the text of a fictitious agreement which provided for the transfer of Alaska to an American company. It was believed that the announcement of such a transfer would completely deter any designs which the British may have had on Alaska.

On January 30, 1854, the proposed bill of sale, with blank spaces for dates and other details, was sent to Stoeckl for his approval. The Russian Ambassador consulted William L. Marcy, Secretary of State in the Buchanan administration, and Senator William McKendree Gwin of California, about the matter. Both men advised Stoeckl not to carry through with the scheme. They

believed that the British would see through it.[17] Stoeckl wrote the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, A.D. Gorchakov, after consulting with the American officials, that: "In spite of their willingness to protect our colonies and their genuine interest in them, they regard it as impossible to prove to the English that the contract is not fictitious ..."[18]

The advice which Stoeckl received from Marcy and Gwin was construed as an unequivocal intimation by the Americans that the best course for Russia to pursue would be that of an outright sale of Alaska to the United States.[19] Certainly, American interest in Alaska, however sporadic, had never completely dissipated and the talk of even a fictitious sale had greatly increased American attention toward Russia's colony.

By the summer of 1854, rumours of a proposed sale of Alaska to the United States abounded in the American press.[20] The Baltimore American, for instance, believed that Russia would sell its North Pacific colony in order to forestall seizure by the British.[21] On the other side of the Atlantic, the British press suggested that such a transfer may have already secretly taken place.[22] The Gentleman's Magazine of London reported that:

> a treaty has been concluded between the United States and Russia, the effect of which will, it is said, be the purchase by the former of the Russian possessions in America.[23]

But the negotiations between the Russian - American and Hudson's Bay companies had met with success in London. Both companies had agreed to the neutralization of their respective territories in North America in the event of European hostilities and requested their governments to recognize their under-

standing. The British government accepted the agreement, but its Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Hudson's Bay Company that the neutrality pact would not be extended to cover Russian ships at sea and that the coast and ports of Alaska might still be subjected to blockade.[24] This was the only stipulation demanded and the British government sanctioned the neutrality pact, March 22, 1854. The Russian government was only too happy to accept the agreement and officially became party to the pact, March 31, 1854, soon after war had been declared.

Russian Ambassador Stoeckl wrote to Foreign Minister Gorchakov shortly after the pact was signed. He observed that neutrality was "entirely to our benefit, since we are not in a position to attack the English possessions, whereas the English would have been able to seize ours."[25] Certainly, this was very close to the truth. Despite the fact that the Taiping Rebellion had diverted most of the British fleet to Chinese waters, Britain could have caused Russia great embarrassment in Alaska. But throughout the war, Britain adhered strictly to the neutrality pact and never even utilized the privilege she had retained of seizing Russian ships at sea; nor were any ports of the Russian colony blockaded.

It is doubtful that the British, in signing the neutrality pact, were motivated by a fear of a Russian assault upon Hudson's Bay Company territories. At first glance, British policy does not appear comprehensible. The perceptive Russian minister Stoeckl, however, was quick to make sense of it. He wrote to Gorchakov that:

> this act of affability, which is so little in harmony with English egotism had a secret reason behind it. A rumour was gaining currency at the time that we were preparing to sell our colonies to the United States; and it was in order to block such a sale that the British government gave its approval to the agreement between the two Companies.[26]

The British government had been willing to agree to neutralization in order to avoid forcing Russia to part with Alaska by ceding it to the United States. Such a transfer would have obviously not been to the advantage of the British. The Hudson's Bay Company administered the territory between Alaska and the United States. For its strategic value, if nothing else, the British felt it was worth holding on to. Furthermore, during the Crimean War Britain had established a naval base at Esquimalt on Vancouver Island, a British colony since 1849.[27] The possible threat of a Russian - American alliance seemed to have prompted the British to take steps to preserve their interests on the Pacific coast of North America. Perhaps the rumoured sale of Alaska to the United States had encouraged the British to take such defensive measures. Apparently, throughout the Crimean War, the British Ambassador at Washington had made repeated attempts to find out whether the sale of the Russian colony had been discussed.[28]

That Britain was none too eager to engage in a conflict which would have aided the United States in acquiring Alaska is quite clear. It was largely because of this then, that Britain

was willing to respect the agreement of neutrality. But this is not to imply that the British did not have second thoughts about their decision. In excluding Alaska as a possible object of war, the British government may have acted too hastily. Lord Palmerston, at the British Home Office, recognized this, only too late. The possibility of a Russian - American alliance had prompted him to write the British Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Clarendon, in August 1854, that the "nominal possession" of Alaska might "forestall the bargain between Nicholas and the Yankees".[29] There was even some talk in Canada of the desireability of seizing Alaska during the Crimean War. At least one imperially-minded Canadian, A.R. Roche, favoured the seizure of the territory as a valuable addition to British North America both strategically and commercially.[30] But these were mere afterthoughts. The British government had become party to the neutrality pact and faithfully lived up to its obligations.

There was of course no "Bargain between Nicholas and the Yankees." But the idea which emerged during the Crimean War of a possible sale of Alaska to the United States was not without ultimate consequences. In fact, it prepared the way for the eventual consummation of the sale of Alaska to the United States in particular, as opposed to any other power, especially Great Britain, Russia's rival. The North Pacific had been far from a major theatre of war during the Crimean conflict, but for both British and Russian possessions there the war posed difficult problems. Britain responded by re-emphasizing the fact that it intended to maintain its foothold on the West coast of North

America. For Russia, however, the problem of administering and retaining Alaska had come to a head and its future was by no means certain.

Russian losses during the Crimean War had been great. Throughout the war, Russia's naval power had been almost hopelessly overpowered by the allied fleet. Russia's defeat in the war, however, was attributed to more than mere military factors. The outmoded conditions of Russia's social system and political structure and the backwardness of her economy were all blamed. The Crimean War thus came to be an important turning point in Russia's national and foreign affairs and culminated in the reforms of the new Czar, Alexander II.[31]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, it had become clear that Russia had decided upon a policy of consolidating its interests on the Asian mainland.[32] Immediately prior to the Crimean War, Russia had gained control of the Amur River, an important waterway leading Eastward from Siberia to the Sea of Japan. A dominant motive for Russian expansion Eastward appeared to be fear of British aggrandizement in the Pacific, especially in Asia.[33] General Nikolai Muraviev, an influential Russian statesman, was greatly suspicious of British intentions. He believed that in order to check British aims at dominance in the Pacific, a Russian - American alliance would be useful.[34] Even prior to the outbreak of the Crimean War, Muraviev had been in favour of disposing of Alaska and concentrating on expansion in Asia. The sale of Alaska to the United States would be one way to strengthen a possible alliance.

Interestingly, Muraviev, and other Russian statesmen, believed in the United States' self-proclaimed "Manifest Destiny" to rule over the whole North American continent. In 1853 Muraviev wrote to the Czar:

> the ultimate rule of the United States over the whole of North America is so natural ... that we must ourselves sooner or later recede - but we must recede peacefully, in return for which we might receive other advantages from the Americans.[35]

What were these "other advantages" which Muraviev referred to? In all likelihood he was alluding to a possible Russian - American alliance against Britain in the Pacific. He concluded his letter to the Czar by stating that:

> Due to the present amazing development of railroads, the United States will soon spread over all of North America. We must face the fact that we will have to cede our North American possessions to them.[36]

The Crimean War had brought to the fore the question of retaining Alaska. Consequently, many Russians in governmental circles began to lean towards the views of Muraviev. Immediately upon the end of the war, the Grand Duke Constantine, brother of Czar Alexander II, wrote to the Russian Minister of Finance: "In the event of a war with a naval power we are not in a position to defend our colonies."[37] The term "naval power" applied, quite obviously, to Great Britain. At the same time, Constantine wrote to his Foreign Minister, Gorchakov:

> The United States of North America sic should in the natural course of events be eager to conquer all of North America, and will therefore

> meet us there sooner or later, and there is not the slightest doubt that it will seize our colonies without great effort, and we shall be in no position to retain them.[38]

Constantine therefore proposed that Alaska be sold to the United States in order to avoid any future conflicts in America. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, while agreeing in principle to the liquidation of Alaska as a Russian colony, was hesitant on the matter. Gorchakov insisted on postponing any final decision until the franchise of the Russian - American Company expired, January 1, 1862.[39]

In the meantime, Constantine continued to urge the transfer of Alaska to the United States. In 1857, he wrote his brother the Czar:

> We must not deceive ourselves. We must foresee that the United States, aiming constantly to round out their possessions and desiring to dominate undividedly the whole of North America, will take the aforementioned colony (Alaska) from us and we shall not be able to retain it.[40]

It has also been noted that Edouard de Stoeckl, Russian Minister at Washington, was also a "complete believer in America's Manifest Destiny."[41] In fact, several leading Russian statesmen of this period were willing to accept the American claim to hegemony in North America. The reason for this is quite clear. Russia's Asian interests had been greatly increased with its advance down the Amur Valley. Many Russians began to agree with Muraviev and Constantine that a retreat from their

North American commitments would be in order. Also, by ceding Alaska to the United States, it was felt that British power in the Pacific would be weakened. At the least, an American Alaska would be a thorn in the British side, since it would allow American territory to surround the British on the Pacific. It would thus be a potential source of future Anglo - American conflict.

Stoeckl, for instance, while critical of American aquisitiveness, was unshaken in his policy of fanning the flames of hatred between Great Britain and the United States.[42] Stoeckl took his cue from Muraviev and persistently agitated for the transfer of Alaska to the United States. In 1859, he gleefully reported to Gorchakov that such a transfer would "displease Britain to the last degree."[43] For some Russians, that in itself may have been enough to justify the sale of Alaska to the United States.

Opinion in Russia, however, was far from unanimous on the subject.[44] Gorchakov replied to Stoeckl in 1860 less than enthusiastically: "I personally am not in the least convinced that it would be of advantage to Russia to surrender these communities."[45] Russian - American Company interests, in particular, argued against the cession of Alaska to any power. Dmitri Petrovich Maksutov, the last Russian Governor of Alaska, defended the colony as having a great future for Russia.[46] As early as 1858 the Russian - American Company had applied for a renewal of its charter which was to expire in 1862. But the Company was already in debt to the Russian Treasury[47] and the tide of events were not to prove in its favour.

A new fear soon came to pressure the Russian government to make a decision regarding Alaska. Russia's North American colony could have been lost in the event of war - this was recognized. But that it could have been lost through peaceful penetration was also a possibility. Nineteenth century history has more than one illustration of this form of imperialism.

In 1857, Stoeckl heard of rumours that a group of Mormons, led by Brigham Young, planned to move northward and settle in Alaska.[48] In great alarm he sought an interview with President Buchanan to ascertain the truth of these reports. In a despatch to St. Petersburg, Stoeckl noted his conversation with Buchanan:

> The President smilingly alluded to such a possibility. I asked him whether the Mormons were coming as conquerours or as peaceful citizens. "You" he said, "will have to answer that question, as for us, we shall be mighty glad to be rid of them.[49]

While Stoeckl noted that the chance of a Mormon migration to Alaska constituted no immediate danger, he suggested that in the case of such an event Russia would be faced with the alternative of either armed resistance or of ceding part of its territory.[50] Czar Alexander II, when he read Stoeckl's report noted: "This confirms the idea of settling right now the question of our American possessions."[51]

The idea of peaceful penetration, economic or otherwise, therefore, constituted a possible threat to Russia's colony. But, seen in a broader context, it was primarily external factors which helped to decide Alaska's fate. The Crimean War had

aptly demonstrated the military weakness which Alaska represented. Its neutralization during that war had prevented any possible military embarrassments. But if Great Britain and Russia were to battle again the situation could have been far less agreeable for the Russians. And another war with Britain was far from an impossibility. Already the long period of Anglo - Russian rivalry in Asia had begun.[54] The British, in fact, were already seeking to halt Russia's Asian advances and both Britain and France threatened to intervene in Russian - held Poland, where an internal rebellion was fulminating.[55] Therefore, Russia had good reason to rid itself of Alaska, a colony which was already an encumberance and could have become the cause of an unnecessary crisis.

Toward the end of 1857, Gorchakov instructed Stoeckl to approach American officials in Washington in such a way as to subtly make them understand that Russia would be willing to discuss the possible sale of Alaska.[56] Stoeckl began work at this slowly and cautiously. The Russian Ambassador, as well as government officials in St. Petersburg, realized the significance of such a move. Russia, during this period, sought friends in world affairs and an alliance with the Americans figured well in the Russian "Weltpolitik".[57]

From the beginning, Russian diplomats had little doubt that the transfer of Alaska to the United States was a direct challenge to Great Britain.[58] Stoeckl understood this. In a report to St. Petersburg in 1859 he stated reassuringly that: "the plan for the cession of our colonies, if it should be re-

alized, has been worrying the British government to the highest degree."[59] There was no lack of grounds for Stoeckl's remark. The United States' "surge to the Pacific" had been a serious blow to Britain's influence on the west coast of North America. Furthermore, British efforts to intensify colonization of Vancouver Island had met with little success. Stoeckl wrote that:

> if the United States should win mastery of our possessions then British Oregon (Columbia) would be squeezed together by the Americans from the north and south and would hardly be able to escape agressive attempts on their part.[60]

Russia's aim to undermine British power in the Pacific was undoubtedly one of the prime motives behind her desire to cede Alaska to the United States. If it was solely economic motives which guided Russian policy, it seems clear that Alaska would never had been transferred to any power, for Russia's colony had been proven to be rich in mineral wealth. Obviously political and strategic considerations were of foremost importance.

