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A SUGGESTION FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE CORRESPONDENCE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH WITH THE RUSSIAN CZARS

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THE correspondence which forms the subject of this communication begins on April 25, 1561, with a letter from the Queen to Czar Ivan the Terrible, and ends in April 1603 with a letter from Czar Boris to Elizabeth. The frequent intercourse between England and Russia during this period has produced in forty-two years probably more than a hundred letters. Of these ninety-eight have been identified ; others are mentioned which cannot be found, probably destroyed by accident in the course of the last three centuries. In any case the considerable amount of letters which we possess is deserving of notice. Some of them are simply short safe-conducts given by the Queen to Englishmen going to Russia, but these are few, the great mass of the correspondence consisting of long letters exchanged by the monarchs on important commercial and diplomatic subjects.

Ninety-eight letters for forty-two years give an average of two and a quarter letters yearly ; but it must be remembered that the diplomatic relations between England and Russia were not regularly maintained during all these years. In fact, three long intervals occur : the first from 1561 to 1567, the second from 1575 to 1581, and the third from 1594 to 1597. If we deduct these eighteen years of inaction from the whole number of forty-two years, we shall find that the ninety-eight letters we possess have been written during thirty-three years, and that raises the yearly average to three.

This valuable and curious correspondence has not yet attained the distinction of a systematic and critical edition. Moreover, it has to be looked for in several different texts. In England some letters were printed by Hakluyt in his 'Principal Navigations,' and by Bond in his editions of Fletcher's and Horsey's works. Since that time the study of the subject has not been undertaken by any English historian. In Russia the first to make use of some of these documents was Karamzine, the father of Russian historiography; he even published some fragments of them in his 'Russian History,' which appeared between 1816 and 1829. His conclusions on the Anglo-Russian relations are interesting. He says:

'Our intercourse with Britain, based on mutual advantages without any dangerous competition in policy, took a special character of sincerity and friendship, gave a new proof of the czar's wisdom and a new aspect of glory to his reign.'

Some twenty years later Hamel,¹ taking up the study of the relations of England and Russia, published a few specimens of the correspondence between the two courts in the sixteenth century. The Manuscripts Department of the Academy of Sciences of Petrograd has preserved all his papers, and volume 33 of this collection is made up of copies taken from the English records. These papers contain some new letters of Elizabeth, but, unhappily, the copies are very defective. A number of royal letters were published in 1875 by Tolstoy² with other documents concerning the Anglo-Russian relations, but his volume, though beyond doubt, after that of Hakluyt, the most valuable for the study of this correspondence, stops with the year 1593. Though his work contains both the Russian and English texts of the documents it seems to have attracted little attention in England.

¹ *England and Russia.*

² *The First Forty Years of Intercourse between England and Russia.* St. Petersburg.

The thirty-eighth volume of the Collection of the Imperial Historical Society in Petrograd contains another series of documents concerning the Anglo-Russian relations ; these have been printed from the collection of 'English Books' preserved in Moscow amongst the records of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. These books were made up from copies and ancient translations of English documents. We find there seventeen Russian translations of Queen Elizabeth's letters which have never been published before. Most of these seem to have survived only in that form, and the English originals have not hitherto been discovered.

These are the principal publications in which we must look for the correspondence of Queen Elizabeth with Russia ; but, of course, the English Calendars of State Papers and the volumes of the Historical Manuscript Commission have to be consulted, as also some great Russian collections.

The undoubted fact that Russia has hitherto done more for the study and publication of documents concerning the Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations than has been done in England is easily explained by the relative importance of this intercourse in the cause of the country. For England Russia had only a commercial interest, Muscovy becoming from 1553 a new foreign market, one of many now opened to the activity of English merchants. For Russia England was the first country which established a regular intercourse with the land of the Czars. The English were the first to live and trade in Russia, and their doctors, apothecaries, and engineers have played the part of the first civilisers of the country.

If many letters have been printed, many others have remained unedited amongst the Records. Some of them are originals and some copies. Eighteen originals of Queen Elizabeth's letters are to be found in the already mentioned records of Moscow, in the collection of 'English Letters.' Beautiful originals of the Czars' letters are preserved in the Public Record Office ('S.P. Foreign Royal Letters,

Russia'), also in the Bodleian ('Ashmolean' and 'Tanner'). The Manuscripts Department of British Museum possesses many letters, most of them copies, especially in the Cotton ('Nero') and Lansdowne collections; two letters will be found at Cambridge. The Manuscript Department of the Academy of Sciences of Petrograd must not be forgotten, because of the invaluable copies by Hamel, the originals of some of which seem to have since disappeared.

