Lessons Learned: The Influence on Lincoln of Alexander II's Emancipation of Russian Serfs

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> "[I]t was the fortune of both of these rulers of two great nations to have devoted their lives to the liberation of the enslaved, and to the elevation of the whole people to the equality before the law. 'I cannot but regard this coincidence as the work of that Providence which inscrutably designs and ever advances in monarchies and in republics, the liberties and the civilization of the human race. Let us bow in reverent submission to the divine will, and hold forever the friendship between the people of Russia and America.'"[1]

In the fifth Lincoln-Douglas debate, Abraham Lincoln contrasted "our national Democracy" with the tyranny of "emperors and monarchies in Russia" stifling free political speech.[2] A few years earlier, Lincoln similarly commented to his friend Joshua Speed, "When the Know-Nothings get control . . . I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy."[3] Yet, Tsar Alexander II emancipated millions of Russian serfs almost two years before Lincoln publicly announced the

1. Clay to Seward, U.S. Department of State (DOS) No.106, St. Petersburg, Russia, Mar. 12, 1866, attaching transl. n.a., "The United States and Russia," *La Presse*, Jan. 31, 1866 (quotation in original), reprinted in *Digital Collections: University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries*, "Foreign Relations of the United States," https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS, with all subsequent citations to diplomatic correspondence coming from this source unless otherwise stated.

2. Abraham Lincoln, Reply to Stephen Douglas, Fifth Joint Debate, Galesburg, Illinois, October 7, 1858, in Robert Johannsen, ed., *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 222.

3. Lincoln to Speed, Springfield, Illinois, Aug. 24, 1855, in Roy P. Basler, et al. eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953–55, for the Abraham Lincoln Association), II: 323. Lincoln commented to Speed in response to Russia's armed intervention in Hungary. See Albert Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1952), 13.

Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2022

Emancipation Proclamation. Alexander II had signed the Emancipation Manifesto on 19 February [O.S.], 1861, but delayed announcing it until 5 March [O.S.], 1861, "Forgiveness Sunday," in the hope that the start of Lent would heighten the peasants' gratitude.[4]

The Manifesto established a lengthy, bureaucratic, "three-stage process" of serf liberation. In the first stage, "serfs became legally free" while maintaining labor obligations to the nobility during "a two-year transitional period." At the second stage, the former serfs received "guaranteed permanent use rights of allotments of land in return for fixed obligations" (paid in cash or labor). In the third stage, called "the redemption operation," the peasants purchased the land primarily using government loans that featured installment payments lasting decades. The "redemption sum" for the land allotments was set in a manner favorable to the nobles, based roughly on the expected income stream from peasant labor on the land rather than on the land's current market value.[5]

A debate exists over the relative generosity of serf emancipation compared with the emancipation of slaves in the American South. One historian has characterized the former as a "radical reform" favoring the peasants over the nobles especially in the long-term, while W.E.B. Du Bois acidly assessed the condition of ex-slaves in the post-Reconstruction South as follows: "The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery."[6] However, Peter Kolchin contends that freedmen ultimately fared better than former

4. See Daniel Field, *The End of Serfdom: Nobility and Bureaucracy in Russia, 1855–1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 357; Edvard Radzinsky, *Alexander II: The Last Great Tsar*, transl., Antonina Bouis (Free Press: New York, 2005), 128–32. At that time, dates from the old style, Julian calendar were 12 days behind the Gregorian calendar, making March 17, 1861, the date in most of Europe and the U.S. of the Tsar's public announcement in Russia. See Calendar Converter, https://www.formilab.ch / documents/calendar (converting 5 March [O.S.], 1861 to March 17 [N.S.], 1861).

5. David Moon, *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia, 1762–1907* (London: Routledge, 2014), 4, 71–82, 98–105.

6. Serge Zenkovsky, "The Emancipation of the Serfs in Retrospect," *The Russian Review* 20, No. 4 (Oct. 1961), 282, 289–92; W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 30; see also Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old World Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 405, 425–26 (contending that the benefits of land ownership to the freed serfs outweighed the costs, with almost 85% of them owning their land allotments by 1881, and that the payments to the Russian nobility "fell short of compensating them").

serfs regarding literacy and even property ownership.[7] Nevertheless, during the early stages of Reconstruction, abolitionists like Thaddeus Stevens viewed serf emancipation with much favor for providing land, and he criticized Congress for not enacting a land program, including his February 1866 bill seeking to transfer millions of acres of former Confederate-owned land to the freedmen.[8] Preeminent historian James McPherson provides a more positive historical perspective, describing the freedmen farmers' approximate 20 percent land ownership rate by 1880 as "a significant achievement."[9]

In the same month as the Tsar's momentous announcement, Lincoln, in his first inaugural address on March 4, 1861, offered "no objection" to the Corwin Amendment, which stated:

> No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere, within any State, with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said State.

This portion of his address represented a last-minute edition, with the Corwin amendment passing the Senate at 5:20 a.m. that morning. Lincoln prefaced his acquiescence to slavery with two significant hedges, that "I make no recommendation of amendments" and that the Constitutional convention process for new amendments "seems preferable [to the Senate], in that it allows amendments to originate with the people themselves . . . ."[10]

Even with these hedges, the irony of publicly seeking to maintain slavery in the same month as the Tsar announced emancipation

7. See Peter Kolchin, "Reexamining Southern Emancipation in Comparative Perspective," *The Journal of Southern History*, LXXXI, No. 1 (Feb. 2015), 21, 37 (citing statistics that between 1870 and 1910 Southern black landownership increased from 2.2 percent to 44 percent and literacy rates improved from 20 percent to 69 percent, exceeding the conditions of freed Russian serfs).