By 1859, the negotiations for the sale of Alaska passed from the stage of generalities into the realm of concrete proposals. But the administration in Washington found it difficult to commit itself. Several prominent Americans were actively lobbying for the immediate consummation of the transfer,[61] but the sharpening contradictions between the Northern and Southern states and the upcoming Presidential elections forced a postponement of any immediate negotiations. "Everything depends on the coming presidential elections which will take place in

November" wrote Stoeckl early in 1860.[62]

In November, Abraham Lincoln was elected President and almost immediately the United States became involved in a Civil War. Any plans concerning Alaska were now delayed indefinitely and the matter was postponed for a more opportune moment. For Russia, such a moment would hopefully arise within a couple of years when the Russian - American Company's charter expired, January 1, 1862.[63] However, the American belligerents did not allow the Russian plan to work out quite so appropriately, as the Civil War dragged on until 1865.

Russia, however, was concerned about the outcome of the American Civil War for greater reasons than the settlement of Alaska's fate. Indeed, a united America figured large in Russia's plans, especially as an ally in world affairs and particularly as a counter-balance to British power in the Pacific. At the beginning of the conflict between the American North and South, Stoeckl wrote to Gorchakov:

> The disintegration of the United States as a nation would from our point of view, be something to be deplored. The American confederation has acted as a counterpoise to British power, and, in this sense, its continued existence constitutes an important element in the balance of power.[64]

Gorchakov, in a conversation with a representative of the United States in 1862, agreed with the idea expressed earlier by Stoeckl. He laid particular stress upon the fact that Russia wanted, above everything else, "the preservation of the American union as an indivisible nation."[65]

But as far as Alaska was concerned, the immediate problem facing the Russian government was what action to take regarding the Russian - American Company. The Russian government had no intention of renewing the Company's charter. A decision regarding Alaska's fate had been made - as soon as possible that territory would be transferred to the United States. However, the Russian government desired to keep this decision a secret. In order to cloak the postponed negotiations with the United States, the government pretended to be studying a possible new charter for the Russian - American Company. Consequently the Company's old charter was extended indefinitely by Imperial decree.[66]

In the meantime, officials of the Russian - American Company were well aware that the Company was in a weak position. It was in debt to the Russian Treasury to the amount of 725,000 rubles and depended upon annual state subsidies of at least 200,000 rubles.[67] In order to instill some new life into the company it was felt that a long-term loan was needed. The Russian government refused a request for such a loan. It would have made little sense to attempt to resucitate a company facing liquidation.

But, in spite of the Company's difficult financial situation, the London Stock - Exchange was more than willing to grant it a loan. There was, in fact, good reason for such an offer. The decline in the political importance of Alaska for the Russian empire and further rumours of Russia's growing inclination to sell the colony to the United States prompted the British

government, acting through British financial circles, to come to the aid of the Russian - American Company.[68] Obviously, the British would have preferred a Russian company under their own financial dominance as a neighbour on the Pacific to the agressive and rapidly encroaching Americans.

If the loan was to be accepted, the British wanted to have a definite guarantee that the Russian - American Company's franchise was to be renewed and that consequently, Alaska would not be sold to the United States.[69] The London Stock - Exchange further demanded that the loan be guaranteed by both the Czar and the Russian Minister of Finance.[70] Certainly, this could be construed as evidence that the British were still very concerned about the future of Alaska. But the British offer never had any chance of success, as the Russian government was determined in favour of a deal with the United States at the earliest possible moment.

Obviously, negotiations with the United States could not have been resumed before the end of the Civil War. But even during the hostilities, some Americans did not lose sight of Alaska. Robert J. Walker, who had urged for the transfer of Alaska to the United States almost twenty years earlier, was in St. Petersburg as an American financial agent during the Civil War. While there, he reminded American Ambassador to Russia, Cassius M. Clay, of the still unfinished business and urged him to reopen negotiations at the earliest opportunity.[71]

William H. Seward, American Secretary of State in the Lincoln administration had also kept one eye fixed upon Russia's North American colony. In a confidential letter written to

American Ambassador Clay, December 26, 1864, Seward referred to the Grand Duke Constantine, one of the earliest and foremost Russian protagonists of a cession of Alaska to the United States. Seward asked Clay to invite Constantine to spend a few months in the United States. He added that: "I think it would be beneficial to us, and by no means unprofitable to Russia, I forebear from specifying my reasons. They will readily occur to you, as they would to His Imperial Highness if his thoughts were turned in that direction."[72] This invitation was forwarded to Constantine, but the Grand Duke had only just been appointed President of the Council of the Empire and because of official duties and previous commitments he was forced to decline Seward's hospitality.[73]

In the spring of 1865, the American Civil War, one of the bloodiest of all modern conflicts, came to an end. The victory of the North had preserved the unity of the United States, but the price paid was an expensive one. The United States now faced a long period of painful reconstruction. At the close of hostilities, on April 14, 1865, President Lincoln had been assassinated and his Vice-President, Andrew Johnson, succeeded him in office. The Johnson administration, in addition to being faced with the cumbersome problems of the post - war period, inherited much unfinished business from the pre - war era. The question of Alaska was one such item and surprisingly, shortly after the war negotiations for its purchase were resumed.

The American Civil War, in fact, had served to facilitate the transfer of Alaska to the United States because it greatly

increased the cordiality of Russian - American relations.[74] At first glance it was a friendship which appeared puzzling. The differences between the two countries were great. The United States was the most democratic and republican of the New World nations while Russia was the most autocratic of the Old. But many general similarities between the two countries existed. Both countries controlled huge, self - sufficient areas; both were expanding powers; both had almost simultaneously freed millions of subject peoples,[75] the list of such similarities is extraordinarily long.[76] But interesting as they are, these similarities are only superficial parallels and do not provide an explanation for the friendship which had developed between Russia and the United States. More important was the fact that there was an almost complete absence of conflict between the two countries during the nineteenth century. "The Russian and American people have no injuries to forget or remember," declared Alexander II in 1866.[77]

Of course, there are other factors which help to explain the cordiality between the two countries which characterized their relations during this period. On one occasion during the Civil War the Russian fleet visited the harbours of both New York and San Francisco. The Northerners construed this as a sign of friendship on the part of the Russians. It was believed that Russia was willing to aid the North in the event of possible intervention by any European powers in the Civil War. This greatly increased feelings of amity between the two countries.

It was not until 1915, in fact, that the American people

learned of the real reason for the Russian fleet's sudden appearance in American ports in the autumn of 1863. The truth was that the Russian squadrons were hiding from the vastly superior British and French fleets in neutral American harbours. The whole incident arose out of Russia's problems with Poland in Eastern Europe.[78] Nevertheless, at the time of the unexpected visit the United States almost unanimously echoed Gideon Welles fervent "God Bless the Russians."[79]

One final reason which should be advanced to explain the development of Russian - American friendship was the fact that the United States, like Russia, had been repeatedly thwarted and irritated by the actions of Great Britain. During the Civil War several incidents occurred which increased American bitterness toward Britain. This served to strengthen any possible alliance between Russia and the United States. Common enemies sometimes serve to make uncommon friends.

At the conclusion of the Civil War, Russia began to earnestly promote the sale of Alaska to the United States. In the autumn of 1866, Stoeckl was recalled to St. Petersburg.[80] At a meeting December 16, 1866, attended by the Czar, his brother, Grand Duke Constantine, plus the Ministers of Marine, Finance and Foreign Affairs, Stoeckl received orders to return to the United States and begin negotiations for the sale of Alaska.[81] His instructions were few, except that he was ordered under no conditions to accept less than five million dollars as a purchase price.[82]

Stoeckl arrived at New York in February, 1867, but a slight

illness prevented him from going to Washington until the following month.[83] He arrived in the American Capital about March 8,[84] and without a delay went to the State Department to visit William H. Seward, who had retained his position of Secretary of State in the Johnson administration.

Unfortunately, little is known of the actual negotiations of the Alaska Purchase Treaty. Seward left behind practically nothing in the nature of documentary information and the little that is known has been pieced together from Stoeckl's infrequent despatches to St. Petersburg.[85] Seward seemed to take pride in this paucity of documentation. He later wrote that:

> Probably this treaty stands alone in the history of diplomacy, as an important treaty conceived, initiated, prosecuted and completed, without being preceded or attended by protocols or despatches.[86]

The Seward - Stoeckl negotiations were conducted under conditions of great secrecy. The treaty was drawn up between March 10 and March 14, 1867.[87] The purchase price agreed upon was $7,200,000; substantially more than the Russians had expected, but a figure which still came to a total purchase price of less than two cents per acre.[88] All that remained was for the two diplomats to receive the authority from their respective governments, and the document could be signed.

On the evening of March 29, Seward was at home playing whist with his family when Stoeckl arrived to notify the American Secretary of State that he had just received approval of the treaty from St. Petersburg. Stoeckl suggested that they meet the next day to conclude the transaction. But Seward enthusias-

tically pushed away the whist table saying: "Why wait till tomorrow, Mr. Stoeckl? Let us make the treaty tonight."[89] Seward could not allow the matter to rest until the next day, for he feared that the current session of Congress would adjourn at any time and he wished to secure the Senate's ratification of the treaty at once.

Stoeckl could not believe that Seward was serious about concluding the treaty that evening, for it was already late. "But your department is closed." said the Russian Minister. "You have no clerks, and my secretaries are scattered about the town." "Never mind that," responded Seward. "If you can muster your legation together before midnight, you will find me waiting at the Department which will be open and ready for business."[90]

Seward had already received the approval of President Johnson and the Cabinet, therefore he had the authority to take such actions. Charles Sumner, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations was sent for and at midnight the little company met at the State Department where they remained until the early hours of the morning placing the finishing touches on the Alaska Purchase Treaty. The sun was rising when the treaty was finally signed by the respective plenipotentiaries and despite the fact that it would still require consent by the American Senate, the fact that all preliminaries were out of the way must have been a great source of satisfaction for both William H. Seward and Edouard de Stoeckl.

NOTES

1. The term "Alaska" was not used in reference to the Russian territory until 1867, when it became the official name of the new American possession; it will be used here to avoid confusion. Prior to 1867, it was most commonly referred to as Russian America.

2. - Congressional Globe - 40th Congress, 3rd Session, House Report #35, p. 12.
- Apparently Walker had written to President Polk on the subject of Alaska, listing in detail the possible advantages of acquiring the Russian territory. See: J.H. Donaldson, "A Politician of Expansion: Robert J. Walker" Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. 19. p. 370.

3. F.R. Dulles, America in the Pacific (2nd Ed.) N.Y. DaCapo Press, 1969 - pp. 83-84 (first published, 1932).

4. H.H. Bancroft, History of Alaska. N.Y. Antiquarian Press, 1959 - p. 592. (first published, 1886).

5. Ibid.

6. R.W. Van Alstyne, "International Rivalries in the Pacific Northwest" Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. XLVI, Sept. 1945, p. 194.

7. J.S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821 - 1869, L.A., Univ. of Cal. Press, 1957, p. 134.

8. Ibid.

9. D. Thomson. Europe Since Napoleon N.Y., Alfred A. Knopf., 1971, (first published, 1957), p. 227.

10. A.G. Mazour, "The Prelude to Russia's Departure from America" Pacific Historical Review, Vol. 10, 1941, p. 318.

11. S.B. Okun The Russian - American Company (translated from the Russian by C. Ginsberg) Cambridge Maws., Howard Univ. Press: 1951, pp. 234-235.

12. Ibid.

13. D.C. Davidson, "Relations of the Hudson's Bay Company with the Russian - American Company on the Northwest Coast, 1829 - 1867" British Columbia Historical Quarterly, Vol. 5, Jan. 1941, pp. 33-51.

14. H.H. Bancroft, History of Alaska, p. 570.

15. S.B. Okun The Russian - American Company, pp. 230-236.

16. Ibid.

17. H.M. McPherson - "The Interest of William McKendree Gwin in the Purchase of Alaska, 1854 - 1860", Pacific Historical Review, Vol. 3, 1934, p. 30.

18. S.B. Okun, The Russian - American Company, p. 240.

19. Ibid.

20. egs. N.Y. Herald - July 20, 1854 and July 25, 1954.

21. See: P.M. Buzanski, "Alaska and Nineteenth Century American Diplomacy" Journal of the West, Vol. 6, July, 1967 pp. 451-452.

22. egs. London Times - August 8, 1854.

23. The Gentleman's Magazine, September, 1854, Vol. XLII, p. 289.

24. C.C. Hulley, Alaska, 1741 - 1953, Portland, Oregon, Binfords & Mort, 1953, pp. 193-195.

25. A.G. Mazour, "Prelude to Russia's Departure ..." pp. 317-318.

26. quoted from: S.B. Okun, The Russian - American Company, p. 241.

27. B.M. Gough, The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810 - 1914. Vancouver, U.B.C. Press 1971, p. 108.

28. S.B. Okun, The Russian - American Company, p. 241.

29. - Lord Palmerston (H.O.) to Lord Clarendon (F.O.) August 29, 1854
- quoted from B. Gough - The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast, p. 111.

30. A.R. Roche, A View of Russian America in Connection with the Present War, Montreal, 1855.

31. Czar Nicholas I, Alexander II's father, died during the Crimean War.

32. A.G. Mazour, "Prelude to Russia's Departure ..." p. 311.

33. F.A. Golder, Russian Expansion in the Pacific, 1641-1850, Cleveland, Arthur H. Clark, Co. 1914, pp. 263-264.

34. Ibid.

35. quoted from H.M. McPherson, "The Interest of William McKendree Gwin ..." p. 30.

36. Ibid.

37. quoted from S.B. Okun, The Russian - American Company, p. 242.

38. Ibid. pp. 242-243.

39. Ibid.

40. quoted from: H. Chevigny, Russian America - The Great Alaskan Venture 1741 - 1867, N.Y. Viking Press, 1965 p. 234.

41. F.A. Golder, "The Purchase of Alaska" Pacific Historical Review, Vol. 25, 1940, p. 413.

42. M.M. Laserson, The American Impact on Russia - Diplomatic and Ideological, 1784 - 1917, N.Y. Macmillan, 1950, p. 169.

43. quoted from: H.M. McPherson, "The Interest of William McKendree Gwin ..." p. 37.

