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**Treaty of 1825—Correspondence Respecting the Boundary
between Russian America (Alaska) and British
North America**

by

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*Treaty of 1825—Correspondence Respecting the Boundary between Russian America (Alaska) and British North America.*¹

By JAMES WHITE, F.R.S.C.

(Read May Meeting, 1913.)

The correspondence contained in the following paper is an interesting contribution to the inner history of the negotiations that culminated in the signing of the Treaty of 1825 and which determined the boundary between Alaska and Canada. For a proper understanding of these documents a brief statement of the occurrences prior to February 1825, is necessary. Anyone desirous of further information should consult the Case, Counter-case and Appendices of "His Majesty's Government before the Alaska Tribunal," 1903.

September 16, 1821, Alexander I, Emperor of all the Russias, signed a ukase granting "the pursuits of commerce, whaling, and fishery, and of all other industry" on the northwest coast of America between Bering strait and *latitude 51° N.* to Russian subjects exclusively and prohibiting foreigners, under heavy penalties, from approaching these coasts within less than 100 Italian miles (geographical miles).

In November following, this decree was officially communicated to the Government of Great Britain by Baron de Nicolai. Sir Charles Bagot, British Ambassador at Petrograd (St. Petersburg), was informed by Count Nesselrode that "the object of the measure was to prevent the 'commerce interlope' of the citizens of the United States," who not only carried on an illicit trade in sea-otter skins but traded prohibited articles, especially gunpowder, with the natives of Russian America. Sir Charles reported to the British Government that "this extraordinary pretension has been adopted from, and is supposed to be justified by, the XIIth Article of the Treaty of Utrecht."²

¹ A summary of the below paper was presented to the Royal Society of Canada in 1913. Through the courtesy of Dr. A. G. Doughty, Dominion Archivist, the correspondence which forms the paper was copied from the Bagot papers in the Archives. In the hope that it might be supplemented and the record thus made more complete, publication was suspended pending an attempt by Mr. H. P. Biggar to procure additional correspondence in England. As Mr. Biggar was unsuccessful, the contributor intended making a personal attempt to secure it when in Great Britain in the summer of 1914. Unfortunately, the outbreak of war necessitated the abandonment of the idea. The correspondence is, therefore, published as presented two years ago.

² By Art. XII, French subjects were excluded "from all kinds of fishing . . . within 30 leagues" of the coasts of Nova Scotia.

In December, 1799, the Emperor Paul had signed a ukase granting to the Russian-American Fur Company exclusive rights to hunt and trade on the northwestern coast of America between latitude 55°N. and Bering strait and on the islands in the vicinity. This grant was not protested by other powers and the ukase of 1821 was virtually an extension of it southward and seaward. Between December, 1799, and September, 1821, however, the North West Company of Montreal and their successors, the Hudson's Bay Company, had reached the Pacific and established themselves on the coast and in the interior of what is now British Columbia.

Doubtless, principally at the instigation of the Hudson's Bay Co., the Government of Great Britain protested these extraordinary claims to jurisdiction over territory containing British trading posts and to the open ocean far beyond limits acknowledged by international law.

The United States also protested against the attempt to exclude American traders and whalers from this territory.

September 10, 1822, Count Lieven, Russian ambassador to Great Britain, suggested confidentially that Great Britain bring forward her claims to territory on the northwest coast of America "so as not be shut out by any agreement made between Russia and the United States."

January, 1823, Count Lieven informed George Canning, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that he was instructed to propose "that the question of strict right be temporarily set aside on the part of both" and that the differences "be adjusted by an amicable arrangement to be negotiated at St. Petersburg."

April, 1823, John Q. Adams, United States Secretary of State, suggested joint negotiations by Great Britain and the United States at St. Petersburg, and stated that the United States had no territorial claims as high as 51°N. lat. Canning wrote Sir Charles Bagot, British ambassador to Russia, that a joint negotiation would be mutually advantageous, as two maritime powers acting together could probably secure greater concessions than if acting separately.