8. See Bruce Levine, *Thaddeus Stevens: Civil War Revolutionary, Fighter for Racial Justice* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), 227–31; see also Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 8–9 (discussing Stevens's advocacy of land for the freedmen based on the Russian example).

9. James McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 624–25.

10. "First Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln," Washington, D.C., Mar. 4, 1861, in *Collected Works*, IV: 262–71. The text of the Corwin amendment is at https://www.lib.niu.edu/2006/ih060934.html. On its passage early in the morning of March 4, 1861, see Daniel Crofts, *Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 233.

surely vexed Lincoln.[11] He believed slaveholders wrongly "den[ied] the humanity of the slave . . . estimat[ing] him only as the equal of the hog," as he lamented during his October 16, 1854, speech criticizing the Kansas-Nebraska Act.[12] Lincoln also frequently invoked the Declaration of Independence's natural-rights principles in political speeches and other discourse attacking slavery. For example, in his March 5, 1860, speech at a Republican rally in Hartford, Connecticut, Lincoln chided the Democratic party, especially the "Douglas wing," for admitting that the Declaration of Independence's "'equality of man' principle" applies "to the negro," but then "[taking] the bull by the horns, and [saying] the Declaration of Independence wasn't true!." In that speech, Lincoln made clear his strongly held belief that the equality principle, which "actuated our forefathers in the establishment of the government is right; and that slavery, being directly opposed to this, is morally wrong."[13]

Despite his hatred of slavery, Lincoln did not publicly endorse serf emancipation and may have worried that a favorable reference to the Tsar ending serfdom, in spring 1861, would antagonize the Border States still vacillating over secession. "The momentum of secession seemed to have spent itself by February" 1861, with conventions in Arkansas, Missouri, and Virginia voting down secession over the ensuing weeks, and legislatures or voters in Kentucky, Delaware, North Carolina, and Tennessee failing to call secession conventions.[14] With these states still considering secession, Lincoln refrained from any public antagonism with the South over slavery, following William Seward's advice "to speak as softly as possible—perhaps saying nothing at all."[15]

11. Alexander II publicly announced the Emancipation Manifesto in Russia on March 17 [N.S.], 1861, or 13 days after Lincoln's inaugural speech. See *supra* at 13 & n.4 (5 March [O.S.], 1861). The Tsar signed the legislation on March 3 [N.S.], 1861, the day before Lincoln's inaugural speech. Noting the irony of Russian emancipation preceding the emancipation of slaves in the republican U.S., see Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 167. That irony likely galled Lincoln, who considered slavery morally and philosophically bankrupt and poisonous to the U.S.'s future. See his Address at Cooper Institute, New York City, Feb. 27, 1860, *Collected* Works, III: 547–50. Lincoln believed "[t]he ideal government would be known as republican." Louise Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 4.

12. Lincoln, "Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act," Peoria, Illinois, Oct. 16, 1854, *Collected Works*, II: 265.

13. Lincoln, "Speech at Hartford, Connecticut," Mar. 5, 1860, *Daily Courant* (Hartford, Mar. 6, 1860), in *Collected Works*, IV: 4.

14. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 150–51.

15. James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013), 64–65.

Passions stemming from racial prejudice ran hot in the South, in contrast to Russia where despite class differences Southern commentators perceived that racial homogeneity largely existed between nobles and serfs. This racial distinction appeared on the front page of the April 6, 1861, edition of the *Alexandria Gazette*: "If the emancipation of serfs in Russia should be every way successful and beneficial—that would not advance a single step, an argument in favor of the abolition of negro slavery in America. Every reader will follow out in his own mind, the suggestion." More explicitly, the *Richmond Dispatch* distinguished serfdom from slavery based on bloodlines: "The Russian serfs are white men, of the same blood with their masters. We do not therefore pretend to say that they ought to be treated as African slaves; that is, never to be emancipated at all."[16]

Lincoln's silence about serf emancipation, however, did not equate to indifference concerning the social changes in Russia. To the contrary, the Russian experience with serf emancipation influenced Lincoln's support for emancipation and his development of the Emancipation Proclamation, as confirmed by:

- Alexander II's belief that Lincoln supported slave emancipation heightened Russia's favorable diplomatic relations with the U.S. during the Civil War
- Those favorable relations, aided by each side's able diplomatic corps led by Cassius Clay, the U.S.'s colorful Minister to Russia, and Edouard de Stoeckl, a gifted Russian diplomat, increased Russia's strategic importance as a Union ally
- Lincoln, Seward, and Clay cultivated Russian support for the Union by emphasizing antislavery policies and common ties of emancipation
- Lincoln's State Department previewed emancipation to the hearty approval of Alexander II in late June 1862, several weeks before Lincoln presented his cabinet on July 22, 1962, with the first draft of what became the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, and thereafter the State Department kept the Tsar informed about ongoing emancipation developments
- Clay lobbied Lincoln for emancipation upon his return from Russia
- Soon after Alexander II had abolished serfdom, the Republican press cited the Tsar's action in support of the emancipation of slaves

16. *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* (Alexandria, Va.), Apr. 6, 1861; "Russian Serfs," *Richmond Dispatch*, Apr. 9, 1861.

- Lincoln employed similar strategies to Alexander II's in promulgating and promoting emancipation
- Textual similarities and differences between the Emancipation Manifesto and the Emancipation Proclamation suggest Lincoln learned from the Tsar's successes and mistakes, and
- Lincoln focused on the end of Russian serfdom well after his announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, including in a memorable Christmas Day, 1863, letter to a former Russian diplomat lecturing across the U.S. about the Russian people.