44. H. Miller "Russian Opinion on the Cession of Alaska" American Historical Review, Vol. XLVIII, April 1943, p. 522.

45. quoted from: M. Sutty & J. Vavra "Russian America and Russo - American Relations in the 18th and 19th Centuries" paper delivered at XLV International Congress of Historical Sciences, San Francisco, Aug. 22 - 29, 1975, p. 12.

46. R.A. Pierce, "Prince D.P. Maksutov: Last Governor of Russian America", Journal of the West, Vol. XL, July 1967, p. 40.

47. S.B. Okun, The Russian - American Company, p. 250.

48. B.P. Thomas, Russian - American Relations 1815 - 1867 N.Y., DaCapo Press, 1970, p. 144.

49. quoted from: S.B. Okun, p. 244.

50. Ibid.

51. A.G. Mazour "Prelude to Russia's Departure ..." p. 317.

52. F.A. Golder "Mining in Alaska before 1867" Washington Historical Quarterly, Vol. VII, 1916, pp. 233-38.

53. A.G. Mazour, p. 317.

54. H.H. Bancroft, History of Alaska, pp. 590-591.

55. C.C. Hulley, Alaska 1941 - 1953, p. 197.

56. A.G. Mazour, p. 317.

57. Ibid., p. 319.

58. S.B. Okun, p. 251.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., p. 251-252.

61. H.M. McPherson, "The Interest of William McKendree Gwin ..." pp. 37-38.

62. S.B. Okun, p. 259.

63. Ibid.

64. quoted from Ibid, pp. 259-260.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., p. 253.

67. A.G. Mazour, p. 316.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. B.P. Thomas Russian - American Relations, 1815 - 1867, p. 148.

72. quoted from: Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., pp. 122-142.

75. In 1861, Czar Alexander II introduced the greatest of his reforms - the Emancipation of the Serfs. On January 1, 1863, Lincoln had emancipated all black slaves in the United States.

76. See - C.C. Hulley, Alaska 1741 - 1953, p. 199.

77, Quoted in: Ibid.

78. F.A. Golder, "The Russian Fleet and the Civil War." American Historical Review, Vol. 20, pp. 807-808.

79. B.P. Thomas, Russian - American Relations, p. 138.

80. V.J. Farrar, The Annexation of Russian - America to the United States, N.Y. Russell and Russell, 1937, p. 34.

81. P.M. Buzanski, "Alaska and Nineteenth Century American Diplomacy", p. 452.

82. F.A. Golder, "The Purchase of Alaska", p. 419.

83. Ibid.

84. V.J. Farrar, The Annexation of Russian - America to the United States, p. 34.

85. Ibid., p. 25.

86. Congressional Globe, 40 the Cong. 2nd Sess. 1339. H. Ex Doc. #177, p. 3.

87. The treaty in its complete form is published in various secondary sources. egs. V.J. Farrar The Annexation of Russian - America to the United States, Appendix 1, pp. 123-129.

88. W.H. Depperman, "Two Cents an Acre", North American Review, Vol. 25, March 1932, pp. 126-133.

89. The event is recounted by Seward's son, Frederick, who served as Assistant Secretary of State with his father. F.W. Seward, Reminiscences of a Wartime Statesman and Diplomat 1830 - 1915, N.Y. G.P. Putnam, 1916, pp. 361-363.

90. Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

REACTION TO THE AMERICAN PURCHASE OF ALASKA

A. The United States

Without the concerted efforts of one individual, William H. Seward, it is doubtful that the negotiations for the purchase of Alaska would have come to a successful conclusion. Working tirelessly, Seward devoted amazing energy towards the passage of the Alaska Purchase Treaty. He also helped to shape the American public reaction to the purchase by initiating an incredible "educational" campaign which favourably publicized the treaty. In a sense, the American purchase of Alaska was almost the single handed achievement of the enterprising American Secretary of State. Because his role was so central to the events surrounding the purchase, it is essential to gain an understanding of why Seward grasped so enthusiastically at Russia's offer to cede Alaska to the United States. It is equally important to determine what significance Seward believed the purchase held.

Seward was one of the central figures in American expansion in the nineteenth century and the purchase of Alaska was, in one sense, the culmination of his career. Throughout that career he had spoken and written extensively on the role of the United States in world affairs. He had long had a great interest in what he referred to as the "destiny of America", by which he meant its inevitable rise to the front rank of world powers.[1] By the time he became Secretary of State in 1861, Seward had produced

a large body of opinions and ideas on American empire. During the period of his secretaryship he attempted to implement some of these ideas. Alaska was the only territorial enlargement achieved during Seward's secretaryship, but his tenure in office was of great significance. It was during this period that the foundations of a "New Empire" were established in the United States.[2] Seward and his broad vision of American empire which he carried into office with him were largely responsible for this.

Seward is most commonly represented as a one-dimensional man; as an expansionist of "undiscriminating voracity."[3] The American purchase of Alaska has been explained as a consequence of his "insatiable passion for territorial expansion"[4] or alternatively as a result of his "megalomania of expansionism."[5] Perhaps it is natural that Seward has been depicted in this light. After all, throughout his career he spoke of territorial aggrandizement, and his public statements were usually impressively couched in the elaborate phraseology of his era. For example, in 1853 at Columbus Ohio, Seward looked in the direction of the United States future and predicted that:

> The borders of the federal republic shall be extended so that it shall greet the sun when he sends his gleaming rays towards the polar circle and shall include even distant islands in either ocean ... all mankind shall come to recognize in us the successor of the few great states that have alternately borne commanding sway in the world.[6]

This is only one of dozens of references which could be, and have been, cited to illustrate the commonly held view that

Seward was obsessed with "expansion for expansion's sake." But more often than not, his speeches and public statements were tailored to suit a certain mood or particular audience and they do not accurately reflect what motivated or inspired the policies he pursued while Secretary of State.

If one looks beyond rhetoric, it becomes evident that Seward was not looking in the direction of limitless expansion. On the contrary, his policies were based upon well-planned and deliberate measures with specific goals.[7] If anything, they demonstrated that Seward possessed a keen insight into the basis of real empire, for he viewed expansion not only as territorial gain, but also in terms of the extension of influence economically and politically. In this sense, Seward's claim to greatness lies in the fact that he helped lay the foundation of American foreign policy in the century which followed him.

Of course, territorial acquisition did play some part in Seward's conception of a developing American empire. But he would never have laboured to acquire just any territory; expansion for Seward was a highly selective process and served a higher purpose than mere land-grabbing. For Seward's idea of empire, the kinds of territory and their geographical location were of prime importance, and it is in this regard that the American purchase of Alaska can be understood.

Seward's interest in Alaska was not sudden. As early as 1852, while serving in the United States Senate, he had introduced a bill to provide for a naval survey of the north Pacific and the Bering Strait.[8] It was the potential commercial posi-

bilities of the region which interested Seward during the early years of his career.[9] However, it was an interest which was not to wane. As Seward's career advanced and as his ideas concerning American empire developed, his interest in Alaska increased. In a speech at St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1860, Seward alluded quite specifically to the Russian colony:

> Standing here and looking far off into the northwest, I see the Russian as he busily occupies himself in establishing seaports and towns and fortifications on the verge of this continent ... and I say "Go on and build up your outposts all along the coast up even to the Arctic Ocean - they will yet become the outposts of my own country - monuments of the civilization of the United States in the northwest.[10]

It seems clear that Seward, already looking toward the American acquisition of Alaska, had recognized an importance in the Russian territory. No longer were commercial considerations the sole basis of his interest in Alaska. Significantly, geopolitical factors were at least as important as economic inducements to incorporate Russian America into the United States.

For Seward, the purchase of Alaska was of at least dual significance. Firstly, it helped to round out America's continental domain. Alaska was the "backdoor" to the British North American west and therefore a countermovement to Canadian Confederation and its expansion westwards.[11] Of equal significance, the purchase of Alaska was an important thrust by the United States into the Pacific, which Seward believed would be the theatre of America's future greatness.[12] He declared that Alaska gave the United States "a foothold for commercial and naval operations accessible from the Pacific states,"[13] and

later proclaimed that by virtue of the purchase, "Japan, China and Australia are commercially bound to the American Pacific coast."[14] Complete control of the Pacific coast of North America seems to have been one of Seward's objectives.[15] The American purchase of Alaska was, therefore, more than just another item on a lengthy shopping-list of territories designed to satisfy the appetite of an insatiable expansionist. It was rather, a move in the direction of consolidation of the whole North American continent and a specific step towards increasing American influence in the Pacific.

The fact that Alaska figured prominently in Seward's vision of American empire is evident but would the rest of America go along with his grandiose schemes? Unquestionably, Seward was taking on a fantastic task in attempting to see the purchase of Alaska through. The United States was going through a period of acute crisis. After the Civil War the internal condition of the country occupied all minds. Burdened with a mountainous debt, obliged to grapple with the difficulties of a depreciated currency and the reduction of the war taxes, the administration in Washington was in no mood to incur large new expenditures.[16] Indeed, the fact that Seward had managed to gain the support of President Johnson and the Cabinet for the Alaska Purchase Treaty is credit to his persuasive and diplomatic abilities.

The harassing problems arising from Reconstruction in the United States, involving the military control of eleven states, must have made the prospect of additional dependent territory unattractive. The economic interests of the country, although

expanding, were turned almost completely toward internal development. Furthermore, there appeared to be no popular demand for more territory. In addition to these problems, the national administration was functioning awkwardly. Partially as a result of Reconstruction policy, President Johnson was about to go through the proceedings of an impeachment trial.[17]

Certainly these factors weighed heavily against any chance of success the Alaska Purchase Treaty may have had. Nevertheless, Seward remained unshaken in his belief that Alaska was an important acquisition and he was determined to work toward the treaty's acceptance. For ratification, the treaty required two-thirds vote of the Senate and a majority vote in the House of Representatives would be necessary for appropriation of the funds necessary to pay the Russian government for their territory.

President Johnson introduced the Alaska Purchase Treaty to the Senate on March 30, 1867.[18] The ink on the treaty had barely had time to dry, as Seward and the Russian ambassador, Stoeckl, had only just concluded the agreement that morning. Reaction in the Senate was, quite naturally, one of surprise.[19] The Senators had received no advance notice of the negotiation of the treaty. Debate and discussion on the subject was both heated and intense, and despite Johnson's request for an immediate consideration of the treaty,[20] it did not go to a vote for well over a week.

The situation in the Senate was complex, as the furor over President Johnson's impeachment was entering a critical phase.

The Alaska treaty was regarded not only as an annoying interruption, but as an effort on the part of the troubled administration "to cover up its blunders at home by a stroke of foreign policy."[21] Indeed, it was felt that Seward, in initiating the purchase, was merely attempting to revive the decaying popularity of the State Department which was sharing the opprobrium being heaped upon the Johnson administration.[22] Thus, when the first announcement of the treaty was made public, it was predicted that it had little chance of obtaining Senate ratification.[23]

Despite these difficulties, Seward carried on a spectacular campaign publicizing the treaty. He gained whatever influence he could in the Senate and distributed information favourable to the purchase to several "friendly" newspapers. In the end, he managed to sway the support of many newspapers throughout the country and a large amount of public opinion.

But initially, the announcement of the purchase drew varied reaction throughout the United States. Of course, Alaska lent itself to several picturesque expressions: "Seward's folly", "Seward's ice-box", "Johnson's polar bear garden", "Esquimeaux Senators", "Walrussia", etc...[24] These and many similar phrases became popular and were widely used in the American press. They reflected an initial surprise to the announcement of the treaty. Because the actual treaty negotiations had been carried through so quickly and so secretly, few Americans had anticipated such a move. Even Clay, the United States ambassador at St. Petersburg and a zealous advocate of the acquisition of Alaska, was unaware of what had taken place. He wrote to Seward that "the secrecy

took me with a most agreeable surpirse."[25] Indeed, it was the secrecy that some Americans seemed to object to. The treaty was referred to as "a dark deed done in the night",[26] and almost immediately upon its announcement, opponents of the Johnson administration began to voice loud opposition to it. After the initial shock, however, it became clear that American public opinion was far from universally opposed to the purchase.[27]

The immediate reaction to the purchase illustrated a divergence of opinion in the United States on a geographic basis. Newspapers on the Pacific coast, from the beginning, almost unanimously favoured the acquisition of Alaska. The Portland Daily Oregonian, for example, reported:

> The Purchase by our Government of The Russian North American Possessions is the most valuable acquisition of territory obtained by the United States since the cession of California ... Considering the great value of this acquisition the sum paid for it must be allowed to be small indeed.[28]

The San Francisco Golden Era also commented favourably on the purchase.[29] Clearly, Pacific coast interests recognized that the acquisition of Russia's colony would be to their advantage. Earlier, fishing and trading interests along the Pacific coast had been among the first to openly urge for the purchase of Alaska.[30] Thus, the announcement of its acquisition seemed to produce an almost completely favourable response in the west coast press.

The purchase of Alaska, while it was the leading topic of discussion in the Eastern press, initially produced a response there that was far from favourable. This can be attributed to

the fact that Alaska was obviously more remote to Eastern interests. In fact, in general terms, many Americans barely seemed aware of Alaska's existence. Also, the turmoil surrounding the impeachment of President Johnson was causing increasingly bitter political quarrels and enemies of his administration used the purchase treaty as a vehicle for further attack upon its policies.

The Cincinnati Daily Gazette called the treaty a dodge by Seward and Johnson to hide their domestic disgrace.[31] The New York World on April 1, 1867, noted that the United States had bought a "sucked orange". "Whatever may be the value of that territory and its outlying islands", continued the World, "it has ceased to be of any to Russia."[32] The New York Evening Post of the same date declared that Alaska was "a frozen, sterile, desert region ... of no value present or prospective."[33] Among New York papers there also resided the great journalistic opponent of the treaty, the New York Tribune, edited by Horace Greeley. For several years, Greeley had been a personal and political foe of Seward, and he was no friend of the Johnson administration.[34] The Tribune claimed that in purchasing Alaska, Seward sought "to improve his wretched political position by getting an acquisition of territory utterly valueless..."[35] Greeley used his newspaper to attack the treaty incessantly. He claimed, for example, that:

> Ninety-nine hundredths of Russian America are absolutely useless; the remaining hundredth may be of some value to the Russians who settled it, but it certainly is not worth seven millions of dollars to a nation already possessed of more

> territory than it can decently govern ...[36]

Initially, other newspapers in the East did react with less than enthusiasm toward the purchase of Alaska,[37] but few continued the torrent of abuses which the Tribune consistently levelled against both the treaty and its supporters.