In August, 1823, Bagot wrote Canning that Count Nesselrode considered "the proposed concert of measures between Great Britain and the United States" as the most agreeable mode in which the question could be brought under discussion."

Two months later, however, he wrote that, notwithstanding Adams' statement, the United States were "fully prepared" to assert an equal pretension with Great Britain and Russia to the whole coast as high as 61°N. basing their claim as the successors in title to Spain by virtue of the Treaty of Florida Blanca, 1819.

In December, 1823, President Monroe, in his Message to Congress, set forth the so-called "Monroe doctrine" which declared that the American continents were, thenceforth, "not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power."

In the same month, Rush proposed that Russia be limited on the south by latitude 55°, that Great Britain be limited on the west coast to latitude 51°N. to 55°N. and the United States on the north by latitude 51°N. As Great Britain had repeatedly refused to accept 49° and, as she was in joint occupation of the country as far south as 42°, this proposition did not err on the side of modesty.¹

Thenceforth, the negotiations proceeded separately.

April 17, 1824, the United States and Russia signed a treaty whereby it was agreed that citizens of the United States would not form any establishment upon the northwest coast of America north of latitude 54° 40' and that Russian subjects would not form any south of the same parallel.

In April and in August, 1824, Bagot made further concessions, but his proposals were rejected; doubtless owing to George Canning's strong opposition to the Holy Alliance which had given great offence to Russia.

As it was evident that Bagot could not accomplish anything, he was transferred to The Hague. Stratford Canning succeeded Bagot in December, 1824, and the treaty was signed February 28, 1825.

The correspondence contained in this contribution was confidential and has not hitherto been published. It throws considerable light upon the secret opposition of the United States and demonstrates the insincerity of Middleton, the American minister.

Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning

St. Petersburg, Oct., 5, 1823

.....

I have had one or two preparatory and informal conversations with Mr. Poletica upon our North West Coast business, but we are purposely delaying matters to give time for the arrival of Mr. Hughes, the American Charge d' Affaires at Stockholm, who is expected here every day with instructions for Mr.

¹ On January 23, 1824, Stratford Canning, British minister, to the United States, wrote Sir Charles Bagot: "there are so many points of rivalry between the two countries, with so much of prejudice on the one side and so much forwardness, not to say impudence, on the other, that I almost despair of ever seeing my wishes on that subject realized. I see that you are about to plunge into your Northwestern negotiations, and I congratulate you most heartily on having at least to swim in that element without an attendant Yankee offering a cork-jacket, and watching his opportunity to put your head under water."