With the Confederacy's early success on the eastern battlefields, Lincoln soon found that Russia represented the Union's only "constant friend" among the European powers.[17] Regardless of political differences, both shared a common foe in Great Britain and each desired to minimize British and French influence in Europe and the Americas. The two nations also shared a long history of trade, and, despite official neutrality, the U.S. had supported Russia during the Crimean War with weapons, a ship (the *S.S. America*), and physicians and other medical staff.[18]

Beyond past support, as early as June 1861, Alexander II expressed his belief to Clay that Lincoln would embrace the emancipation of slaves as the Tsar had done with serfs and that Russia and the Union's twin goals of emancipation would further strengthen relations between them. Alexander II stated, in "nearly the exact words" per Clay:

> '[The Tsar's] hopes of the perpetuity of the friendship between the two nations now, that in addition to all former ties we were bound together by a common sympathy in the common cause of

17. Seward to Clay, DOS No. 3, Washington, D.C., May 6, 1861. Seward felt the same way over two years later. See Seward to Taylor, DOS No. 10, Washington, D.C., Dec. 23, 1863 (Russia "has our friendship, in every case, in preference to any other European power, simply because she always wishes us well, and leaves us to conduct our affairs as we think best").

18. See Cameron to Seward, DOS No. 4, St. Petersburg, Russia, July 23, 1862 (describing Russia's unwavering support for the Union); Mungo Melvin, *Sevastopol's Wars: Crimea From Potemkin To Putin* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2017), 298 (citing examples of American support of Russia during the Crimean War). On the trade and diplomatic favors between the two countries, see Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 125, William Appleman Williams, *American-Russian Relations, 1781–1947* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1952), 7–8, 16–19, and John Kuhn Bliemaier, "Cassius Marcellus Clay in St. Petersburg," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 73:3 (July 1975), 263.

> emancipation' . . . [and he] expressed a very earnest wish that we would speedily recover the integrity of the Union.[19]

Throughout the Civil War, Alexander II never wavered from these sentiments favoring the Union.[20] Likely given the Tsar's long-held belief that Lincoln supported emancipation, the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation sent by the State Department to the Tsar and published in a St. Petersburg newspaper did not elicit "much surprise at [his] court," but did receive a "favorable" reception there.[21]

As exemplified by the above correspondence, Lincoln and Alexander II communicated through diplomatic channels save for a few short and perfunctory letters, such as Lincoln's congratulations about the birth of a son to the Tsar's brother.[22] Diplomatic relations between the two countries benefited from Clay's strongly held antislavery beliefs, which appealed to the Tsar.[23] Clay had previously owned and published *The True American*, the first Southern paper to advocate antislavery positions. By 1848, his reputation had reached such heights that Horace Greeley, then one of the foremost abolitionist voices in the U.S. and the founder and publisher of the *New York Tribune*, edited and wrote the preface to an 1848 collection of Clay's antislavery writings.[24] An intimidating man, "standing 6-feet-3 and weighing 215 pounds,"

19. Clay to Seward, Legation (Leg.) No. 4, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 21, 1861 (quotations in original reflecting Clay's transcription of Alexander II's words "spoken to [Clay] directly in English").

20. The Tsar's steadfast support for the Union is expressed in a statement from Prince Alexander Gortchacow, Alexander II's diplomatic liaison in St. Petersburg, to the American diplomat Bayard Taylor, who then communicated that to Seward—"'Russia alone . . . has stood by you from the first, and will continue to stand by you.'" Taylor to Seward Leg. No. 16, St. Petersburg, Russia, Oct. 29, 1862 (quotes in original reflecting Taylor's transcription of Gortchacow's words).

21. Taylor to Seward, Leg. No. 16, St. Petersburg, Russia, Oct. 29, 1862 (the diplomatic correspondence makes clear that the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation arrived after Gortchacow's statement of Union support).

22. See, e.g., Abraham Lincoln Letter to His Imperial Majesty Alexander II, September 26, 1862, in *Collected Works*, V: 440.

23. See Clay to Seward, Leg. No. 4, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 21, 1861; see also Cameron to Seward, Leg. No. 2, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 26, 1862 (Clay's successor, Simon Cameron, describing Clay's last meeting with Alexander II before taking diplomatic leave to assume a Union military position, and the Tsar's subsequent comments to Cameron "refer[ring] to his efforts in regard to the emancipation of the serfs" and hoping for a favorable resolution against slavery in the U.S.).

24. See "General Clay's Career Famous: Served Twice as American Minister to Russia Under President Lincoln," *Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 19, 1925; "Prospectus for *The True American*," reprinted in Clay, *The Writings of Cassius Marcellus Clay including Speeches and Addresses* (New York: Negro University Press, 1969 reprint), v–viii, 211.

Clay did not hesitate to impose his will on others (even if it meant dueling).[25] As one example thereof, Clay played a prominent role in securing Lincoln's nomination at the 1860 Republican convention and took advantage by insisting that Lincoln personally review his diplomatic correspondence from Russia.[26] Not surprisingly, given his antislavery zeal and temperament, Clay reported serf emancipation in the most favorable light, extoling it as the catalyst for a new era of Russian prosperity and highlighting the diplomatic advantages of Lincoln's pursuing a similar course.[27]

Diplomatic relations between Russia and the U.S. also benefited from Russia's top diplomat to America, Stoeckl, and his ready access to Congress and Lincoln. With an American wife and numerous influential friends, Stoeckl moved easily among members of Congress in a variety of settings ranging from formal meetings to receptions, dinners, and gambling. He met with Lincoln within a week of the inauguration and frequently thereafter, and thanks in part to this diplomat's skill, political access, and media savvy, Russia achieved outsized influence in Washington, D.C., during the Civil War.[28]

Alexander II's endorsement of the Union cause provided strategic benefits as well, which ranged from the fairly mundane, such as an order prohibiting workers at Russian ports from saluting the Confederate flag, to critical assistance in helping resolve the *Trent* affair on favorable Union terms in 1862 and the refusal to participate

25. "Cassius M. Clay: Kentucky's Grand Old Lion," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Ky.), Aug. 19, 1962; "Cassius M. Clay Dead: Famous Abolitionist Dies at 'White Hall,' His Kentucky Home. His Life Was Stormy from the Duels of His Youth to the Family Quarrels of Old Age," *New York Times*, July 23, 1903; Clay, *The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay: Memoirs, Writings, and Speeches* (New York: Negro University Press, 1969 reprint), 179, 232–33.