The announcement of the purchase of Alaska did not seem to interest editorial writers in the American South or Mid-West to the extent that it did those in the East and on the Pacific coast. However, in the South there appeared to be little unfavourable reaction to the treaty,[38] and its announcement in the interior of the country was cheered without qualification. The Chicago Evening Journal, April 1, 1867, stated that "the acquisition of Russian America by the United States has the promise of future good."[39] And the St. Paul Press commented that Alaska

> affords a new anchorage for that policy of northward expansion by which Mr. Seward hopes, before long, to absorb the intermediate British possessions, and a new base for the extension of our commerce and power in the Pacific.[40]

Many newspapers, after initially responding unfavourably to the announcement of the purchase treaty, soon came out in strong support of Alaska. Significantly, it was largely the political importance of the acquisition which the press used to justify the treaty. The Boston Daily Evening Telegraph editorialized that Alaska's

> chief value is now its fur trade and its fisheries; but ... of vastly more importance than all other things, will be the command it will give us

> of the western and the northwestern territory of this continent.[41]

The New York World after rejecting the treaty initially, managed to console itself by rationalizing that Alaska "was an advancing step in that manifest destiny which is to give us British North America".[42] Similarly, the New York Herald commented that:

> Politically considered ... this cession of Russian Alaska becomes a matter of great importance ... it takes British possessions on the Pacific coast in the uncomfortable position of a hostile cockney with a watchful Yankee on each side of him ... It is a flank movement for this greater object (Canada).[43]

Even the New York Post committed an immediate about-face and also focussed on the Pacific coast:

> The Purchase of the Russian Territory is a step towards the retrieval of this blunder (the Oregon boundary settlement, 1846) not only by giving us the undisputed prominence on the American coast of the Pacific, but by pushing it out of the power of England to extend her territory in that quarter.[44]

On a general level then, reaction in the American press was favourable to the purchase of Alaska. Although several newspapers were not immediately disposed to accept the treaty, within an amazingly short period of time opinion seemed to become, if not enthusiastically in favour, at least willing to accept the acquisition of Alaska.[45]

Undoubtedly, Seward's "educational" campaign had helped sway the support of some of the country's newspapers, but if anything, the reaction to the announcement of the Alaskan Pur-

chase Treaty demonstrated that there was a great deal of latent expansionism in the country. Various sectors of the nation's press justified the purchase of Alaska in terms of its "political advantages,"[46] especially within the context of American continental expansion on a general level. The Washington Evening Star emphatically declared that: "There are few full-blooded Americans who do not devoutly believe in the doctrine that this country is to absorb not only Russian America, but all the British possessions in North America."[47] Many newspapers focussed more specifically on the Pacific coast. Various editors expressed the hope that the purchase of Alaska, by putting British Columbia in "an American vice" would terminate Britain's hold on that coast and hasten its complete annexation by the United States.[48]

Despite the great difficulties of the post-war period, an undercurrent of expansionism was still very evident in the United States. The lure and attraction of further territorial gain was openly declared after the announcement of the Alaska Purchase Treaty and it was one of the most commonly used arguments advanced in its favour. Several papers called upon the Senate to lay aside partisanship and vote for the good of the country.[49] And the New York Herald remarked on April 8, 1867 that the chances of the treaty gaining ratification in the Senate were much greater than the week before.[50]

On April 9, the treaty came under serious consideration in the Senate. The opponents of the treaty based their objections upon several factors. The expense involved, they declared, was

too great; domestic affairs, it was argued, should take precedence. Senators friendly to the treaty claimed that Alaska would provide a naval base and harbours for traders and for the Pacific whaling fleet. They also argued that the purchase would help forward the acquisition of Canada as well as gratifying Russia.[51] Before ratification was brought to a vote, Charles Sumner, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, delivered a speech in which he waxed eloquent for over three hours on the advantages of the acquisition.[52] Sumner was one of the most influential American politicians of his time and Seward was fortunate to have been able to solicit his support for the treaty. In his oration, Sumner stressed the fact that the purchase of Alaska would be of immediate commercial advantage to United States' interests on the Pacific coast. He included evidence gained from the reports of members of the Scientific Corps of the Russian - American Telegraph company, which stressed the fact that Alaska was rich in natural resources.[53] Among other factors, Sumner also argued that the acquisition of Russia's colony would improve the United States' position strategically and militarily, and that it was an act of friendship to the Russian government which, it was believed, had befriended the country during the Civil War.[54] Finally, Sumner proclaimed that the treaty was "a visible step in the occupation of the whole North American continent."[55]

Sumner's speech and his support of the treaty in general seemed to exert great influence in the Senate, and along with the clamour of public opinion the chances of ratification were

greatly improved. Indeed, when brought to a vote, the treaty was ratified almost unanimously; 37 Senators voted for the treaty and only 2 voted against.

The Alaska Purchase Treaty was officially proclaimed June 20, 1867, and a few months later, before funds for payment for the territory had been appropriated from Congress, the United States took formal control of Alaska. A brief ceremony took place at Sitka, October 18, 1867, where the Russian flag was lowered as a salute was fired and the Stars and Stripes run up.[56]

Thus, the transfer of Alaska to the United States seemed complete. Only one last duty now had to be performed by the United States - Alaska had to be paid for. But would the nation's representatives make the appropriation necessary to pay for the new territory? On July 6, 1867, President Johnson transmitted to Congress a copy of the Alaska Purchase Treaty and a request for appropriation of the $7,200,000 which had been agreed upon as the purchase price.[57] But no immediate action was taken and the session of Congress adjourned before the matter could be considered.

When Congress convened in December, 1867, the battle for appropriation of the funds was fought. The opponents, quite clearly, were President Johnson's enemies.[58] The funds were denied because, it was argued, the purchase of Alaska was designed to bolster the waning prestige of the administration.[59] The House of Representatives refused to consider the subject until the conclusion of Johnson's impeachment trial.

On May 16, 1868, the United States Senate voted on impeachment. Johnson escaped by the narrowest possible margin; 35 Senators voted for conviction, 19 for acquittal.[60] This fell one short of the necessary two-thirds majority and thus, the indictment failed.

The trial over, the House resumed the subject of appropriation of funds for Alaska. The failure of impeachment had caused a bitterness of feeling among many Congressmen. The opponents of the administration, declared that Johnson had exceeded his authority in taking possession of Alaska before appropriation had been voted for.[61] They seemed to resent being presented with a "fait accompli".

Once more, Seward was forced to lobby support for the acquisition of Alaska. He exerted as much influence as possible among prominent members of Congress and urged Johnson to rally whatever support he could in the House. Once again, Seward had favourable articles concerning Alaska printed in the press, especially in the newspapers of the nation's capital.[62] The treaty's supporters, fortified by documentary evidence sent by Seward, asserted that Alaska was immensely valuable. They believed that the House was "morally obligated" to pay for the territory; if it refused to do so, the states on the Pacific Coast would be offended, Russia would be disappointed and Great Britain would receive the territory by default. It was a step, they declared, toward building up American trade in the Pacific and toward the occupation of the whole continent.[63] Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, for example, declared that:

> I shall vote for this bill ... because I consider it one of the necessary steps in the expansion of our institutions and nationality over the entire domain of the American continent. But the great significance this purchase possesses is found in the fact that it points the way to the acquisition by the United States of that great and valuable region, Western British America ...[64]

Despite opposition in the House to the treaty, which was still evident, when the vote was taken for appropriation of funds on July 14, 1868, it passed with relative ease. The final vote showed 113 in favour to 43 opposed, with 44 not voting.[65] Thus, over fifteen months after the Alaska Purchase Treaty had been signed, the transfer was finally completed.

One final question remains to be answered concerning the passage of the Alaska treaty. Was money employed to assure its way through Congress? The suspicion still exists that Russian gold may have helped ease the treaty through both the Senate and the House of Representatives.[66] Seward later told President Johnson that Stoeckl had liberally greased the palms of influential Congressmen and Senators to ensure the treaty's passage.[67] But even if this was the case, perhaps it is not surprising when the aroma of corruption which was so familiar to post-war Washington is taken into consideration.[68] But would such payments have actually been necessary to secure the passage of the Alaska Purchase Treaty? This is a more pertinent question. Certainly, conditions were such in the United States that the purchase of Alaska seemed unlikely. But reaction to the pur-

chase on a broad level seemed to manifest support for the acquisition, and generally appeared to sanction expansion.

Shortly after the purchase, Seward, in a speech at Boston, declared: "I know that Nature designs that this whole continent, not merely these thirty-six states, shall be sooner or later, within the magic circle of the American Union."[69] He found these sentiments roundly applauded by the audience. And later, President Johnson in his last annual message, December 9, 1868, referred to the purchase in surprisingly expansionist terms. He stated that:

> The acquisition of Alaska was made with the view of extending national jurisdiction and republican principles in the American hemisphere ... Comprehensive national policy would seem to sanction the acquisition and incorporation into our Federal Union of the several adjacent continental and insular communities as speedily as it can be done peacefully, lawfully and without any violation of national justice, faith or honor.[70]

The American reaction to the purchase of Alaska demonstrates that expansionism was alive in the United States in the post-war years.

B. Canada

Perhaps it was natural that the purchase of Alaska made its greatest impact in North America. Undoubtedly, the United States' acquisition had great geopolitical significance for all of British North America, and for Canadian Confederation it had particularly important implications. The announcement of the purchase produced a decidedly dramatic effect in Canada.

On March 29, 1867, Queen Victoria signed the British North America Act signalling the creation of the Dominion of Canada. That same night in Washington, Seward and Stoeckl were up until the small hours of the morning placing the finishing touches on the Alaska Purchase Treaty. The next day, March 30, President Johnson submitted the treaty to the United States Senate. This remarkable concurrence underlines the essential relationship between the two events. Certainly, Canadians viewed the simultaneity as more than a mere coincidence. In fact, the purchase of Alaska was considered to be a flanking movement by the United States to Confederation and a counter-movement to Canadian expansion westward to the Pacific.[71] As such, the American acquisition seemed to hang a dark cloud over Canada's future.

Of course, there was good reason for apprehension on the part of Canadians. American attitudes to the creation of a separate and united British North America had been unsympathetic and at times openly hostile.[72] Frequent public pronouncements in the United States were directed against the Confederation movement. For example, in July, 1866, a bill was presented in the United States' House of Representatives by N.P. Banks, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the attempts being made to unify the British colonies. The bill declared that:

> ... the people of the United States cannot regard the proposed confederation of the Provinces on the northern frontier of this country without extreme solicitude; that a confederation of states on this continent, extending from ocean to ocean ... and founded upon monarchical prin-

> ciples, cannot be considered otherwise than in contravention of the traditions and constantly declared principles of this government, endangering its most important interests and tending to increase and perpetuate embarrassments ...[73]

The bill passed the House of Representatives, but went no further. In Canada, however, it and other such pronouncements provoked a wide reaction.[74]

That the United States posed a possible threat to Confederation was a notion which appeared to be generally accepted by Canadians. In fact, fear of the possible dangers which the United States represented was one of the great unifying intellectual forces in the Confederation movement.[75] The American Civil War had served to reinforce "anti-Americanism" among British North Americans. Despite this fact, some Americans arrogantly demanded that all of British North America be ceded to the United States in order to erase the memory of a few isolated incidents during the Civil War in which friction developed between Great Britain and the victorious Northern forces.[76] Such demands, however, were never taken seriously and if anything, the great struggle between the North and South in the United States only served to entrench anti-American sentiment in the British colonies. Significantly, for the colonists, the American Civil War also seemed to confirm the bankruptcy of republican institutions and the existence of inherent weaknesses in the American social fabric.[77]

In a sense, Canadian Confederation was a conscious rejection of claims Americans made to "Manifest Destiny". British

North Americans deliberately preferred self-government under British institutions within the liberal Victorian empire to union with the democratic republic of the United States. But even having attained Confederation, Canada's future independence was by no means guaranteed. In fact, some American politicans and newspapers claimed that Confederation only made annexation to the United States a much simpler task because it could now be consummated in a single stroke rather than in a piece-meal fashion.[78]

Interestingly, most Americans seemed to view Confederation skeptically; just as European observers had viewed the United States' independence in the 1780's. Shortly after the union of the British colonies, for instance, the New York Tribune predicted:

> When the experiment of the 'dominion' shall have failed, as fail it must, a process of peaceful absorption will give Canada her proper place in the great North American Republic.[79]

This editorial, while aptly illustrating the supreme self-confidence which appeared to typify Americans of this era, also inadvertently expressed the greatest fear still lingering in the souls of many Canadians.

If the purchase of Alaska was the United States answer to Confederation, the fears which Canadians harboured seemed confirmed. Many British and Canadian statesmen believed that if the United States were to add to the purchase of Alaska a part of the British Northwest, Canada would perish. Indeed, it seemed to many that if Canada was to survive on a continent dominated

by the United States, it too would have to become a transcontinental nation - it would have to consolidate the Pacific coast and colony of British Columbia, as well as Rupert's Land, the vast area in between.[80] In this sense, the American purchase of Alaska was a direct challenge to the future expansion of the newly-confederated British colonies.

But while American expansion worried Canadians, it also gave impetus to Canadian expansion and a wholly Canadian version of "Manifest Destiny". Certainly many Canadians felt that their future greatness lay with the British North American west and although the purchase of Alaska seemed to threaten that quarter, it also created an urgency to consolidate it within the newly-formed Dominion. The American purchase of Alaska was, therefore, a motivating force behind Canadian expansion westward.