Middleton which he has brought from Washington and which we suppose to relate to this business. To tell you the truth I am not very well content with Mr. Poletica's appointment to discuss this question—not that I object to him, but to his powers, which are nothing, as, according to a note of Nesselrode to me, he is only appointed 'à entamer avec moi (and Mr. Middleton) des pour parlers relatifs aux différends qui se sont élevés' &c—and the note goes on to say that 'ces pour parlers auront pour but de préparer les voies à l'ajustement définitif de ces différends.' In other words that he is to employ himself in picking our brains during Nesselrode's absence without having as it should seem, authority to speak in the name of the Government to any point. I have half a mind to exceed my instructions, and to try if I cannot get a degree of longitude instead of latitude for our line of demarcation. It appears to me that if we take a degree of latitude we leave Russia with undefined pretensions to the Eastward, and in the Interior of the Continent whereas a degree of longitude would describe both the boundary on the Coast and within the Continent at the same time. I do not know whether Russia would listen to such a proposition, but it would I think be a great point if we could get somewhere about the 139th degree of West Longitude as the line. This would cut the Coast about Behring's Bay,¹ to the South of which Russia has in fact no pretensions whatever, to discovery or anything else. This would make the latitude of our boundary about 59½ North instead of 57, with which you say you would be contented. If I am to secure 57 it may at all events be as well to begin by claiming something more, and I have some notion of bringing forward this idea. Before I can have your answer I shall be deep in the whole business, but I should still like to have your notions upon this point. You may depend upon it that the Americans will try to interfere somehow or other in our boundary negotiation as distinguished from the maritime jurisdiction question. Mr Middleton has already told me clearly that he thinks that the United States have an interest in the business—and upon what grounds think you? because Spain had by treaty the right to trade with our coasts in that quarter, and that the United States by their last treaty with Spain have acquired all the rights in that respect, and stand in her shoes. Is not this preposterous? Mr. Hughes and the United States put one in mind of your speech at Liverpool. I cannot tell you with what delight I read it and chiefly for a reason which was perhaps not actuating you at the moment. It was the true and only mode of replying to the childish and malignant attack made on the 4th of July last year by Adams against England. A Secretary of State speaking in the manner he did ex cathedra of a Power in amity!!! Yours was the only way of making him ashamed of himself. Had you this speech in your head when you made yours? I have not yet heard of The Jasper's arrival in England, but I hope that the next post will bring me accounts of her. Our letters from England are to the 19th of 1st month. I doubt whether I shall have occasion to send you a Messenger before the return of The Emperor or at least of Nesselrode for nothing—absolutely nothing is to be learnt or done in their absence. I may indeed receive news from Lord Strangford which may be worth a Courier, and in that case I shall despatch one forthwith. This is all I have to say at this moment.

I am, &c.,

CHARLES BAGOT

¹ Just west of present Yakutat bay.

Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning

St. Petersburg

October 29th, 1823

Private, By Messenger Walsh.

"Who am I to side with? That seems to be in point of fact, the question to which Mr. Middleton's new instructions have given rise. Am I to side with America, and deny all claims of Russia to any part of the N.W. Coast South of the 61st degree of North Latitude? or am I to side with Russia, and deny all claim of the United States to any part of the coast north (for example) of the mouth of The Columbia river? or am I to side with neither—to admit that we have all three equal pretensions—and to give it to be understood that we would consent to divide the whole coast between the 42d and 61st degrees as well as we can, and according to our respective conveniences?

These are questions much too important in their consequences for me to give an opinion upon, even if I could form one in my own mind, which I can not, until I know more accurately than I do whether our principal object is to secure the fur trade on the continent for the Hudson's Bay Company, or to secure to ourselves a share in the Sea otter trade with China—or to secure both.

The pretensions of the United States are in the true spirit of their usual encroachment; and as there is something plausible in their argument, they may I think contrive to make this a troublesome business. The object of the United States is, I know, to obtain a boundary which shall give them both banks and the exclusive navigation of the Columbia River from its mouth to the Stony Mountains,¹ and, to secure this, they would desire a line drawn from about Widbegs² harbour, in something more than 46°N. Latitude (I use the map you sent me from the office) to the most northern bend of the river in something more than 51°N. Latitude: but I think, from a few words which Mr. Middleton let fall that they will not insist very stubbornly upon coming cranking in cutting "this huge Halfmoon, this monstrous cantle" out of the territory of the Hudson's Bay Company (who have actually a Post at Athabaska³ at the very bend of the river), provided that they can secure the embouchure of the Columbia.

To this perhaps there would be no great objection, as, in regard to the Americans, any fixed boundary may be better than none; and the adjourned question of the Columbia river, which has, I believe, only 4 or 5 years more to sleep, would thus be quietly and finally disposed of in a general arrangement. But shall we consent, when boundaries are once established, to give freedom of trade, fishery, &c., to the other two parties in our allotment? I suspect that if we do, Jonathan will catch a world more otters than we shall—that he will get the whole of that trade with China into his own hands. And that he will contrive both to stir up and arm the Indians against us and our Company in the interior of the Country.

¹Rocky mountains.