26. See Bliemaier, "Cassius Marcellus Clay," 269–70; "Helped to Nominate Lincoln Here in 1860: Addison G. Procter, only Living Delegate to the Convention, Retells History to the Hamilton Club. Cassius Clay's Influence: Kentuckian Helped to Break the Powerful Support for Seward, Who Barely Missed Winning," *Chicago Evening Post*, Feb. 13, 1911.

27. See Clay to Lincoln, St. Petersburg, Russia, July 25, 1861, *The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress*, https//www.loc.gov/resource/mal.1088000/?st=gallery; see also Clay to Seward, Leg. No. 15, St. Petersburg, Russia, Jan. 7, 1862 ("if we were real emancipationists we could claim [Europe's] sympathy").

28. Describing Stoeckl's access to Lincoln, see Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 15–17, 129, 191, 196, 253; see also *The Lincoln Log*, https//www.thelincolnlog.org (citing a meeting with Stoeckl, as late as March 20, 1865, when Lincoln informed the Russian diplomat that the Civil War would soon end). Citing Stoeckl's diplomatic talents, see Frank Golder, "The American Civil War through the Eyes of a Russian Diplomat," *The American Historical Review* 26:3 (Apr. 1921), 45.

in Napoleon III's proposed joint mediation seeking to end the Civil War in late 1862.[29] Nothing, though, surpassed the goodwill engendered by the Russian navy's successful voyages to New York City and San Francisco in the summer and fall of 1863. A cartoon in *Harper's Weekly* characterized these events as a show of military support for the Union, depicting Lincoln telling Seward to use "[m]ild applications of Russian Salve for our friends over the way [Napoleon III and John Bull], and heavy doses . . . for our Southern patient!" It is an open question whether these voyages resulted from the friendship among allies strengthened by the twin emancipations in Russia and the U.S. or from Russian self-interest in the event of European War to thwart a potential English naval blockade of Kronstadt and the Black Sea, as had happened in the Crimean War. But undeniably the presence of the Russian navy docked in Union ports electrified the public, deepened "the historic friendship" between the two countries, and decreased the chances of British or French intervention in the Civil War.[30]

These foreign policy triumphs stemmed, at least in part, from the cultivation by Lincoln and the Seward State Department of Russian support early in the Civil War via diplomatic communications that emphasized the Union's antislavery policies and tied those policies to the example set by Alexander II's serf emancipation. Among the earliest diplomatic dispatches to Clay, in May 1861, Seward stressed the importance of friendly Russian relations and the Union's strong opposition to slavery. Long before Lincoln or his administration made any such public suggestion in the U.S., Seward, in this same correspondence, identified "African slavery" as "the cause of the revolution" and "fatal to the prosperity, safety, and happiness of the whole American people." Seward also described Lincoln's support for serf emancipation in the strongest possible terms, stating that "the President and the people of

29. See John Appleton to Seward, Leg. No. 18, St. Petersburg, Russia, May 22, 1861 (also from *Digital Collections*); Simon Cameron to Seward, Leg. No. 6, St. Petersburg, Russia, Aug. 7, 1862; Cathal Nolan, "Detachment from Despotism: U.S. Responses to Tsarism, 1776–1865," *Review of International Studies* 19, No. 4 (Oct. 1993), 366.

30. Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, 4 Vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1939), 2: 524–25, reprinting cartoon and quoting article from *Harper's Weekly*, Nov. 28, 1863. But see Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 144–48, 156–57 (contending that Russian self-interest was the primary motivation for the voyages, but also acknowledging the morale boost in the North therefrom). For the Lincoln Administration's enthusiasm over the Russian voyages, see Clay to Seward, DOS No. 29, St. Petersburg, Russia, Nov. 8, 1863; Seward to Clay, DOS No. 52, Washington, D.C., Dec. 8, 1863. Regarding the impact on French and British intervention, see Nolan, "Detachment from Despotism," 367–68; Michael Knox Beran, *Forge of Empires, 1861–1871: Three Revolutionary Statesmen and the World They Made* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 216.

the United States have observed with admiration and sympathy the great and humane efforts [Alexander II] has so recently made . . . by removing the disabilities of slavery."[31] In response about six weeks later, Clay exclaimed to Seward that "[t]he Emperor seemed much gratified and really moved" by "the President['s] . . . profound sympathy and admiration upon the great reforms" and elaborated that the mutual support of emancipation in each country strengthened the two nations' ties. Seward responded enthusiastically in August 1861, stating, "I am sure you need no new instructions to enable you to say that we rejoice in the peaceful progress of the means which the Emperor has instituted for meliorating the conditions of the people of Russia."[32]

Alexander II also wrote widely distributed public letters cited in newspapers like *The New York Herald*, supporting the Union from the Civil War's earliest stages, at least some of which may have influenced the diplomatic calculus in Europe over neutrality.[33] In particular, an October 1861 editorial in that newspaper explained that the European press closely followed Alexander II's "late noble letter . . . expressive of his sympathy with the cause of our Union in this crisis." The editorial also argued, based on the concerned reaction in London thereto, "we think we have secured in these English opinions of the Czar's American letter a virtual confession that Russia must henceforth be considered in any design on the part of England to play false to her professions of American neutrality."[34]