Of course, Canadian interest in the British North American west predated the purchase of Alaska. Indeed, several prominent Canadians had maintained a vigorous interest in westward expansion from the early 1850's onward.[81] Perhaps the greatest proponent of Canadian expansion was George Brown, leader of the reform party in Canada, and editor of the most influential newspaper in British North America, the Toronto Globe. Brown had been interested in the Northwest from an early date, and while he was only one of many Canadians whose interest in the territory was aroused during the mid-nineteenth century, his involvement in the agitation for westward expansion was particularly important, if only because of the great influence which his newspaper exerted upon public opinion.[82]

By 1856, Brown had committed both himself and his journal to the expansion of Canada across the vast interior prairies and ultimately to the Pacific.[83] He claimed that the British North American west was Canada's "birth-right" and "no power on earth" could prevent her from occupying it.[84] In 1858, Brown addressed a political meeting at Belleville:

> Who cannot see that Providence has entrusted to us the building up of a great northern people, fit to cope with our neighbours of the United States, and to advance step by step with them in the march of civilization? ... it is my fervent aspiration and belief that some here tonight may live to see the day when the British American flag shall proudly wave from Labrador to Vancouver Island ...[85]

The speech is significant not only for its accurate forecast, but for its expression of the expansionist spirit. Indeed, in Brown is found the same brand of providential nationalism which had earlier impelled an American editor, John L. O'Sullivan, to coin the phrase "Manifest Destiny".

George Brown constantly declared that if Canada did not claim the Northwest it might be lost to the United States; a thought which enraged Canadians whose eyes had been turned westward. The demand for expansion spread rapidly through the Canadian reform press and especially appealed to Upper Canadian Clear Grits and land-seeking farmers. But it seems clear that Brown envisaged a Canadian future which offered wide appeal to the larger community of British North Americans in general.[86] Joseph Howe of Nova Scotia, for example, declared in 1864 that

he too "looked across the broad continent as the great territory which the Almighty has given us for an inheritance."[87]

Later, in 1865, during the debates on the subject of Confederation, George Brown was heartily cheered when he exclaimed that the British North American west would soon "be opened up to civilization under the auspices of the British American Confederation."[88] Throughout the Confederation debates the Canadian "Fathers of Confederation" alluded to the Northwest and its future consolidation within the proposed union. Western expansion was referred to as "one of the most cherished projects" of Canadians, and it appeared to be generally accepted that, ultimately, Confederation was to become a transcontinental affair.[89]

Of course, Canadian sentiment was not completely and wholeheartedly in favour of expansion westward. Indeed, immediate consolidation of half a continent seemed to some an impracticability. One "Father of Confederation", A.A. Dorion, stated that it was somewhat of a "burlesque" to speak of a Canada stretching across the west to the Pacific Ocean, when the thousands of miles separating British Columbia from the populated eastern centres were almost empty and "without communication except through the United States or around Cape Horn."[90] But, on the whole, a dogged determination characterized the leaders of the Confederation movement in Canada. In answer to any doubts about Canada's future, the Toronto Globe, on the first "Dominion Day", was happy to report the view of Amor de Cosmos, a British Columbian newspaper editor.

> If the people of the United States can govern a territory on the

> Pacific Ocean, why cannot four millions of British Americans do the same.[91]

Certainly, Canadian Confederation appeared to many to be destined to contain all of British North America within its borders. The British North America Act contained provision for the eventual entry of both Rupert's Land and British Columbia into the union.[92] But how soon could it be practical for Canada to extend itself across the entire continent? Confederation itself was a considerable achievement, and it seems that immediate expansion westward would have been ruled out as a high priority if the threat of American expansion was not real in the minds of Canadians.

The American purchase of Alaska was a singularly important event because it reminded Canadians of the United States' seemingly relentless drive for hegemony in North America. To John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, the purchase of Alaska only emphasized what a vast and unmanageable inconvenience the British Northwest was. A few years earlier, rumours of the proposed sale of Alaska to the United States had prompted Macdonald to write:

> I would be quite willing, personally to leave the whole country a wilderness for the next half-century, but I fear if Englishmen do not go there, Yankees will.[93]

The first session of Canadian Parliament evinced a growing awareness in Canada of the British North American west and the potential problems which American expansion into the area posed. Early in the initial session the advisability of acquiring the

Northwest was seriously considered.[94] Prime Minister Macdonald, speaking of American penetration into the area warned that:

> The Americans are going in singlely, first the trapper, the trader, and by and by the settler. The people of the United States are tearing up every line of demarcation between the North West and the United States ...[95]

Macdonald then suggested that Canada would, as a result of the American threat of northern expansion, have to move in the direction of a quick consolidation of the west. He declared that:

> We would be false to ourselves, and false to everything that would make us respectable in the eyes of the world if we neglected this opportunity. If we do it may pass from us to the United States.[96]

Alexander Galt, another "Father of Confederation" and Minister of Finance in Macdonald's first ministry elaborated on the same theme with specific reference to the purchase of Alaska in a speech at Lennoxville, May 22, 1867. He claimed that Alaska was the American answer to Confederation and as such, could not be ignored.

> We cannot close our eyes to what is happening in the West ... I for one look upon the acquisition of Russian America by the United States as their answer to the arrangements we have been making to unite among ourselves ... There is only one way in which a policy of aggression can be met. If the United States desire to outflank us on the West, we must accept the situation and lay our hand on British Columbia and the Pacific Ocean. This country cannot be surrounded by the United States - we are gone if we allow it ... "From the Atlantic to the Pacific" must be the cry in British

> America as much as it has ever been in the United States.[97]

Certainly, the situation did appear critical. But reaction to the American purchase of Alaska in the Canadian press appeared, on the whole, less pessimistic. That most expansionist of Canadian newspapers, the Toronto Globe, referred to the purchase as "ridiculous". George Brown editorialized that:

> Seward's attempt to coerce Canada by the purchase of Walrussia has brought down upon him the laughter of mankind and has not altered one whit the determination of the people of British America from Prince Edward Island to Vancouver to stand by the old flag to the last man and the last cartridge.[98]

With utter confidence in Canada's future, the Globe proclaimed that union with British Columbia was the best possible reply to the American acquisition.

> Let us make a junction with the Pacific coast - and before many years the authorities at Washington will be very pleased to sell us Walrussia for a much less sum than that which they have paid the Russian Government.[99]

Apparently, the chief newspapers of Canada supported the Globe in its view of the Russo-American transition.[100] The Montreal Gazette, for instance, looked upon the purchase of Alaska with little but delighted derision. Alaska was, it claimed, "a howling wilderness somewhere betwixt Asia and the North Pole, which is famous for the crop of icebergs which it annually produces."[101] The Gazette did recognize that the United States, in acquiring Alaska, was attempting "by territorial expansion to crush the new nationality out of existence."[102]

However, the Montreal journal only scoffed at this possibility and concluded that: "We can only wish them (the Americans) joy of their acquisition and sincerely wish we could throw the North Pole into the bargain."[103]

The confidence in Canada's future exuded by the Canadian press can partially be explained by the fact that it, like the national presses of other countries, was caught by surprise by the announcement of the American purchase. Its response was part disbelief, part stupefication. It is doubtful that the press' cheerfully philosophic attitude to the purchase quelled Canadians' fear of being cut off by the United States in the British Northwest. Because the Northwest was the area upon which the future expansion and continued existence of Canada was based, the purchase of Alaska could only be considered with alarm by most Canadians.

Later, John A. Macdonald wrote to a friend that he was convinced that the United States would do "everything possible short of war to get possession of the western territory." Only "immediate and vigorous steps", Canada's Prime Minister declared, could prevent this.[104] The American purchase of Alaska, because it was the most "visible" manifestation of post-Civil War American expansionism, increased such concern on a general level throughout Canada. As a result, it was an impetus to Canadian expansionism, and prompted the "immediate and vigorous steps" which would help to frustrate the United States' "Manifest Destiny".

C. British Columbia

Without a doubt, the impact of the purchase of Alaska was most deeply felt in Britain's colony on the Pacific coast of North America, British Columbia. In fact, the American purchase, because it placed British Columbia "in the nutcrackers",[105] only emphasized the isolation of the colony and the uncertainty of its future. The newly-united colony was composed of the older colony of Vancouver Island, which had been established in 1849, and the mainland colony of British Columbia, which had come into existence in 1858 as a result of the onrush of gold-seekers into the territory. But, by the mid-1860's, the gold-rush was waning and the great days of Barkerville and Soda Creek were over. With the decline of the goldrush, the economies of both colonies sank into severe depressions. Partially an attempt to solve this problem, the two colonies were united by an act of the British Parliament, November 19, 1866.[106]

But union was a palliative and not a cure to British Columbia's problems. Although the white population of the newly-united colony was only ten thousand in 1866, the public debt was $1,300,000, and fully three quarters of the annual income was required to pay its interest.[107] But perhaps the greatest problem facing British Columbia was isolation. Certainly all colonials complained of isolation and neglect; it was part of the colonial condition to do so. But British Columbians may have been justified in their complaints. Indeed, with Great Britain virtually at the other end of the earth, British Columbia could expect no great future as a remote British colony.

The inhabited regions of Canada were three thousand miles away and separated from the Pacific coast by almost unsurpassable mountains, vast and desolate prairies, and the barren Precambrian shield. To the west, the nearest British colony was Hong Kong. The only foreign intercourse easily available to British Columbians was with the American settlers in Washington territory and the States of Oregon and California. San Francisco was British Columbia's closest connecting link with the outside world and to a large degree American steamship lines dominated the west coast of the continent.[108] In fact, San Francisco was fast becoming British Columbia's entrepot and the colony's future seemed increasingly to lie with the United States.

Within the colony itself opinion was divided concerning what future course British Columbia should follow. A sizeable portion of the colonists favoured union with Canada, while a vocal group centered in Victoria, the capital of the colony, loudly proclaimed the advantages of annexation to the United States. In addition to these two alternatives, some colonists, especially the British official class which administered the colony, favoured no change at all.[109] But continuation in a state of existence which was economically stagnant and generally growing more despondent was no real alternative. Even Frederick Seymour, the Governor of the colony, who always evinced a certain reluctance to make definite decisions in colonial affairs, characterized British Columbia as "a disheartened community, longing for change of any kind."[110]

Against this background, the American purchase of Alaska

could only have made a tremendous impact. By surrounding British Columbia with American territory to the north as well as the south, the purchase of Alaska appeared as a more than subtle suggestion to the discontented colonists of which future course to follow. The purchase ultimately brought home to British Columbians an increased awareness of what appeared to be the weakness and vulnerability of the British position on the Pacific coast of North America.

In the United States, a great deal of positive reaction to the purchase of Alaska had been focussed upon the British colony on the Pacific. British Columbians could hardly have ignored the fact that the expansionism generated in the United States by the purchase was aimed in their specific direction. Seward himself had boasted that the purchase of Alaska made "the permanent political separation of British Columbia from Alaska and Washington territory impossible."[111] Several prominent American politicians expressed similar sentiments. Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, for instance, stated that British dominion between Washington territory and Alaska would "disappear between the upper and nether millstones. These jaws of the nation will swallow it up."[112]

Of course, editorial comment in the American press also cast eager glances in British Columbia's direction after the acquisition of Alaska. The Chicago Evening Journal stated quite specifically: "The effect of this cession will be to hasten the time when British Columbia will become part of the United States."[113] The St. Paul Daily Press declared that British

Columbia was wedded to the United States by "geographical affinities which no human power can asunder, as He has divorced it from Canada by physical barriers which no human power can overcome."[114] The New York Herald, always ready and willing to support the acquisition of more territory, also cast a contemplative eye toward the Pacific coast. The Herald suggested that Seward was working toward complete consolidation of the Pacific coast of North America, and it supported such a cause with perhaps, debatable discretion, when it editorialized that: "The people of this country will certainly find it inconvenient to have different portions of our republican empire separated by foreign territory."[115] Interestingly, another New York newspaper, the World, argued in favour of the annexation of British Columbia on almost completely aesthetic grounds:

> A gap in our possessions on the Pacific Coast will always be an eyesore to the nation, whose sense of symmetry will be offended by the ragged coastline.[116]

One American publisher actually went as far as to urge Secretary of State Seward to attempt to buy British Columbia from Britain as he had purchased Alaska from Russia, and promised the support of his newspaper, the St. Louis Times, in the matter.[117]

The excitement which followed the purchase of Alaska in the United States caused a general alarm in British Columbia. Many aggressively expansionist statements by American politicians and editorial comments in American newspapers eventually filtered down through the press of British Columbia, where they were reprinted to the dismay of those colonists who still cherished the

British connection. The Victoria British Colonist, for example, after reproducing in full a New York Herald editorial which commented on "the obvious political consequences" of the purchase of Alaska, concluded that the immediate goal of the United States appeared to be:

> nothing more or less than to hem in and enclose British possessions on the Pacific; render them of little or no importance to Great Britain, and insure their easy conquest ...[118]

Events as well as conditions were the cause of concern to loyal British subjects in the Pacific coast colony, for they favoured the United States rather than Great Britain or Canada. In 1866, the threat of an invasion by Fenians based in San Francisco, had caused a general panic in British Columbia.[119] The colonists felt quite defenceless against the possibility of a serious attack. This fright passed away, but was replaced by other, potentially more dangerous, fears.

For British Columbians, manifestations of American expansion were becoming all too commonplace. American transportation and communication networks were steadily creeping closer to British Columbia. The completion of the American transcontinental railroads, the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific, only served to increase British Columbia's dependence on the United States. The tide of American frontier settlement was also rapidly moving westward. Minnesota had become a state in 1858, and Oregon in 1859. After the Civil War, increasing numbers of settlers began to pour into the American west, which would eventually result in the creation of additional states

bordering to the south of British Columbia. The American purchase of Alaska only emphasized the fact that the United States was extending its continental boundaries without hesitation.