The letters of Queen Elizabeth were generally written in Latin, though after 1570 some are in English. The Latin letters were immediately translated into English, and thus many of them are to be found in the Records in a Latin original with English copies. The letters of the Czars were written in Russian, but there exist also two specimens in German, one dated April 10, 1567, and the other April 1, 1569; all the later letters are in Russian. The original manuscripts are very beautiful; they were written on parchment, the first lines in gold, in a large clear handwriting. The seals, with the double-headed eagle, are often preserved unbroken. The letter begins with a short preamble, always the same, with the great title of the Czar, enumerating separately all the provinces of his vast empire. This was called in Russia 'the long title.' As to the English queen she used always the title, 'Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queene of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith &c.' and her letters had no preamble. At the end of them we find the subscription of the Queen, which was not the custom of the Russian Chancery. When she addresses the Czar, her letters are richly ornamented with gold, but when she addresses his lieutenant, Godounov, they are simpler in appearance and smaller in size.

The letters, whether originals or copies, are generally dated: those of the Czars by the year of the Creation, those of the Queen by the year of the Incarnation.

The style of the two correspondents is very different. The letters of the Czars are in that respect mediaeval

documents. If the preamble and the title are always long and uniform, the rest of the letter lacks any definite order ; its style is heavy and loaded with repetitions, and even a Russian cannot always easily come to a clear understanding of the document. The Czar's letter is generally long, for it begins by summarising the preceding letter of the Queen, to which it gives an answer. This custom has its value, because it gives sometimes a *résumé* of a letter that has disappeared. But if we overlook the defects of the style, we must recognise that we have in Czar Ivan a most fascinating writer ; his letters are full of energy and vehemence, they show a force and vigour characteristic of the man—the intelligent and proud despot.

Compared with the writings of her Russian correspondent the letters of Queen Elizabeth are quite modern ; short and simple, expressing clearly the ideas of their author, they are generally easy and agreeable to read. To the vehement force and rudeness of her correspondent Elizabeth opposes a great moderation and diplomatic ability, with a spice of irony ; under the cloak of very friendly and sometimes modest phraseology we note a careful choice of words, and a general tendency to promise much and carry out as little as possible.

The three successive reigns of the Russian czars, Ivan the Terrible, Feodor, and Boris, naturally divide this correspondence into three periods.

Of ninety-eight letters sixty-five are written by Elizabeth, and only thirty-three by her three correspondents. For the first period we have twenty-eight letters of the Queen and only eleven of the Czar ; in the second reign the proportion is twenty-five to thirteen, and in the third twelve to eight. It will thus be seen that though the English queen wrote many more letters than her Russian correspondents, her correspondence shows a falling off in the latter part of her reign. Of these three epochs the first presents the greatest interest for two reasons ; because it coincides with the interesting period of the origins of

the Anglo-Russian relations and treats not only important commercial subjects, but debates also questions of great diplomatic importance. Again, it reflects the mighty personality of Ivan the Terrible, who remains an unsolved enigma for the conscientious historian.

We have no intention to give here a detailed account of the various questions debated in these letters. A short study on this question has been already printed by the present writer in the *American Historical Review*¹ and therefore it is only necessary to give here a brief review of the principal subjects of this correspondence.

For the first period they were :

1. The possibility of a political alliance between England and Russia ;
2. A plan of Czar Ivan to seek shelter in England in case of revolution and mutiny in his country ;
3. A matrimonial project concerning the marriage of the Czar with Lady Mary Hastings.

While the views of Elizabeth were exclusively commercial, Ivan had political plans ; the Queen hoped to obtain commercial advantages for the English company trading in Russia, the Czar wished to make her conclude a political alliance against Poland and Sweden ; this was impossible for England, the principal enemies of the Czar being her friends. But the different phases of this project are interesting to study. The Anglo-Russian treaty, published in Rymer under *anno* 1623 under the title 'De Intercursu Mercandis cum imperatore Russiae,'² which had in view a commercial and political alliance between the two countries, only summarised in the seventeenth century the ideas exchanged by Czar Ivan and Queen Elizabeth on this subject in the sixteenth.

The letters reflect the different state of mind of the two correspondents. The political plans of Ivan can be best studied in his private or secret letters ; the most important

¹ April 1914, pp. 525-542.