²Whidbey harbour, now known as Grays harbour, Pacific coast of the United States, lat. 47°N.

³Boat Encampment, at the "Great bend" of the Columbia river, lat. 52° 04'N., long. 118° 36'W.; the west end of the portage *via* Athabaska pass.

All this however is high matter upon which I dare not open my lips till I hear again from you. I have by no means forgot that your despatch of the 12th of July leads me to expect further instructions from you so soon as you should know more precisely than you then did the views of the American Government in regard to our concert of measures, and I think it very probable that I may hear from you upon the subject even before this letter reaches England. Still however I have thought it advisable to dispatch this Messenger to you if it is only to enable you to compare the language held to me by Mr. Middleton, with that which Rush may be holding to you in London; and moreover to remind you, in case it should be necessary, that if I am to conclude any thing here jointly with Mr. Middleton, the full powers which I have are inadequate, as they were drawn up before there was any question of concert with America, and as they do not specifically empower me to treat about boundary even with Russia.

I am, &c.,

CHARLES BAGOT

Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning

St. Petersburg, December 29, 1823

.....

"The American Minister here has drawn up a huge and lengthy memorial about N. W. Coasts which he designs to give in to this Government. But he has not done so yet, waiting I believe to know a little the nature of the instructions which I may receive from you. It is a sort of narrative to show that Russia has no real rights upon these Coasts South of the 61st degree, and is drawn from Humboldt, Lisiansky and all the voyagers in the world. He has had one conversation upon the general question with Nesselrode in which he took a very high tone, and got, as I am assured, a very sharp rap on the knuckles. He has by order of his Government given in a note to Count Nesselrode claiming indemnity for the loss of the voyage of an United States ship which had (last year I believe) entered the Port of Nov Archangelsk or Sitca, and had been warned by the Russian Governor there, under the Ukase of 1821, to quit the coast in 24 hours. He has not yet received any answer to this note but I know that he has been invited to a conference with Count Nesselrode tomorrow and I think it is probable that he may desire to see him upon this very subject.

I believe that the idea of the Imperial Court removing next year to Moscow is abandoned. The expense is found to be too great—and moreover the Prince and Princess of Orange and the Duke and Duchess of Saxe Weimar are expected to arrive here in the Summer.

I am, &c.,

CHARLES BAGOT

Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning

St. Petersburg

Febry. 17th, 1824

Private, By Sardinian Courier to Berlin

The Sardinian [minister] sends a Courier to-night to Turin via Berlin which gives me the opportunity of sending this letter and a couple of despatches to the care of Clanwilliam and thus avoiding at least the Russian Post Offices. It sounds odd to tell the Secretary of State that I am too busy to write to him to whom it is my particular business to keep writing, but such is the fact, and like Rabelais' semiquaver friar, I must speak in monosyllables.

I had yesterday my first interview with the Plenipotentiaries Nesselrode and Poletica respecting our N. W. Coast Convention, and we meet again to-morrow. As I was getting into my carriage to go to the conference, Mr Middleton, to whom I had communicated the fact and the reasons of my being instructed to treat separately in this affair, and who had been mightily embarrassed by the intelligence, called upon me and stated totidem verbis that he should think it necessary to protest against any territorial division between Russia and England of any parts of the Coasts in question as prejudicing more or less the claims of His Government founded on the Treaty of Washington, and this, notwithstanding the assurance which I had given him that I should insist upon the insertion of a clause in any convention which I might conclude which should save those pretensions. Upon arriving at Nesselrode's I thought it my duty to acquaint him with what Mr. Middleton designed to do, and after discussing what he *could* do, we agreed to proceed in our business. The fact is that he could do nothing, nor does any agreement which we may make with Russia preclude the United States from bringing forward hereafter any pretensions which they may think they have to any privileges, or rights, territorial or other, within the allotments assigned either to us or to Russia. I do not deny that Russia would come to the discussion of any such pretensions with increased advantage *after* a Convention of Limits with us. This Russia sees, and it makes Her as anxious as I am to conclude the business with us as soon as possible. Pray do not conceive that I am not following your prescription as to the mode of treating Middleton, or that I am not upon the best possible footing with him when I tell you that I am not sorry that he should be both defeated and disappointed in this business, not on his account, because he must ride to order and do his best, but on account of the perfidious Adams. Middleton tells me that he regrets the course which we take because he now feels in a scrape for not having sooner executed his original instructions instead of waiting to see the result of the proposal made to us for a concert of measures—and what do you imagine those original instructions were? Nothing less than to propose to Russia to proceed to divide the whole coast in question between Her and the United States to our entire exclusion. It is even so—I had it from his own lips yesterday that such were his instructions, and an hour afterwards I had from those of Poletica that he had actually made to him this proposal. Now there does appear to me to have been a baseness in this business on the part of Adams which nobody but Adams was capable of. But this trick has failed—I shall conclude certainly speedily, and I think satisfactorily, our separate arrangements, and Adams may bellow as much as he pleases.