British Columbians could imagine only one purpose for the acquisition of Alaska, and reaction to its purchase in the colony was both defensive and pessimistic. The Colonist expressed the general mood of the colony, when it sullenly commented that:

> Here, in Vancouver Island, within a few degrees of the recently acquired tract, we are in a position to state that it is a valuable acquisition, and that its cession to the United States is likely to inflict a severe blow to British interests in the Pacific; if it does not exercise an unfavourable influence upon all of British North America. The purchase is regarded here as the masterstroke of Mr. Seward. By it the United States virtually secures control of the coast ... and places the whole of Her Majesty's possessions on the Pacific in the position of a piece of meat between two slices of bread, where they may be devoured by a single bite ... The colony of British Columbia hemmed in by her colossal neighbour, has scarcely room left to draw a long breath ... The anxiety of the United States to extend its territory to the Pacific may attract the attention of our Government to the necessity of extending us a helping hand; but the prestige of British institutions on this side of the continent has received a severe blow from the effects of which they may not recover ... [120]

British Columbians did not so much resent the acquisition of Alaska, as envy the energy displayed by its new owner which was such an impressive contrast with the seeming supineness of

the British government. In fact, many colonists were in despair and blamed Britain's "imbecility, ignorance and neglect" for the situation which had allowed the United States to strike its "shrewd blow."[121] The New Westminster British Columbian complained that Great Britain could have had Alaska during the Crimean War, but "the old sleepy British lion" was not so disposed.[122] However, while regretful, the mainland newspaper could also be philosophic, and it declared that the United States had been mulcted of over seven million dollars "for the doubtful luxury of an Arctic preserve, in which to cool the ardour of 'Manifest Destiny' aspirations ..."[123]

But, on the whole, British Columbians were less sanguine. Dr. J.S. Helmcken, an interesting colonial figure, and member of the Legislative Council of British Columbia, later wrote that the Americans were proudly boasting that "they had sandwiched B(ritish) Columbia and could eat her up at any time."[124] No doubt, the idea that they had no say in their destiny worried most of the colonists. But the Americans residing in the colony could do little but rejoice upon the announcement of the purchase - the American merchants and tavern owners of Victoria displayed their proud approval by hanging out their American flags in triumph.[125] Surely though, to many colonists, these flags must have appeared as a cruel mocking of British Columbia's uncertain future.

While the excitement over the purchase of Alaska was still at a peak in British Columbia, another alarm waited upon the long-suffering colonists. It was rumoured that the Imperial

government intended to cede the colony to the United States in satisfaction of the Alabama claims.[126] The idea that such action was within the realm of possibility enraged many of the most loyal British colonists. But, contemporaneously, such a move did not seem wholly incredible. "After all," declared the Colonist, "the home government has allowed Seward to put British Columbia into an almost hopeless position."[127] It appeared logical, therefore, that Great Britain would attempt to get what it could for the colony while it was still within its orbit. A few days later, the same newspaper reported that:

> since no change would be for the worse, they (British Columbians) would welcome annexation to the United States to continuing in a state of poverty and wretchedness. In writing this we know we speak the mind of nine out of every ten men in the colony ... The sentiment is heard at every street corner - at social gatherings - in business circles - in all places.[128]

This mood was also noted by the American consul at Victoria, Allen Francis, in his despatches to Seward. Francis' reports were always detailed and comprehensive accounts of colonial affairs, and in his last despatch prior to the purchase of Alaska, he had noted that conditions in the colony were worsening and that discontent was prevalent.[129] In his next despatch, April 13, 1867, Francis congratulated Seward upon the acquisition of Alaska and stated that "its geographical and political importance is thoroughly recognized here."[130] In his following despatch, Francis made detailed comments concerning the impact of the purchase on the colony. He observed that the acquisition of Alaska had furthered the paralysis of the hopes and prospects

of the colonists. He also claimed that even those colonists claiming to be the most loyal subjects of the Queen,

> are now urging with great unanimity annexation to the United States as their only salvation - as the only means of retrieving the Colonies sic from their present embarrassment and decline.[131]

It is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of Francis' observations. Certainly, British Columbians were longing for a release from their colonial isolation, but it would be difficult to prove that they favoured union with the United States with "great unanimity." Francis had long been an ardent expansionist, and he seemed to view working toward the annexation of British Columbia to the United States as his diplomatic task at Victoria. Undoubtedly, he was attempting to impress Seward by reporting conditions which would favour American influence in the colony. But even with this obvious bias taken into consideration, to a large degree his reports must be taken seriously, for they contain a wealth of documentation. He concluded his report of April 23, 1867, by cheerfully proclaiming: "The spirit of annexation, with the exception of the officials in the Colonies sic favoring Confederation, is general and earnest."[132]

Clearly, the American purchase of Alaska had a devastating effect on the social climate of the colony of British Columbia. For some time, the colony had been suffering from deteriorating conditions, but without a doubt the spring of 1867 was its nadir of despair. All observers agreed that the purchase of Alaska was a momentous event. Indeed, it was an event which suggested

to British Columbians that an end to the frustration and isolation of remaining a lonely colony on the Pacific was at hand.

But did British Columbia's future necessarily lie in the lap of the United States? Despite the fact that for many this appeared to be the case, the American purchase of Alaska did not make the annexation of British Columbia to the United States inevitable. Certainly, many Americans believed that it did, but the United States was not immediately willing, or perhaps was unable to take any direct action. In fact, most Americans seemed unaware of the fact that British and Canadian forces were acting quickly to thwart any such possibility. Indeed, even British Columbians were largely unaware of the external forces which were rapidly drawing them into Canadian Confederation.

But when the hysteria which enveloped the colony after the purchase of Alaska is considered, perhaps it is too much to expect that British Columbians could have seen their future with the imperturbably rational eyes of the mid-Victorian statesmen who were, at once, totally removed from the situation, and yet, determined not to lose their British foothold on the west coast of North America. Thus, paradoxically, it was the American purchase of Alaska, the very event which seemed to point toward British Columbia's absorption into the American union, which helped to unleash the forces which would ensure its entry into Canadian Confederation.

D. Great Britain

Russia's cession of Alaska to the United States produced a

varied reaction in Great Britain. This was largely due to the fact that the Imperial idea was undergoing a major reevaluation. The priorities of the Manchester School had placed the claims of international economy well ahead of those of imperial economy. To many Englishmen it seemed that the "old colonial system" was being slowly dismantled, and few doubted that Great Britain's place as a colonial power was going through a process of transformation. But despite the fact that several leading Victorian statesmen contemplated the break-up of the British Empire with feelings ranging from resignation to pleasure, Britain was not about to abandon her colonies. The British reaction to the American purchase of Alaska, as divergent as it was, demonstrates that Great Britain was still prepared to act to preserve her colonial interests.

Of course, in North America as elsewhere, Great Britain's position as a colonial power was changing rapidly. Until the middle of the nineteenth century Great Britain had made an effort to maintain a semblance of a balance of power in North America. But after the American Civil War few doubted that the United States held the preponderance of power on the continent and British foreign policy readily accepted this fact.[133] British North America was vast, isolated, almost indefensible and its imperial value was openly questioned. Throughout the nineteenth century Britain's North American possessions represented a collective hostage through which the United States could win concessions from Great Britain. Any policy directed towards Europe had to be formulated with the strategic realiza-

tion that "Britain's back door" stood wide open to attack in North America. For fear of an American war, Great Britain could not concentrate her entire efforts in Europe. At the same time, the prospect of a European war created the uncomfortable situation where Britain could no longer afford to garrison her North American colonies. With her hands tied and anti-imperialism at its zenith, it is little wonder that Great Britain came to consider independence for British North America.[134]

On a larger scale, the value of colonial possessions was undergoing a major reassessment. Most Victorian statesmen, as well as spokesmen of the Manchester School, professed a strong distaste for "Empire". Benjamin Disraeli, who would later become Prime Minister of Great Britain, spoke for a wide cross-section of public opinion when in 1852 he referred to Britain's colonies as "a millstone around our necks".[135] As early as 1822 one British member of Parliament had suggested that it might be better if Canada was "sunk under the ocean".[136] But however much critics spoke of the disadvantages of colonies, successive British statesmen usually refused on the grounds of prestige alone to abandon them. Lord John Russell, for example, while Prime Minister in 1849, proclaimed that "the loss of any great portion of our colonies would diminish our importance in the world, and the vultures would soon gather to despoil us of the other parts of our Empire".[137]

In British North America strong governmental structures were evolving and the development of constitutional government allowed new relationships to arise within the Empire. Since the

North American colonies were those whose weakness involved the most real danger, it was natural that Britain should wish to see them standing on their own political feet as soon as possible. Therefore, when a plan for union arose within the colonies, Great Britain did little to discourage its realization. In 1867 the British Parliament passed the British North America Act which established the "Dominion of Canada". With the union of these British colonies a new, federal and almost completely self-governing entity was created in North America.

In uniting her North American colonies Britain was not abandoning them. Canadian Confederation was only the first major step in the process of continental consolidation. Great Britain would not retreat from the continent until all British North America was successfully united with Canada. But was the future charted out for Canada by Imperial strategists assured? Would it be possible to successfully incorporate both Rupert's Land and British Columbia with Canada and thereby resist the United States "Manifest Destiny" to rule over all of North America? These questions were of great concern to Canadians, but to the British too they were more than trifling troubles. Britain still had important interests in North America and union of her possessions there was part and parcel of Imperial policy. Certainly, Canadian Confederation had satisfied "Little Englanders" and critics of empire generally to some degree. But the news of Confederation and the festivities surrounding its success ominously coincided with the announcement of the cession of Alaska to the United States.

Interestingly, the American purchase of Alaska caused "considerable excitement" in Great Britain and on a general level was a subject of "great public interest".[138] The British press recognized the significance of the purchase in both strategic and political terms. For example, the London Morning Post, April 2, 1867, declared that the reason for the American purchase was not the intrinsic value of Alaska but the hope of acquiring the territory south of it.[139] The London Times, April 1, 1867, with less than a thorough knowledge of the geography of the Pacific coast of North America, stated that the cession would "exclude British Columbia almost entirely from the Pacific."[140] The Times also admitted that Britain's colony on the west coast of North America might now desire to join the United States.[141] The British press almost appeared to take offence at the United States' timely acquisition and the Times went as far as to petition Her Majesty's government "to remonstrate upon the subject."[142]

However, no such course of action was pursued by the British government. In fact the purchase of Alaska drew a varied response in British governmental circles. Lord Stanley at the Foreign Office seemed unshaken; he stated that the United States had bought "a large amount of worthless territory."[143] Of course Stanley's view merely reflects the disdain most mid-Victorians held for further territorial acquisition. Earlier, the British minister at St. Petersburg had warned the British Foreign Office of a sinister Russian - American plot to undermine British power in the Pacific.[144] And after the purchase Sir Frederick Bruce,

the British minister at Washington, warned his government that the American acquisition of Alaska increased the United States desire and opportunity to gain British Columbia.[145] When these warnings from British diplomats abroad, coupled with the press reaction in Great Britain, are taken into consideration, it is difficult to believe that the British Foreign Office could have been completely indifferent to the American purchase. Indeed, British foreign policy now had to take into consideration the possibility of further American territorial annexations in North America - an unwelcome prospect to plans of British North American union.

In the British House of Commons reaction to the purchase proved to be excited. As elsewhere, the American purchase was met with an initial surprise, and a complete lack of any advance notice of the negotiations for the purchase served to produce a certain bewilderment. Nevertheless, it was immediately recognized by some British members of Parliament that the purchase endangered their colony on the Pacific. Some urged that Great Britain build a railroad across the North American continent in order to preserve its Pacific possession and ensure future Canadian expansion westward.[146] The Duke of Buckingham interjected in the discussion on the subject by suggesting that the American purchase should not be exaggerated in importance. He stated:

> I cannot myself think that the cession or purchase of the territory in question by the United States is likely to have any such overwhelming influence upon the progress of the colonies sprung from English blood which have

> been established on that side of the world, as at first sight appears to be imagined.[147]

Despite this reassuring statement from the future British Colonial Secretary, the American purchase of Alaska did evince concern on Great Britain's part for the future development of her North American territories. The purchase especially emphasized that there could be no great delay if Canada was to consolidate the entire northern half of the continent, for the American move to Alaska suggested that the United States was still relentlessly pursuing its policy of continental expansion which had earlier seriously constricted the British position on the Pacific coast of North America. Because of the shifting balance of power in the Pacific an outlet on that ocean was of considerable importance to Great Britain. British interests in the Pacific were expanding[148] and her rivalry in that quarter with Russia and other European powers was intense.[149] For its strategic position, if nothing else, British Columbia was worth retaining as a British possession. Undoubtedly, the union of the isolated Pacific colony and the rest of the British North American west with Canada would help to preserve British interests. But such long range imperial plans now took on a sense of urgency.

A later discussion of the effects of the American purchase of Alaska in the British House of Commons demonstrated a real fear of American expansion in the British North American west. One member asserted that: "We should be following a very unwise policy if we allowed such territories to slip out of our hands."[150] A warning was issued that if British Columbia and

Rupert's Land were much longer neglected they "would soon become so peopled with citizens of the United States that we should one day find that we have lost them."[151]

The American purchase of Alaska proved to be a powerful reminder to Great Britain that the United States posed a serious threat to the security of British North America and the future of Canada. In fact, fear of the United States and the power it represented became a major factor in the formulation of British foreign policy. The American purchase demonstrated to Britain that American expansionism had not died with the Civil War. In particular, the purchase evoked great concern on Britain's part for the future of British North America. Clearly, if all British territories in North America could be consolidated within Canada, British interests would not suffer. But the American purchase of Alaska gave an urgency to this facet of Imperial policy. If the United States' new acquisition was to be followed up with the annexation of further continental territories, Canada might not have a west to expand into. By surrounding British territory on the Pacific to the north and south, the American purchase helped to generate the motivating force which would ultimately push Canadian sovereignty, and thus Britain's interests, to the Pacific coast of North America. The motivating force was fear.