Lincoln and his administration, in turn, supported not only Alexander II's policies ending serfdom, but also the social changes in Russia necessitated by ending the nobility's direct control over the serfs such as judicial and military reform, freedom of expression, and even limited representative government at the local level. For example, the highest-ranking U.S. diplomat in Russia in late 1862, Bayard Taylor, conveyed to Prince Gortchacow "the sincere congratulations of the government of the United States on the new and auspicious reform which his Imperial Majesty has decreed" and then enthused about the Prince's "great pleasure . . . at the prompt recognition of its importance by the President." Gortchacow then compared the relatively peaceful

31. See Seward to Clay, DOS No. 3, Washington, D.C., May 6, 1861.

32. Clay to Seward, Leg. No. 4, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 21, 1861; Seward to Clay, DOS No. 12, Washington, D.C., Aug. 12, 1861; see also *supra* at 18 & n.19 (Alexander II's belief in "the common cause of emancipation").

33. See "The Emperor Alexander's Letter on Our Southern Rebellion and Mr. Seward's Reply," *New York Herald*, Sept. 10, 1861, p. 4; "The Letter of the Czar on American Affairs in England—A Decided Sensation," *New York Herald*, Oct. 10, 1861, p. 4.

34. *Ibid.*, 4.

Russian economic and social reforms with the South's fight to preserve slavery, responding, "[w]e have stepped from one peaceful revolution to another, and my earnest wish is that your revolution could have been accomplished the same way."[35]

Cognizant that emancipation furthered Russian support for the Union, the Lincoln Administration previewed the coming of emancipation to Alexander II as well as Lincoln's draft bill seeking gradual emancipation in the Border States. Simon Cameron, upon becoming the new Russian Minister after his brief and disastrous tenure as the Secretary of War, first met with the Tsar on June 25, 1862. Cameron's prepared notes describe "instruct[ions] by the President to convey to your Imperial Majesty" the respective social struggles over emancipation:

> No two governments in Christendom differ more widely in some respects than Russia and the United States, yet both . . . are present[ly] engaged in a social change, and have imposed upon them a national duty similar in character, and promising alike results equally vital and glorious to either nation. This social change is the emancipation of labor, in effecting which your Majesty has so nobly led the way, and which the free masses of my own country are now so heroically emulating under the guidance of divine providence.

In response, Alexander II "heartily concurred" and engaged in a "more than half an hour" discussion of the respective "social change[s]" in the two countries, comparing his actions of serf emancipation to the unresolved slavery issue between North and South and "manifest[ing] a great interest concerning the solution of the slavery question in the United States." Then, the day after Lincoln revealed to the cabinet his first draft of what became the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Seward communicated Lincoln's "gratif[ication]" over the Tsar's positive reception.[36] Two weeks later, on August 5, 1862, Cameron

35. Taylor to Seward, Leg. No. 22, St. Petersburg, Russia, Dec. 17, 1862 (quotes in original reflecting Taylor's transcription of Gortchacow's words). Regarding these social changes, see Radzinsky, *Alexander II*, xi, and Moon, *Abolition of Serfdom*, 110.

36. Cameron to Seward, Leg. No. 2, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 26, 1862; Seward to Cameron, DOS No. 5, Washington, D.C., July 23, 1862. Discussing the controversy and corruption at the War Department during Cameron's tenure and his subsequent diplomatic appointment to Russia, see Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 115, and Allen Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 71. Describing the famous meeting, on July 22, 1862, at which Lincoln first announced to his cabinet potential emancipation plans, see *ibid.*, 117–23.

described the Russian court's reaction to Lincoln's draft gradual emancipation bill for the Border States (which unbeknownst to Cameron had already been rejected) and "glad[ly]" informed Seward "that the measure proposed by the President is considered . . . by all intelligent Russian statesmen, as exceedingly liberal and generous."[37] The overwhelmingly favorable Russian response supporting emancipation surely heartened Lincoln as he evaluated when to announce publicly his plans for emancipation to the country.

Upon leaving his Russian diplomatic post in late June 1862 and returning to the U.S., Clay continued his antislavery lobbying, including direct communications with Lincoln in which Clay argued for emancipating all of the Confederacy's slaves. Indeed, in recognition of this lobbying, shortly after Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation, Professor A.W. Blinn identified Clay as "among the foremost to urge upon Mr. Lincoln the measure of Emancipation." In so doing, Clay made unfavorable comparisons with serf emancipation in Russia that did not escape the notice of the newspapers. Indeed, while still a Union general, Clay directly challenged Lincoln to abolish slavery in the Confederacy, controversially stating in a Washington, D.C., speech, in mid-August 1862, that he would "never use the sword while slavery is protected in rebel States, . . . [w]hen I draw a sword, it shall be for the liberation and not the enslavement of mankind."[38] The non-abolitionist press, however, rejected Clay's comparison between emancipation in Russia and the U.S. (typically along racial lines), as exemplified by an Indiana newspaper in late August 1862:

> Mr. Clay alludes to the case of the Czar freeing twenty millions of serfs. But these are of the same race as the Czar himself and the highest nobles in the land. There is no parity of reasoning, therefore, in the case. The emancipated serfs are susceptible of the highest freedom and civilization. Not so the American negroes.