² *Foedera*, vii. p. iv. 71-73.

is dated May 18, 1570 ; a confusion has sometimes occurred because two different letters were generally despatched to England the same day under the same date, one of them being secret and the other official. If Ivan seriously counted on the possibility of passing with all his family to England, Elizabeth undoubtedly could not look forward with pleasure to such an eventuality, which might become the source of new political complications. Did not the Queen of Scotland give trouble enough to her mind ? And yet she had to be very cautious in her answers to the Russian court, and even to overlook certain coarse and harsh remarks of the terrible Muscovite. When he vehemently wrote to her, protesting that she was not ruler over her land, having left her power 'to merchants and bowers' and 'flowing in her maydenlie estate like a maide,'¹ she answered haughtily but politely, explaining that no merchants governed her estate, and that no sovereign had more obedient subjects than she.² Still her later letters show clearly that she felt herself more and more entangled in the political plans of the Czar. By a letter of June 8, 1583, she expressed her great joy at the news of a projected journey of the Czar to England : 'Really this has been so agreeable to us to learn, that nothing could better fulfil our wishes !' Her countries will be as freely opened to the Russian monarch as to her own self. 'May your Honnor come freely and friendly at any time to see his affectionate and friendly sister in her English kingdom, and not otherwise as if you entered into the territories of your own mighty Russian empire.' This journey seems to have been projected by the old Czar with the intention to choose by himself an English bride. In the spring of the same year the Queen had already felt it necessary to show to the Russian ambassador the proposed bride, Lady Mary Hastings. The Russian monarch had found an easy way to force Elizabeth more and more into friendship. If the Queen was out of his reach, her merchants were in Russia ; in

¹ October 24, 1570.

² *Anno* 1571.

her letters she had made herself the echo of their demands and complaints, and when Ivan threatened the Muscovy Company by fines and withdrawal of privileges, the Queen had naturally to yield on many points. Happily for Elizabeth, Ivan died in 1583, and with him vanished all his uneasy projects.

The second period of Queen Elizabeth's correspondence is nearly exclusively concerned with commercial questions and controversies; some of these letters become very voluminous and are valuable sources for the history of the Muscovy Company, its activity, and the difficulties found by the English trade in Russia. Many of the privileges are withdrawn from the English merchants; the Persian trade has come to an end. The Muscovy State had already profited by the activity of the English, who had opened to Russia a new commercial route. It was now inclined to protect the trade of other strangers who had profited by the example of the English.

The correspondence of this reign is two-fold. Writing to Czar Feodor, the Queen found it necessary to enter two years later into correspondence with the Regent Godounov, who was at that time the real ruler of Russia. Being in friendly relations with Sir Jerom Horsey, he seems to have taken his side in his controversies with the Muscovy Company. Godounov was an enemy of its exclusive privileges in Russia, and in his letters to the Queen and Lord Burghley tried hard to persuade them that the English trade in Muscovy should be kept free. One of the principal interlopers, Marsh, had been taken under his special protection.

The third period begins in 1598 with the death of Feodor, when Godounov, who was the brother of his wife, was chosen to take the throne under the name of Czar Boris. If Elizabeth had corresponded with him as a regent, she, of course, continued this correspondence when he became Czar. This period has been very little studied, and many letters of the Queen and Czar Boris have remained unpublished until now. We find originals of Elizabeth's letters in the records

of Moscow : for example, a letter of May 15, 1601 ; unpublished letters of Czar Boris are to be found in the records of England : for example, in Oxford, the original of a letter dated June 1602, and, in London at the Public Record Office and British Museum, a letter dated April 1603.

The regulation of the commercial relations had proved successful, and the two correspondents now came back to politics. The possibility of matrimonial alliances for the two children of the Czar, a son and a daughter, with English princes was considered. The English merchants, in this case as in many others, tried to influence the Queen ; they feared that a marriage between the children of Boris and some Danish or Polish princes would give advantage to merchants of these nations and ruin the English trade in Russia, so they asked the Queen to show to the new Czar her readiness to meet his wishes. If England in reality was not eager to bind herself to Russia it was not sound diplomacy to reveal this feeling to the Russian monarch, who could be easily contented by the display of a pretended desire for friendship.

The relations of England with Turkey were also eagerly debated, the Czar expressing his indignation at the news that a Christian queen could ally herself with the Mussulmans, as he had been informed by the Emperor and Pope, and Elizabeth energetically rejecting this accusation.

The matrimonial projects of Boris had no consequences ; Elizabeth died shortly after, and the Czar followed her three years later, leaving his young children unmarried and unprotected.