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CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECT OF THE AMERICAN PURCHASE OF ALASKA

Judging from the immediate impact of the purchase of Alaska, a struggle was taking shape; a struggle for territory, power and ultimately for empire. In the United States the purchase generated a vocal and excitable expansionism highly reminiscent of an earlier era when prophets of Manifest Destiny ruled the land. Still recovering from the Civil War, the United States already appeared to be enthusiastically resuming its drive towards continental hegemony. The purchase of Alaska forced the issue of territorial sovereignty to a head. The balance of power in North America, if in fact there was to be a balance, momentarily rested in the British North American west, especially in British Columbia. If the United States could add a portion of the British-held territory in the west to its acquisition of Alaska in 1867, few would have doubted that the Americans' destiny was truly becoming manifest. Such a move would have also cut off any hopes of westward expansion which the newly confederated British colonies in the east may have had. Canada's hopes of future greatness rested upon territories which, after the purchase of Alaska, were ominously surrounded by the United States to both the north and the south.

The Canadians, however, recognized a destiny of their own which, if not quite manifest, could at least be attempted. The American purchase of Alaska helped to create an atmosphere which impelled Canada to attempt it almost immediately. At the

time of the purchase American expansion into the British North American west could still be checked by the transfer of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company to Canada and the entry of British Columbia into Confederation. The grand task of consolidation had been part of the original Confederation scheme, yet, immediate expansion westward seemed an impracticability. Nevertheless, the purchase of Alaska was interpreted as a challenge and as such it could not be ignored. Both Canada and Great Britain were wary of any possible threat which the United States posed to their interests in the west and the self-confidence exuded by Americans after the purchase caused more than mere concern on their parts. In fact, the expansionist overtures expressed by prominent Americans after the acquisition of Alaska prompted the British and the Canadians to considerably speed up plans of consolidation for fear that the United States would beat them to the punch. Ironically, the imperialistic tendencies of one country were feeding the expansionism of another.

But was there in fact cause for apprehension? Did the American purchase of Alaska constitute a real threat to the British North American west? And was expansionism as potent a force in post-Civil War America as it appeared to be? These are crucial questions which deserve to be explored.

Of course, the notion that the United States should expand northward had its inception much earlier; as early as the birth of the Republic. Indeed, the purchase of Alaska only brought about a revived interest in the idea of continental dominion, an idea which had found continuous expression over de-

cades of American history. "The whole unbounded continent is ours." "The British provinces are ripening fruit and will soon fall into the American basket." "The absorption of the British provinces is inevitable for the lesser is always attracted by the greater."[1] These statements recorded in the American press at the time of the purchase of Alaska and the formation of the Dominion of Canada could just as easily have been proclaimed during the 1850's over the issue of reciprocal trade, or earlier over the Oregon boundary dispute.

The idea of Manifest Destiny was dear to the hearts of many nineteenth century Americans, but at different times and places its basis varied in strength and depth. For instance, American politicians seeking re-election often seemed aware of latent interest in expansion and exploited that interest to meet immediate political ends. The slogan "Fifty-four Forty or Fight", for example, was a product of the 1844 American Presidential elections which saw James K. Polk and the Democrats sweep into power. While the slogan alone could not have been responsible for this feat, it certainly aided to a considerable degree.[2] This in itself was significant, for it represents the recognition by a major political party of widespread expansionist sentiment and of the vote-getting possibilities of twisting the British lion's tail. Interestingly, though expansionist sentiment had been utilized for political profit, "Fifty-four Forty or Fight" was never seriously persued as a policy of the Polk administration.

Over the next few decades, these ploys became quite stan-

dard pieces in the repertoire of the American politician seeking re-election, especially if campaigning in mid-western and northern states where expansionism seemed to always flourish. W.H. Seward used these tactics quite masterfully, particularly during the campaign of 1860. At St. Paul, Minnesota, Seward delivered a speech in which he capitalized on the great interest developing in that area in the Red River colony to the north.

> So I look off on Rupert's Land and Canada and see there an ingenious, enterprising and ambitious people, occupied with bridging rivers and constructing canals, railroads and telegraphs, to organize and preserve great British provinces north of the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence and around the shores of Hudson's Bay and am able to say "It is very well that you are building excellent states to be hereafter admitted to the American union."[3]

Seward went even further and was roundly applauded when he proclaimed that once the whole continent had been absorbed by the United States, the nation's new capital would be established there at St. Paul - a vision which he predicted would become an accomplished reality by the year 1960.[4] Perhaps it would be slightly pedantic to question Seward's sincerity in this instance, yet it must be remembered that his speech was a political one, made at the height of an election campaign and obviously tailored to its specific audience. Nevertheless its effectiveness cannot be underestimated. His forecast was greeted with fantastic enthusiasm and even the sedate Charles Francis Adams, who witnessed the oration, felt that the grand vision conjured up produced an effect "much like intoxication."[5]

British North America was always the most convenient tar-

get for American expansionism.[6] After the Civil War, when a residue of anglophobe belligerency tainted the American political climate, it became even more convenient. Seward, when lobbying for support for the Alaska Purchase Treaty, never failed to make perfectly clear that the treaty's passage would prevent Britain from acquiring the territory and that it would hasten the annexation of the British North American colonies to the United States. Earlier, General Nathaniel P. Banks had introduced a bill in Congress which called for the admission of all British North America into the American Union.[7] However, it failed to attract much notice in the House of Representatives and did not pass a vote. After the purchase of Alaska, in December 1867, a set of resolutions which called for the acquisition of the British west was introduced into the United States Senate by Senator Alexander Ramsay of Minnesota.[8] This proposal failed to come to a vote and nothing developed from the plan. Thus, there appeared to be some interest in expansion, especially northward expansion, but government policy rarely arrived at the point where it would sanction gestures made in that direction.

Interestingly, almost all expansionist utterances voiced during this period in the United States came from the general vicinity of the radical wing of the Republican party. This faction, largely led by Charles Sumner, also included such prominent individuals as Nathanial P. Banks, Alexander Ramsay, Montgomery Blair, Zachariah Chandler, Henry Winter Davis, B.F. Butler and a host of other public figures. In the years following the Civil

War, most radical Republicans adopted highly belligerent attitudes towards Great Britain. Their frequent public pronouncements on the matter kept the question of the annexation of British North America alive during those years, and yet, more often than not they were designed to serve some ulterior purpose, usually political gain.[9]

A war-psychosis and a deep-seated belief in the wrongs done to the United States by Great Britain during the Civil War undoubtedly attracted many Americans to the support of the Republican party. But there never seemed to be any singleness of purpose in talk of annexation and often times it seemed insincere. Of course, there did exist some genuine interest in the annexation of British-held territories, but at no time were such issues foremost in the minds of Americans as a whole. In contrast with the events of Reconstruction, the quarrel of Johnson with Congress, the elections of 1866 and '68, the impeachment trial, financial legislation and the dealings with Great Britain over the Alabama claims, the question of further territorial annexations was not only considered a side-issue, by some it was considered an impertinence.[10] Yet, to others it was an issue worthy of support and the radical Republicans catered their views specifically to these individuals. Seen in this light, the lack of sincerity and real drive behind American expansionism can be attributed to attempts by an organized political group to gain popularity and votes; an occurrence which by this time was becoming increasingly familiar in the American political tradition.

In spite of the rhetoric, it was evident to many that an undercurrent of expansionism still rested beneath the surface of American public opinion and that given a chance it might be utilized to produce important results. Seward, of course, had attempted various territorial annexations, including the isthmus of Panama and islands in the Pacific and the Caribbean. That Alaska was the only territorial enlargement achieved during his Secretaryship can be attributed to the Johnson administration's lack of control and inability to act decisively. The true test of the strength of expansionism in America would have been more likely to have occurred under a strong, capable, government willing to take bold steps in foreign policy. Perhaps naively, Americans greeted a new administration in 1868 as just such a government. The weak and relatively ineffective Johnson administration was now succeeded by what appeared to be a powerful, determined and aggressive government headed by a new President, General Ulysses S. Grant.

As a political factor, Grant was an unknown element. He came into office with tremendous prestige yet had no known political principles aside from the significant fact that he strongly sympathized with the radical faction of the Republican party. He appeared to be deeply interested in expansion and at his first Cabinet meeting found that his ministers were unanimous in their opinion that ultimately the whole of British North America would be included in the Union.[11] Grant himself made no secret of his desire to see the United States expand northwards, indeed, to John C. Hamilton he stated that one of his chief aims

was the absorption of Canada.[12]

Thus, with Grant in office and the radical Republicans in the saddle, expansion should have been the order of the day. But several important factors worked against any possibility of extending the political boundaries of the United States at this time. Firstly, Grant's plans were diverse. Rather than concentrating on placing pressure on British North America, his attention was diverted to other projects, such as the securing of a naval base in the Caribbean, a carry-over of one of Seward's schemes. The political manoeuvering of Grant's able Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, also ameliorated expansionist tendencies. While not completely averse to the notion of annexation, Fish was convinced that Britain would never yield to American pressure to cede any portion of her North American territories to the United States in recompense for the Alabama claims. The quiet but effective diplomacy exercized by Fish helped work toward a peaceful and amicable settlement over these claims and was also instrumental in reducing "annexation fever" during the Grant administration. Equally important in this regard, a rift had developed in the ranks of the radical Republicans. Largely a reaction to Grant's foreign policy. Sumner broke away from the main wing of the party and carried considerable support with him. This split, because it detracted from the administration's support and organization, further ate away at possible chances of a concerted drive toward expansionist goals.[13]

American governments, involved in the complexities of Reconstruction politics and at times overburdened to the point of

ineffectiveness, could hardly concentrate on expansion to the exclusion of domestic concerns. Against the backdrop of the post-Civil War period, the purchase of Alaska was an aberration. Nevertheless, due to a multiplicity of circumstances it was successfully consummated. While it may have been possible for the United States to further extend its continental boundaries during this period, it was never a likelihood. The radical wing of the Republican party displayed an active interest in the annexation of British North America during the years 1865-1871, but its main concern was the reorganization of domestic situations and the retention of power. While public opinion may have possibly sanctioned further expansion, an organized political group with sufficient strength to annex a portion of the British west or with the power to attempt the absorption of Canada never existed. British North America was, therefore, not actually threatened by American expansion during this era.

However, a perceived threat can be as effective a motivating force as a real one and for both Britain and Canada the American eagle menacingly appeared high on a perch of discontent, ready to swoop down upon its weaker neighbours. Concerned over the fate of the British empire, Imperial statesmen were clearly distressed over the state of Anglo-American relations following the Civil War. Canadian Confederation was one step towards lessening North American commitments and easing relations with the United States, but the British could ill afford to rest quietly. The American air was still thick with anti-British sentiment and especially after the purchase of Alaska, few could

have ignored the fact that American expansion was aimed specifically in the direction of British North America.

Late in 1868 a general election in Britain placed a liberal ministry in power with a large majority behind it headed by William E. Gladstone. Almost the first act of the new government was an attempt at settlement with the United States. In January, 1869, the Johnson-Clarendon Convention was brought forth for this purpose. It was, without a doubt, a disastrous failure and was thrown out by the United States Senate by a vote of 54-1. Senator Charles Sumner, at this time still Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, publicly lambasted the Convention and in a fantastic speech in the Senate suggested that Britain should cede all of British North America to the United States in satisfaction of the Alabama claims.[14] When news of this reached London, reaction in British government circles was one of utter distress. Lord Clarendon, Gladstone's Foreign Secretary, wrote grimly, "I believe that Grant and Sumner mean war; or rather that amount of insult and injury that must lead to it."[15]

Sumner was merely voicing the sentiments so frequently expressed by prominent radicals in the ruling Republican party. The British government, uncertain of the strength, conviction or sincerity of that group, did not dare, for the sake of Britain's North American interests, ignore their claims. War with the United States, however, was from Britain's point of view something to be avoided at all costs. Indeed, in Europe and in North America British foreign policy was becoming increasingly ineffec-

tive. The same statesmen forced to deal with the Grant administration had also to contend with Bismarck and Napoleon III. Since European affairs took precedence for Britain, a peaceful settlement of all problems in the New World was a necessity.

British North America became a political battleground during this tense period in Anglo-American relations. Great Britain had no intention of ceding any portion of her empire to the United States. A concerted effort was therefore made to encourage union of all her North American territories with Canada. Such a union had been contemplated by Imperial strategists for decades, but relations with the United States had now brought about a situation where such plans would have to be brought to a speedy realization in order that Britain could withdraw from North America with some dignity intact.[16]

Canadians realized that the situation was a critical one, perhaps the most critical in their early existence. Certainly the loud and often boisterous claims of American expansionists were the cause of concern in Canada especially after the purchase of Alaska had made so apparent their designs. But it is not without irony that the schemes of the radical Republicans only gave impetus to the British and Canadian plans of preserving the North American territories for the Empire. There is further irony in the fact that American expansionism was hardly the potent force it appeared to be. Indeed, the influence of the radical Republicans turned out to be only marginal and a serious threat of American expansion was never posed to Canada or the British North American west. But nevertheless, a real

threat was perceived and a plan of action was taken.

The ambitions of the Fathers of Confederation and the designs of British statesmen for the extension of Canada's boundaries westward to the Pacific were not to be long deferred. Speedily, almost hastily, the gears were set in motion for the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada and for British Columbia's entry into Confederation. In 1868 the British Parliament passed the Rupert's Land Act which paved the way for the territory's conveyance to Canada. Before any action could be taken, the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company, which administered the territory, had to be liquidated. Final negotiations with the company were completed in London in the summer of 1869. Through the prodding of the British government, the Hudson's Bay Company handed over the territory to Canada for the relatively paltry sum of 300,000 pounds.