37. Cameron to Seward, Leg. No. 5, St. Petersburg, Russia, Aug. 5, 1862 (Cameron discussing "with great satisfaction the bill submitted to Congress by the President, embodying his plan of emancipation in the border States"); Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 109 (describing Lincoln's submission of the draft bill to Congress on July 12, 1862, and the bill's rejection two days later, on July 14, 1862); Don E. Fehrenbacher, comp., *Lincoln: Speeches, Letters, Miscellaneous Writings, Presidential Massages and Proclamations* (New York: Library of America, 1989), 340–42 (Lincoln's written "Appeal to Border-State Representatives for Compensated Emancipation, Washington, D.C.," July 12, 1862).

38. Clay, *Life of*, 305–6, 312–14 (both quotes); "General Clay's Career," *Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 19, 1925.

Lincoln also gave a less strident speech at this event, about which the same newspaper commented favorably, stating that "[t]he speech of the President to the deputation of colored men at the White House was sagacious and wise. It proclaimed a great truth—that the difference between the black and white races in the United States is so broad that . . . [t]he two races cannot exist in freedom together."[39]

Despite generating much controversy and running contrary to Lincoln's own public message, Clay was not reprimanded by the President for such remarks. Instead, Lincoln tasked Clay with the sensitive assignment of visiting the Kentucky Legislature to determine if emancipation might result in Kentucky's seceding from the Union. Clay did so, and reported to Lincoln that emancipation would not precipitate Kentucky's secession. Soon thereafter, on September 22, 1862, Lincoln publicly announced the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. In typically immodest fashion, Clay's *Memoirs* suggest that his personal assurances to Lincoln about Kentucky's remaining in the Union led to the timing of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation's announcement, bragging: "Thus my good star stood high in the heavens; and . . . I seemed by Providence to have been called for the culminating act of my life's aspirations." With the President's blessing, Clay continued his antislavery speeches now in support of Lincoln's emancipation policies. For example, on September 24, 1862, both Lincoln and Clay spoke in favor of emancipation at the same Washington, D.C., event referred to as the Serenade in Honor of the [Preliminary] Emancipation Proclamation.[40] A few months later, Lincoln reappointed Clay as Russian Minister after Seward granted Cameron's request for leave. Shortly after resuming his diplomatic duties in spring 1863, Clay explained to the Tsar and Prince Gortchacow that his re-appointment highlighted Lincoln's expectation that Alexander II would continue the social reforms in Russia.[41]

Newspapers in the North and South also perceived that emancipation strengthened the bonds between Russia and the U.S. As early as

39. "Two Speeches at Washington—Master and Man—A Strange Contrast," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis), Aug. 25, 1862.

40. Clay, *Life of*, 312–14. On Clay's visit to the Kentucky Legislature at Lincoln's behest, see "General Clay's Career," *Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 19, 1925, and Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 120. About the speeches of September 24, 1862, see Fehrenbacher, comp., *Lincoln: Speeches, Letters*, 371–72 (text of Lincoln's remarks), and "Clay's Reply to Serenade in Honor of [Preliminary] Emancipation Proclamation," Washington, D.C., Sept. 24, 1862, *Collected Works*, V: 438–39 & n.1.

41. Seward to Cameron, DOS No. 13, Washington, D.C., Sept. 16, 1862; Clay to Seward, Leg. No. 3, St. Petersburg, Russia, May 7, 1863.

April 1861, the *Alexandria Gazette* described the momentum to the abolitionist cause from Alexander II's reforms: "Serfdom is abolished in Russia—why cannot slavery be terminated in America?—say the abolitionists in Europe and America." Shortly after Lincoln announced the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, the *Cleveland Morning Leader*, in November 1862, predicted that the twin emancipation policies of Alexander II and Lincoln would contribute to even friendlier relations between these nations, stating "[t]he good feeling which has ever existed between Russia and the United States, and especially since the accession of Alexander, will be still farther strengthened by the bond of mutual emancipation."[42]

Previously, the Republican press had lobbied Lincoln to abolish slavery by citing the Russian example. On April 9, 1861, for example, the *New York Tribune* editorialized:

> The whole world and all succeeding ages will applaud the Emperor Alexander for the abolition of slavery in Russia. But what does the world think, what will future generations think, of the attempt to make slavery perpetual in America?

Lincoln likely read this editorial inasmuch as its publisher, Horace Greeley, communicated with the President so frequently that the famous editor earned the reputation of "administration insider by proxy."[43] *The Douglass Monthly* of Frederick Douglass enthused "A GREAT EVENT" in the headline and printed the entirety of the Tsar's Manifesto. Some in the black and Christian press, in 1861–62, believed the end of serfdom "foretold a similar fate for enslaved people in the United States."[44] Edward Everett, perhaps the nation's foremost public speaker at the time, extolled Alexander II's abolition of serfdom as a "great work" and lamented the Union's struggle "to put down a gigantic insurrection whose object is declared by its own leaders to be to found a Government, for the first time in the History of the

42. *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* (Alexandria, Va.), Apr. 6, 1861; "Emancipation in Russia," *Cleveland Morning Leader*, November 11, 1862, p. 1.

43. "Emancipation in Russia," *New York Tribune*, Apr. 9, 1861, p. 4; see also "Emancipation in Russia," *New York Tribune*, Nov. 13, 1861, p. 4 (Greeley lobbying for total emancipation in the U.S. and citing the Russian example). Noting Greeley's frequent communications with Lincoln, see Harold Holzer, *Lincoln and the Power of the Press* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2014), 378.

44. "A GREAT EVENT Russia Emancipates Her Serfs," *The Douglass Monthly*, May 1861, 459–60 (emphasis in original), https//www.transcription. si.edu/view/12961/ACM -2007.19.12_12; Joseph Reidy, *Illusions of Emancipation: The Pursuit of Freedom & Equality in the Twilight of Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 109 & nn.73–74.