It will be seen, therefore, that the correspondence of Queen Elizabeth with the Russian czars contains matter of great interest to the historian.

(1) It gives ample material for a clearer understanding of the activity and vicissitudes of the Muscovy Company. A sole example of this fact may be given here. It has seemed difficult until now in England to understand sufficiently the reason of the unstable position of this society in Russia.

Professor Scott has admitted that the documents concerning its economy and finance do not explain many vicissitudes of the English merchants in Russia ; they leave unanswered the question, why the company began so soon to lose the support hitherto given to it by the Czar. All the Queen's privileges were suspended in 1570, and Professor Scott thinks ' that it is impossible to determine whether this was due to the machinations of rival merchants or whether it is to be attributed to malpractices of the company's agents in Russia.' The letter of Czar Ivan dated October 28, 1570, shows clearly that the reason of this set-back was the failure of the Czar's plan of political alliance with England.

The economic organisation and finance of the company have been carefully studied in England, but the conditions of its existence in Russia and its relations with the Muscovite government have attracted little attention. A systematic and complete edition of the correspondence would give an impulse to this study, and would also give a vivid picture of the history of the first English Joint-Stock Company.

(2) This correspondence gives ample evidence of the fact that the first relations of England with Russia were not only commercial, but also political. This has not been hitherto sufficiently appreciated, and a study of the diplomatic relations between both countries has not yet been undertaken. Now that England and Russia have been impelled to unite their forces on the field of battle, it is, I think, a most appropriate moment to direct the attention of the historians of both countries to the study of the early political relations of England with Russia, and to the project of a political league between the two countries elaborated by a Russian czar more than 300 years ago. The letters of the English queen and Russian monarch form invaluable materials for such a study.

If an edition of these letters should be undertaken, it ought certainly to include all the existing letters between the English queen and the Russian czars. The publication of the letters of Elizabeth alone is not advisable, for, however

great the individual interest of these letters, it is only when it is considered as a whole that the correspondence can be of real value to the historian in drawing a picture of the commercial and diplomatic relations of both countries. Most of the Queen's letters are written in Latin, but some have also been preserved in contemporary English translations. Whether in Latin or English, they can easily be understood by historians, but if the publication of these letters were intended for the general public, the English translations might be preferred. The letters of the Queen which have come to us only in Russian translations will, of course, have to be retranslated into English, a somewhat difficult task.

The Russian letters of the Czars have also in some cases been preserved in English translations, which would be useful for the suggested edition. Six of the Czars' letters are even known only in their English translations, the Russian originals having been lost. Some of the Russian letters have been already translated by Tolstoy; the rest would have to be translated anew. It would be, of course, better if they could be given in English and Russian, the original being always of special value to the historian. Though many letters have been already published before, the preparation of this edition must take some time. As we have already seen, the letters are scattered in many collections, and the same letters are often presented under different readings, publishing the different copies of the records.

The documents of Hakluyt are often wrongly dated, as the beginning of the year at March 25 has not been taken into consideration. The Russians counted the years from the Creation, which was supposed to have taken place 5508 years before the Incarnation; but another complication is the beginning of the old Russian year at the date of September 1, and the use of Slavonic letters instead of ciphers. Some of the translations of the Czars' letters in the 'Royal Letters' of the Public Record Office are wrongly dated on the marge; so a letter of October 24, 1570, has

been dated by 1591. The classification of the English originals of Queen Elizabeth's letters preserved in Moscow in the series of 'English Letters' is also not quite exact ; for example No. 18 was written before No. 17.

The several Russian editors have often proceeded uncritically ; the Imperial Historical Society of Petrograd has published letters of the Czars not from their originals, but from their copies in the collection of 'English Books' in Moscow. The best help to the editor will be the book of Tolstoy, but he has also sometimes published copies from Hakluyt and Bond without searching for the existing original.

In any case the difficulties of this work will be largely compensated by the interest presented by such a publication which would bring to the knowledge of the historian nearly a hundred documents for the most part unknown and of great value, including at least sixty-five valuable letters of the great Queen of England. It may be admitted that some of these letters were not composed by the Queen herself ; but it would be impracticable to distinguish between the action of the Queen and that of the ministers who directed her policy. My own general impression from a study of these English letters is, that they undoubtedly reflect the personality of the Queen, and that they enhance our appreciation of her diplomatic ability and lofty spirit. If a complete history of the intercourse between England and Russia were to be undertaken (as we all hope may some day be the case), an edition of the correspondence of Queen Elizabeth with the Russian Czars must necessarily be the basis for the studies of future historians.