Upon completion of the transaction, the Canadian government set out to take control of its new possession. However, one important fact had been precipitately overlooked. One of the greatest transfers of territory and sovereignty in history had been conducted as a mere real estate transaction. In its haste to gain control of the area the Canadian government failed to acknowledge the existence of its inhabitants, thereby bringing upon itself a crisis which threatened to reverse all of the precautionary measures taken to preserve Rupert's Land for Canada.[17]

When William McDougall, the Canadian-appointed Governor of the new territory arrived to take charge, he was met with armed resistance. The Indians, half-breeds and few whites based at

Red River had not even been officially notified of the transfer. Led by the Metis, or French half-breeds, and particularly guided by the exceptional abilities of Louis Riel, the settlers refused to allow McDougall entry into the territory until the Canadian government had negotiated for the transfer with their provisional government. Canada, fearing that the United States might take advantage of what was an acutely embarrassing incident, was forced to negotiate on the settlers' terms.

Undoubtedly, the outcome of the Red River "Rebellion" was decisive for the future of the British west. In the hands of the United States, Rupert's Land would have represented a wall forever containing Canada to the eastern half of the continent. The fear that American annexationists had caught Riel's ear and were advising him of dangerous alternatives prompted Canada to act decisively. The demands of the settlers were acceded to and in 1870 Rupert's Land was officially taken control of by Canada under the presence of a small but sufficiently overpowering expedition of Imperial troops. Significantly, it was the last act of British arms in North America and to avoid arousing the United States, Britain made this point clear to the American government.[18] Of equal significance, in satisfying the demands of the Red River settlers, the Canadian government had reluctantly created a new province - Manitoba.

With the Northwest successfully incorporated with Canada, the way was cleared for union with British Columbia. 1869, the year which saw the transfer of Rupert's Land, also witnessed the timely death of the Governor of British Columbia, Frederick Sey-

mour. The concurrence of these two events was undoubtedly a coincidence, but it proves interesting for they both had the same effect - they considerably speeded up the process of continental consolidation. Seymour had never expressed favour with the notion that British Columbia should join Confederation and his reluctance was an obstacle to union. Upon his death, the Canadian government succeeded in securing the appointment of Anthony Musgrave as British Columbia's new Governor. This appointment greatly facilitated the colony's imminent junction with Canada.

Musgrave was transferred from Newfoundland where he had not been successful in bringing the Atlantic colony into Confederation. In British Columbia, however, the prospects were brighter. In a dispatch from the British Colonial Office, August, 1869, Musgrave was notified that "the terms on which Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territory are to be united with Canada have been agreed to by the parties concerned." The new Governor was therefore ordered to "take such steps as you properly and constitutionally can for promoting the favourable consideration of this question (union with Canada)."[19] It was clear that Musgrave had been appointed to perform a specific duty and after the publication of the dispatch from the Colonial Office, it seems to have been taken for granted that union with Canada was British Columbia's fate. Indeed, Musgrave was to complete his task within a remarkably short period of time. He sparked a public debate upon the future of the Pacific colony and in time, persuaded even the colony's Legislative Council - part appointed, part elected - of the merits of entry into Confederation.

Of course, not all British Columbians were immediately convinced of the virtues of union with Canada. Most virulently opposed to the idea were a group of merchants centered in Victoria who openly favoured annexation to the United States. Conditions in British Columbia were such that an absence of an annexationist movement would be difficult to explain. Yet, although some agitation did occur, no organized movement developed.

In the autumn of 1869, a petition for annexation to the United States was circulated throughout the colony. Only forty-two people signed the petition and while a second effort later produced more signatures, the project seems to have been regarded as something of a joke. Curiously addressed to "His Excellency the President of the United States", the document arrived in Washington in December, 1869, where it received scant attention.[20] By this time the American government seems to have accepted the fact that British Columbia's immediate future rested with Canada. Of course, President Grant and other Americans still believed that Canada's eventual fate was absorption into the United States, but such plans contained no sense of urgency, nor were they of high priority.

This complacency is well reflected in the correspondence of the American Consul at Victoria and the American State Department. As late as the summer of 1869, Allen Francis was still submitting lengthy dispatches to Washington which urged some action on the part of the American government to annex the colony.[21] In the spring of 1869, Francis was called back to

Washington and was replaced by a new Consul at Victoria, David Eckstein. In his first report to Secretary of State Fish, August 8, 1870, Eckstein calmly predicted that the planned union of British Columbia with Canada would be successful.[22] This dispatch produced no visible excitement in the American capital.

However, the movement for annexation within the colony, as feeble as it may have been, caused some significant results. Extremist movements generally tend to bring about a reaction against themselves. Talk of annexation to the United States served to crystallize opinion in the colony which proved to be in favour of union with Canada. Ironically, agitation for annexation to the United States helped bring about a reaction from British Columbians favourable to Confederation. Interestingly, it has been suggested that the annexation petitions and the agitation surrounding them were deliberately designed to produce this reaction from the colonists who at times appeared indifferent to their own fate.[23]

In any event the destiny of British Columbia was already decided. Forces operating external to the isolated Pacific coast colony were busily working towards its entry into Canadian Confederation. Imperial pressure had been applied to hasten the day when that destiny would be realized. In March, 1870, under the guiding hand of Governor Musgrave the Legislative Council of the colony agreed upon terms of union with Canada. Delegates were appointed and sent to Ottawa where Canadian negotiators eagerly agreed to the proposed terms. In fact, so anxious was Canada to include British Columbia within its boundaries that the

terms of union were amplified upon and the colonial delegates returned home later that year enthralled with the promise of a railway to link the west coast with Canada.[24] In British Columbia this agreement was enthusiastically received and was ratified by a unanimous vote of the Legislative Council, January 18, 1871. Later that year, on July 20, British Columbia officially became the sixth province in Confederation. Canada had become a transcontinental nation.

Undoubtedly, 1871 was a momentous year in the history of North America. Not only did it witness the success of the Canadian movement for expansion to the Pacific, but it saw the beginning of a gradual easing of tension between the continent's two northern communities. In many ways this relaxation of animosity was the direct result of the triumph of Canadian expansion, for with the completion of one stage of Imperial policy in the New World came the first concrete signs of an Anglo-American reconciliation and the formal withdrawal of all British troops from North America.

The long, drawn-out, series of negotiations between the British and American governments to settle claims and disputes which were largely results of incidents which occurred during the Civil War finally came to a finale when an Anglo-American High Commission met at Washington in the spring of 1871. The product of this meeting was the Treaty of Washington, a significant agreement for several reasons. The treaty ended the aggravated friction between Great Britain and the United States and dealt with certain specific and important issues concerning

Canada. The fact that Canada was party to the treaty, represented in Washington by John A. Macdonald, was a matter of utmost importance. The agreement registered American acceptance of the fact that the United States was a neighbour of an independent North American nation, like itself stretching from sea to sea. In effect, when the Treaty of Washington was signed, May 8, 1871, The United States agreed, among other specifics, to share a continent with a self-governing Canada.[25]

That the American government should become party to such an agreement might at first sight appear incomprehensible. Was this the same government of the same nation which had earlier proclaimed its "natural right" to govern over all of North America? In this respect, the Treaty of Washington must have been difficult for American pride and ambition to accept. But no great loss was incurred in accepting the existence of Canada. Confederation offerred no serious challenge to the United States' continental supremacy. In fact, Americans could rest at ease with a weaker neighbour similar in heritage, culture and institutions. Notably, many Americans were still convinced that the Canadian experiment would not last and that its ultimate fate was union with the Republic.

American policy had only one major design with regard to Canada and that was the removal of all British military power from the continent. This was accomplished when the regiments sailed from North America late in 1871, leaving garrisons only at the naval bases of Halifax in the east and Esquimalt in the west. The departure of the last troops from the Citadel of

Quebec on November 11, 1871, was the sign of the birth of a new era. With the ending of British military presence in North America, the continental imperialism of the United States, in its territorial form, retreated forever. The political boundaries of the continent were now clearly drawn and showed two countries extending in tandem from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Curiously, it was the aggressive mood of the United States after the Civil War and the threatening gestures made by its government which aided in the creation of this second transcontinental nation. It had taken the United States more than half a century to expand from the eastern seaboard to the Pacific Ocean. The process of extending its frontier was both slow and painful. Canada, however, had accomplished this same feat within four short years of Confederation. Of course, Canadian expansion, while it parallels American expansion in direction, does not correspond to the American experience. For Canada, the process of continental consolidation was not part of an extension of a frontier, it was part of Imperial policy. But without the threat posed by the United States, that policy may never have reached fruition.

However, the fear which motivated and dominated Canadian expansion was not a new one. It was simply a variant of a much older fear which goes back as far as 1775 when, almost a year before they declared their independence, the thirteen colonies launched an attack on Quebec. This assault, and the repeated invasions of the War of 1812, bred in British North Americans the conviction that the United States was the main threat to

their independent existence on the continent. American expansion throughout the nineteenth century served to reinforce this paranoia and nurtered in British North Americans the irrepressible fear that the United States was rapidly fulfilling its self- proclaimed Manifest Destiny.

The American purchase of Alaska served to increase this fear considerably. During a period tainted with Anglo-American tension and dominated by a seeming resurgence of American expansionism, the purchase of Alaska was not a welcome event for British North Americans. By surrounding British Columbia on the Pacific, the purchase issued a warning which declared that Britain's position as a power on the North American continent was a vulnerable one. The purchase was, therefore, received as a challenge and was acted upon accordingly.

Undoubtedly, fear was a dominant force working upon the framework of power in North America. The American purchase of Alaska, because it served to increase the volume of that fear, aided in settling the question of a balance of power on the continent. It also aided in defining the rapidly developing North American political boundaries. Originally hailed as "one more Monarch dismissed from the continent", the American purchase of Alaska also hurried the day when the last Old World Monarchy retreated from North America. In doing so, however, it helped to create a new companion to share the continent with the United States.

Rather than hasten the annexation of British Columbia to the United States, the American purchase of Alaska helped frigh-

ten the colony into Confederation. In fact, the acquisition of Alaska, what was a lucky chance for the United States, was a signal for action to Canada and Great Britain. By increasing the fear of American penetration into the British North American west, it prompted decisive effrontery on the parts of Canada and Great Britain to call the American bluff of Manifest Destiny. The American purchase of Alaska was, therefore, an important contributing factor to the cumulative process of continental consolidation.

NOTES

1. Quoted from: J.P. Smith, "A United States of North America - Shadow or Substance? 1815-1915." C.H.R. vol. 26, June 1945, p. 109.

2. E.A. Miles, "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight - An American Political Legend." M.V.H.Q. vol. 13, 1926.

3. Quoted from: V.J. Farrar, The Annexation of Russian America to the United States. pp. 112-113.

4. F.W. Seward, Reminiscences of a Wartime Statesman and Diplomat pp. 221-223.

5. R.W. Winks, Canada and the United States - The Civil War Years p. 167.

6. Indeed, as one historian has noted, "Canada was the American expansionist's first love." A.K. Weinberg, Manifest Destiny. Gloucester Mass. Peter Smith, 1958 (first pub. 1935) p. 355.

7. Cong. Globe, 39th Congress, 1st sess. p. 3548.

8. Cong. Globe, 40th Congress, 2nd sess. p. 79. Senate Misc. Docs. No. 4.

9. J.P. Smith, "American Republican Leadership and the Movement for the Annexation of Canada in the 1860's." C.H.A. Annual Report, 1935, p. 74. And see J.P. Smith, "Radical Republicans Of the Early Reconstruction Period." unpublished Phd Thesis, Univ. Chicago, 1930. Smith argues that a great deal of American expansionism during this era was "window-dressing" to win the votes of anti-British ethnic groups.

10. T.C. Smith, "Expansion After the Civil War, 1865-1871." p. 247.

11. Allan Nevins, Hamilton Fish - The Inner History of the Grant Administration. N.Y., Frederick Ungar Pub. Co. 1936 (2 vols.) Vol. 1, pp. 124-128.

12. Ibid., pp. 212-213.

13. Ibid., pp. 149-169. Nevins deals extensively with the rift in the Republican party.

14. Ibid., pp. 147-152.

15. Quoted from: C.P. Stacey, "Britain's Withdrawal from North America, 1864-1871." C.H.R. vol. 36, Sept. 1955. p. 15.

16. W.A. Dunning, The British Empire and the United States. N.Y. Charles Scribner, 1914. pp. 266-267.

17. Among the most reliable secondary accounts of the transfer of Rupert's Land and the events surrounding the Red River resistance are, G.F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada. Tor. Univ. Tor. Press, 1936. and W.L. Morton, Manitoba; a History. Tor. Univ. Tor. Press, 1957. pp. 94-120.

18. W.L. Morton, The Critical Years, 1864-1867. Tor. Univ. of Tor. Press, 1964. pp. 243-244.

19. Earl Granville to Governor Musgrave, August 14, 1869. Colonial Office, Papers on the Union of British Columbia with the Dominion of Canada. 1869.

20. See: W. Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869" B.C.H.Q. 1940. and "A Further Note on the Annexation Petition of 1869." by the same author, B.C.H.Q. 1941.

21. Egs. see: Allen Francis to Hamilton Fish, July 6, 1869. Despatches from United States Consuls in Victoria, 1862-1906. Wash. Nat. Archives of the United States.

22. David Eckstein to Hamilton Fish, August 8, 1870. in Ibid.

23. See: W.L. Morton, The Critical Years, 1864-1867. p. 246 and M.A. Ormsby, British Columbia: a History. Vancouver, Evergreen Press, 1958. p. 244.

24. Canadian eagerness again proved hasty in this instance, for the promise of a railway to the Pacific was the source of political problems which plagued Canadian governments for the next decade and a half.

25. For a discussion of the events surrounding the treaty and the issues its negotiators grappled with, see: Goldwin Smith, The Treaty of Washington, 1871 - a Study in Imperial History N.Y. Ithaca, 1941.

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