World, on the corner-stone of Slavery," in an October 1861 *New York Times* editorial.[45] Lincoln likely hoped for a similar reception to his emancipation announcement that would provide a public relations boost to the Union war effort.

If so, his strategy worked among those with antislavery sentiments. The Emancipation Proclamation, announced on January 1, 1863, received an enthusiastic reception with the Republican press, most abolitionists, Congressional radicals, and much of the populace in major Northern cities. An editorial by Henry Raymond in the *New York Times* placed the Emancipation Proclamation among the world's most important events even though it did not immediately liberate all, or even most of the slaves in the South or any in the Border States:

> President Lincoln's proclamation . . . marks an era in the history, not only of this war, but of this country and the world. It is not necessary to assume that it will set free instantly the enslaved blacks of the South, in order to ascribe to it the greatest and most permanent importance . . . Hitherto Slavery has been under the protection of the Government; henceforth it is under its ban . . . This change of attitude is itself a revolution.[46]

Frederick Douglass suggested "a day for poetry and song." William Lloyd Garrison characterized the Emancipation Proclamation as "a great historic event, sublime in its magnitude, momentous and beneficent in its far-reaching consequences."[47] The European public also overwhelmingly supported the Emancipation Proclamation, thereby making it difficult for England and France to assist the Confederacy. For instance, the *London Evening Star* reported that English workers "rejoice to see the Union re-establishing itself upon the grave of the institution that was its reproach, its peril, and its curse."[48] Overall,

45. "The Sympathy of Russia with the United States—Views of Edward Everett," *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1861, p. 2 (written by Everett in response to a July 1861 letter sent on the Tsar's behalf by Prince Gortchacow and "read by Mr. De Stoeckl to the President of the United States and Mr. Seward," which strongly supported the "sacrifices" to prevent "dissolution" and explained the importance to "the civilized world" of the Union prevailing over the Confederacy).

46. "The President's Proclamation," *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1863, p. 4. Discussing the North's largely positive reception to the Emancipation Proclamation, see Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 157–58, 184, Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 2:470–71, and John Hope Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1963), 59.

47. Holzer, *Lincoln and the Power*, 418 (quoting Douglass); Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 186 (quoting Garrison).

48. Clay to Seward, Leg. No. 36, St. Petersburg, Russia, Jan. 6, 1864 (quoting an article from the *London Evening Star*, Dec. 28, 1863).

Lincoln accomplished a public relations triumph by turning the Civil War into one against slavery and thereby earning the nickname "Great Emancipator."[49]

Additional evidence of how emancipation in Russia influenced Lincoln comes from the parallels in process, promotion, and text between the Emancipation Manifesto and the Emancipation Proclamation, suggesting that Lincoln had observed and learned from the events in Russia. Lincoln and Alexander II each pursued emancipation based on personal decisions shaped in part by military goals. Lincoln held a high regard for natural rights, leading to his republican values and abhorrence of slavery.[50] An example is Lincoln's harsh criticism of Stephen Douglas's moral indifference to slavery in their famous debates by invoking the Declaration of Independence's equality principles. In the first debate at Ottawa, Illinois, on August 21, 1858, Lincoln famously stated:

> [T]here is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. . . [I]n the right to eat the bread . . . which his own hand earns, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.[51]

Yet, somewhat paradoxically given his republican values, Lincoln used his vast wartime authority as Commander-in-Chief to justify and make emancipation possible for many slaves by citing military necessity.[52] Per James Oakes, the Emancipation Proclamation "transformed

49. James Oakes, *The Crooked Path to Abolition: Abraham Lincoln and the Antislavery Constitution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021), xxv. It is unclear who first called Lincoln the "Great Emancipator" or when that happened. See Wheeler, "A Civil War Mystery: Who Named Lincoln the 'Great Emancipator,'" *The Washington Post*, May 17, 2001, n.p., https//www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2001/05/17/a-civil-war-mystery-who-named-lincoln-the-great-emancipator/ 339f3fc9-91fb-454a-ada0-d4a093d0812e.

50. See *supra* at 15 & nn.11–13.

51. Johannsen, ed., *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, 52–53. Lincoln used a similar metaphor to illustrate the same point in his seventh debate with Douglas in Alton, Illinois, "You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it." *Ibid.*, 319.

52. *See* Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 69–70, 171, 177; Beran, *Forge of Empires*, 145–46. The Emancipation Proclamation assisted the Union's war efforts directly by permitting blacks, including freed slaves, to serve in the Union military and indirectly by encouraging the South's slaves to flee to the protection of Union lines, thereby upsetting the Confederacy's main economic engine. See Oakes, *Freedom National*, 341–45; McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 377–84.

Union soldiers into an army of liberation in the seceded states."[53] As the Union victory over the Confederacy became inevitable, Lincoln helped fulfill emancipation's promise of slave liberation in all the states, whether in the North or South, by successfully lobbying for Congressional passage of the Thirteenth Amendment.[54]

In contrast to Lincoln's republican values and limited powers, Alexander II jealously safeguarded his autocratic authority as Tsar despite receiving exposure to liberal ideas in his education and traveling extensively in Europe as a youth.[55] But as the Crimean War ended in costly defeat, Alexander II understood that Russia's dependency upon serf labor stunted economic and military development, and he used his vast powers to end serfdom.[56] At the War's conclusion, on March 19, 1856, the Tsar foreshadowed liberating the serfs as a necessary step on Russia's path to modernity. Using similar words to Lincoln's later ones at Ottawa, the Tsar forecast a new time of "equal justice and equal protection for everyone, so that each can enjoy in peace the fruits of his own righteous labors." Just a few days later, he rebuffed critics opposed to ending serfdom, stating: "All of you understand that the existing conditions of owning souls cannot remain unchanged. It is better to begin eliminating serfdom from above than to wait until it begins to eliminate itself from below."[57] Alexander II's predecessors, including Catherine the Great and Alexander I, had considered emancipation. Yet only Alexander II possessed the "courage" to play the "decisive" role in reform. In so doing, the Tsar overcame episodes in which he "vacillated and hesitated" over ending serfdom given Russia's long history of leadership upheavals, including the Decembrist revolt, on December 26 [O.S. 14 December], 1825, against

53. Oakes, *Freedom National*, 344. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation did not purport to free slaves in Southern areas controlled by the Union army (and thus no longer in rebellion), in practice this often happened, including in southern Louisiana, western Tennessee, Sea Island, South Carolina, western Mississippi, and Arkansas. See *ibid*.