My Powers are hardly as full as they ought to be for the *territorial* part of the question, but they have been accepted as sufficient upon my assurance that under them I should confidently sign any convention consistent with my instructions without any apprehension whatever of being disavowed.

I have left off writing to you about The Emperor. He is now in the regular train of recovery—but He has been very ill—and there was a moment of great inquietude about Him, more than you would think upon reading my despatches which, going by the post, I had tempered a little.

Many thanks for sending me the copy of your private letter of the 16th of Sept. to H. Wellesley. I will take good care not to sin in future de ce coté là. I will not send you the letter back by this occasion, but by the first perfectly safe one which occurs. I thank you also exceedingly for your letter of the 29th of last month which I received last night by the post. It was very considerate of you to write it. It has set me quite at ease. What I did, I did with reflection, but not without rage and fury in my heart. I have other letters of yours to answer and *thank* you for, but I reserve myself for a better opportunity.

I send you the answer of this Govt. to the American proposition about private property in maritime war. Nesselrode is proud of that paragraph which shows that he is not duped by the plausibility of the American overture, but I never expected to hear any more of the armed neutrality. The Greek conference despatch has been exceedingly well received here. My last letters from England are to the 30th of January. We are looking out with great interest for the King's Speech. Lieven's Courier would I suppose wait for it, but we may have it the day after tomorrow.

It is determined that the marriage of the Grand Duke Michael with the Princess of Wurtemberg shall take place on Friday in The Emperor's own room. There will be a ball at the Court in the evening, but the great Fêtes are put off till after Easter. I fear that this letter is much less legible than that of yours which you feared might be so undecypherable, but I am too hurried and busy to think of my round text.

I am &c

CHARLES BAGOT

Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning

St. Petersburg,
Febry, 28, 1824

Private, By Colonel Loucadou to Berlin

I wrote to you on the 17th of this month to acquaint you with the protest which the American Minister had threatened to make against any territorial division between us and Russia of the N. W. Coast of America. I now write to tell you that I believe that this threat was made in the moment of vexation at learning that I had received instructions to negotiate separately in this question and that, upon cooler reflection, Mr Middleton has given up the idea of carrying it into effect. When I first mentioned his menace to Ct. Nesselrode he, in order to defeat his project, wrote him the official note of which I enclose a copy.

This note was crossed by one from Middleton asking for an interview. The interview took place three days ago, and I learn from Ct. Nesselrode that Mr. Middleton abstained from making any remarks whatever upon *our* negotiation, and had given in to him the projet of a convention which Ct. Nesselrode thought very moderate and reasonable. This projet contains 3 articles. The first assures to both parties the free navigation of the whole of the Pacific—thus quietly getting rid of the Russian maritime pretension. The 2d stipulates that The United States shall not make settlements North nor Russia settlements South of the 55th degree of N. Latitude, and the 3d binds the United States to sell no arms and ammunition to the natives on the Russian American coasts. This projet is, I have no doubt, the modification of that with which Mr. Middleton was originally furnished to negotiate about territorial demarcation and every thing else *without us and to our exclusion*, and that, if he had had to act with me, and had had our appui he would have contended for much more than he now does. Nesselrode and Poletica are also of this opinion—but it is all very well as it is, and we shall each follow our respective courses without collision, as it appears to me, of any sort. The duplicity however of the American Government, as it regards us, has, you may depend upon it, been extreme, and I heartily hope that Squinty Adams may lose his election for it.

I have had three conferences with the Russian Plenipotentiaries—I shall probably have another at the beginning of next week after Nesselrode has seen The Emperor, and that conference I hope may be favorable and final as far as our general agreement goes. This Government is fighting me very hard about the 55th degree which they pretend to adhere to as a point of national dignity being the limit assigned by Paul's charter to the Russian American Company. At my first conference I proposed verbally Chatham Straits, Lynn Canal and Mount Elias or the 140th degree of W. Longitude. This was taken for consideration, and at the 2d conference a contreprojet was offered to me verbally, and afterwards given to me for consideration in writing. I enclose a copy of it. You will see that it is inadmissible. But as it is evident to me that I cannot avoid giving some *lisière*, however narrow, upon the mainland and as I conscientiously think that there is much reason in an argument which has been strongly urged against my first projet viz: that if Chatham Straits are the boundary, the United States, under their convention with us, will have the right of visiting, to the great annoyance of Russia, all the islands and parages between those Straits and the continent. I gave in at my last conference the amended projet of which I enclose you a copy stating that I was at the end, and beyond the end of my instructions, and that I could really go no further. Much discussion took place, but Nesselrode ended by taking my new projet for reference to The Emperor, and I anxiously hope that at our next meeting I may be told that it will be assented to. If it is, the rest will be matter of easy adjustment,—and we may in a few days finish the Treaty when I shall despatch a Messenger with it to England. I know that I exceed the letter of my instructions in ceding the islands North of Prince of Wales and Duke of York¹ Islands, but I do not think that I am acting contrary to the spirit of them, and if I can get, as I thus should do, the 56th degree as the Southern boundary a *lisière* of about 30 miles on the continent and the 140th or 139th degree of W. Longitude, we shall effectually secure all the essential objects and interests of the Hudson's Bay Company. Ct. Nesselrode has asked me whether I should object to a stipulation not to sell arms and ammunition to the natives on the Russian Allotment. I have told him that I should not object.

¹Present Zarembo and Wrangell islands,

I send this letter to Clanwilliam by a Colonel Loucadou, a Prussian, who goes to night en Courier to Berlin. I had not intended to report my progress in the negociation till I should do so officially and in despatch, but Loucadou's departure is a tempting opportunity to write, and it was at least desirable that you should know as soon as possible that there was an end of Middleton's protest.

Neither Count Nesselrode nor I have yet received any news from Constantinople since Minciaky's arrival.

The Emperor goes on well, but is still in His room—and I suppose that it may be still a month before He is on His horse.

I am &c

CHARLES BAGOT

Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning

St. Petersburg,

March 10, 1824

Private, By Russian Courier

I had expected that I should by this time have been enabled if not to send you a Messenger with the definite arrangements respecting The N. W. Coasts of America, at least to have told you that I had so far come to an understanding with the Russian Plenipotentiaries, as that there remained little more to do than to put our agreement into good and due form; I still hope that I shall very shortly have it in my power to do so, but I find, since I wrote to you on the 28th of last month, that whatever disposition there may have been on the part of this Government to recede from the territorial pretensions advanced by the Oukaze of 1821, there is an invincible reluctance on the part of The Emperor to renounce any part of those advanced by The Emperor Paul to the Russian American Company in 1799. These pretensions extend, as you are aware, to the 55th degree of N. Latitude, but whatever may be the extension allowed to them so far as regards the islands upon the coast, it cannot be maintained that they extend to the same degree of latitude upon the continent, and even if it could, they would be inadmissible, under the stipulated basis of our negociation (viz: that of the mutual convenience of the two parties) as interfering directly with the *actual present* interests of England in those quarters.

In my last letter I acquainted you with the amended projet which I had offered in consequence of the contre-projet given to me by the Russian Plenipotentiaries in answer to my original proposition. This amended projet of mine has been replied to by insisting upon the first contre projet as being strictly according to our "convenances mutuelles." To this reply I have prepared a rejoinder which I shall give in at our conference the day after tomorrow. Upon this rejoinder the negotiation must depend. I dare go no further without specific orders to do so.

If by the cession of the Prince of Wales's Island, reserving to His Majesty the islands lying between it and the continent or high as the 56 $\frac{1}{2}$ th degree (the point from which it is proposed that a narrow strip shall be allotted to Russia upon the mainland, and which shall follow the bend of the coast Northward)

some equivalent concession can be obtained in respect to the longitudinal demarcation to the Westward in the higher latitudes I may perhaps find it advisable to exceed (very largely I admit) the letter of your instructions by assenting to some such limit rather than submit to the inconvenience which might, and probably would arise from a protracted delay in the settlement of the question. But I shall in no case venture to make any further cession, and I shall feel it my duty to suspend the whole negotiation if any further advantage is insisted upon by the Russian Government.

When I write to you officially upon this matter I shall of course send you in greater form the details above of the negotiation, but as it has been protracted rather more than I at first expected, I have thought that you would like to know privately and shortly how we are going on.

The negotiations with the American Ministers are not yet concluded.

I am &c

CHARLES BAGOT

Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning

St. Petersburg,
March 29, 1824

Private, by Messenger Draffin

You will perhaps think from my long despatch about N. W. Coasts that I have worked myself into a rage upon the subject. This is not so—but I now know this Government *well*, and I wish to impress upon you that in a question such as that in hand, they must be dealt with as you would deal with a horse-dealer. Their whole conduct in the late negotiation has been of the most huckstering and pedlarlike character, and in my opinion they will not be brought to reason, unless they are told roundly that if they will not arrange the matter equitably and according to our mutual present conveniences, they shall not be *allowed* to settle any where upon the islands or continent South of their present lowest establishment, viz: Sitca. They have not a shadow of claim below this point, and very little above it, to stand upon. It is too much to claim to the 51st degree (they might equally well have claimed to the 42d) and then to treat their retraction of a preposterous pretension as a concession with which they may be permitted to market. The Emperor Paul's pretension to the 55th degree in 1799 was never notified to any Power upon earth. In the affair of Nootka Sound, only nine years before, the Empress Catherine told the Court of Spain (see Annual Register, 1790), that she had no pretensions on these coasts which interfered with theirs, and theirs extended to the 60th degree. In the instructions given by Louis the XVIth (no bad geographer) to La Perouse in 1785, it was never supposed that Russia had any claims whatever upon the Continent and it was doubted whether She had the right of occupancy in all the Kurile and Aleutian Islands. These instructions are so remarkable that I cannot resist enclosing to you an extract of them.

I hope that you will read my despatch and its enclosures with the map before you, but that you may see at once how very liberally I have been dis-

posed to deal with Russia I send you a sketch of my successive offers to satisfy Her. I certainly (whatever you and the Hudson's Bay Company may be disposed to do) could not venture further, and I suspect that if my offers had been accepted I ran no small risk of being disapproved by you.

As to the maritime question that I suppose *must* be settled and I think this Country is mad not to see that by making quietly a recantation which, if it were to stand bald and alone, would be a very mortifying thing to their pride and dignity.

Nesselrode would have been very tractable, as I know that at the bottom of his heart, he thinks the Ukaze indefensible and the line of territorial demarcation a matter of very secondary importance to either party. But Poletica having been called upon to defend the Ukaze when he was Minister in America, feels his amour propre concerned, and they are both under the dominion of the Russian American Company at the head of which is an old Admiral Mardwinoff, an honest man, but mighty obstinate, and who mistakes this obstinacy for patriotism.

I do not know exactly how Middleton is going on with his Convention upon the subject, but I believe that there is some little hitch, growing as I imagine, out of the liberty to trade on the Russian coasts upon which The United States insist very much. I know nothing else upon which there can be any hitch, as there is no boundary to fix.

As Middleton and I act separately the Russians of course try to play us off one against the other but hitherto without success.

I am &c.

CHARLES BAGOT

Sir Charles Bagot to Mr. George Canning

St. Petersburg

Augt. 24, 1824

Here is pretty work, and here is pretty upshot of all your, and Lord St. Helens and my labours about North West Coasts. I can hardly figure your surprize when you first read my despatch upon the subject—but it is all true—true as Gospel, and I believe that you have as much chance of getting Moscow ceded to Great Britain as of inducing this Country to yield upon the three points on which we have split. I believe that it is not necessary for me to say more to you at present than I have said in my despatch, though I shall have much to say when we meet in England. My opinion is that both Nesselrode and Poletica are now afraid of signing any thing upon the subject in which there are not great & signal advantages secured to Russia. There has, I understand, been an immense clamour raised against them for supposed sacrifices of Russian interests in the Convention made with the United States; and they hope & believe that it will not be ratified in America. It is true that there certainly are points stipulated for in your last projet which were not in contemplation in our former discussions, but still this would not sufficiently account for my finding the P. P. so much more difficult to deal with than they were 3 months ago.

On Friday night last I gave in my projet. On Saturday we had our first conference when I immediately suspected the turn which things would take. On Sunday Mr. Poletica called upon me with the Russian Contreprojet when I told him frankly the extent of my discretion, or rather non-discretion, upon the three points most immediately at issue. We have [?had] a very long and earnest conversation which ended by his telling me, honestly enough, that he thought the case really hopeless. The conference of the next day proved it so. As to Nov:—Archangelsk they told me that they had no doubt that at the expiration of ten years, the advantages which the establishment would have derived from its having been frequented by foreign Ships would make the Russian Companies desire a further extension of time, but that they were frightened at the words *for ever*. The Points however upon which scarcely any discretion which you could have given me would have brought us to an understanding were, the perpetual freedom of trading and navigating upon the lisière, if by trading was meant trading with the natives—and the opening *at all* the coast from the 60th degree to Behrings Strait. On the first of these points they contend (Have they not some reason on their side?) that the cession of a coast in nominal Sovereignty saddled for everlasting with such privileges to foreigners was no cession at all. And as to the second, that they were, by undisputed occupancy and possession as unquestionably Masters of the whole of that coast as of the coasts of Livonia or Courland, and that nobody should come there—sic volunt. I asked whether, by their convention with the United States; the Americans were excluded from visiting these coasts. They answered that such was their *idea* of the convention whatever might be that of the Americans, and Mr. Poletica told me privately that the Russian Minister at Washington had orders to give if it were necessary, this interpretation to the agreement, and that he thought it probably [?probable] that, upon this very point, the Americans would refuse to ratify—a circumstance which he should *not* regret.

As soon as I saw the determination which this Government had taken I affected the utmost indifference on our part as to whether was signed a treaty or not—but it was mere affectation, for I see too well that infinite inconvenience may arise, and that shortly, from our not having been able, at this particular time, to come to an understanding. I regret it greatly on public grounds and on personal grounds also, as I should like much to have been the person to sign a Treaty of such magnitude and importance and I should have ended my days here handsomely by doing so. But Dies aliter visum est, and I cannot at all see what is now to be done.

I am, &c

CHARLES BAGOT