54. See Oakes, *The Crooked Path*, 197–204; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team Of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 686–90. After Lincoln's death, the states completed the Thirteenth Amendment's ratification process in early December 1865. See Levine, *Thaddeus Stevens*,169.

55. See Radzinsky, *Alexander II*, 49–51, 60–69; Field, *End of Serfdom*, 95–96; N.G.O. Pereira, "Alexander II and the Decision to Emancipate the Russian Serfs, 1855–61," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 22, No. 1 (March 1980), 101–3.

56. See *ibid*.; Radzinsky, *Alexander II*, 116–18.

57. Pereira, "Alexander II and the Decision," 102–4 & nn.24–25 (quoting Alexander II).

the ascension to the throne of his father, Nicholas I, that formed one of Alexander II's earliest memories.[58]

Alexander II's Emancipation Manifesto provided new energy to the Northern abolitionist movement, which had been agitating without success for slavery's end over the course of decades.[59] The abolitionist movement, however, did not provide the impetus for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Rather, as with Alexander II's Manifesto, the Emancipation Proclamation that Lincoln wrote himself resulted in part from his solitary choices based on the Declaration of Independence's simple, but powerful credo that "all men are created equal."[60] As argued by William Lee Miller, the President's decision-making process reflected his "moral clarity," as well as his "prudence" influenced by ancient philosophical principles. Typical of this prudence, at the July 22, 1862, meeting in which Lincoln discussed emancipation with his cabinet, Seward successfully convinced him to delay announcing emancipation until after a Union military victory.[61]

Alexander II and Lincoln similarly followed incremental strategies to prepare their respective publics for the liberation of bondsmen. The historian Michael Burlingame summarizes Lincoln's approach to emancipation as "carefully prepar[ing] the public mind with both words and deeds," which is a description equally applicable to Alexander II.[62] With respect to the Tsar's incrementalism, almost five years elapsed between his public comments favoring serf emancipation and the Emancipation Manifesto's announcement in March 1861. To prepare serfs and nobles alike, Alexander II toured 10 Russian provinces and established numerous committees of nobles, including the so-called "Main Committee for Peasant Affairs," to provide advice (and

58. Radzinsky, *Alexander II*, 115–17; see also Field, *End of Serfdom*, 95–96 (describing Alexander II's "courage" despite periodically "vacillat[ing] and hesitat[ing]," and explaining that several "times [the Tsar's] intervention was decisive for the commitment to reform"). On the Decembrist revolt and Alexander II's memories thereof, see Radzinsky, *Alexander II*, 25–34. Concerning the danger to Alexander II in ending serfdom, see *ibid.*, 117, and Pereira, "Alexander II and the Decision," 105.

59. *See* Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 172.

60. Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776, reprinted online by ushistory.org, July 4, 1995; Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 168; Franklin, *Emancipation Proclamation*, 57; Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 152–55.

61. William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 222–23 ("[a] prudent person in this older sense used his powers of observation and reasoning to take careful account of the real and concrete situation . . . to adapt the appropriate moral claims and purposes . . . to the real world"). Describing Seward's request for delay, see Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation*, 43–44, and Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 2: 362–64.

62. *Ibid.*, 2: 333.

gain acceptance) on ending serfdom.[63] Displeased by the nobility's general unwillingness to accept his plans, on 28 January [O.S.], 1861, the Tsar told the nobles the time to end serfdom had come in stating, "[a]ny further delay is pernicious for the state." Within a few weeks the Emancipation Manifesto had been signed and publicly announced, with Alexander II's personal lobbying tipping the balance.[64]

Lincoln faced similar challenges from an unaccepting general public, leading the historian Allen Guelzo to describe the President's actions supporting emancipation as "one of the biggest political gambles in American history."[65] Given these risks, Lincoln also moved incrementally, starting with his May 30, 1861, approval of Major General Benjamin Butler's refusal, at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, to return three escaped slaves to a disloyal owner by declaring them contrabands rather than fugitives. Lincoln's "new contraband policy" received widespread coverage in both the North and South.[66]

Upon returning from recess, Congress passed the First Confiscation Act, on August 6, 1861, "legalizing the permanent confiscation of slaves used in support of the rebellion." Two days later, the Lincoln administration went further than Congress when Secretary of War Cameron instructed the Union army to free those slaves. Lincoln followed up with enforcement. Upon learning of the imprisonment of escaped slaves in Washington, D.C., on December 4, 1861, the President ordered their release upon threat of jail for recalcitrant local officials and, a few days later, the warden freed 60 former slaves. At Lincoln's behest, that same month Cameron, Seward, Treasury Secretary Chase, and Navy Secretary Welles all published annual reports highlighting Lincoln's emancipation policy. Three of these reports also suggested employing the now freedmen, and thus, per James Oakes, "adopt[ing] wage labor as the alternative to slavery for contrabands coming within Union lines."[67]

These actions by Lincoln and his administration added momentum to emancipation. Over the next few months, Congress passed and Lincoln signed: (1) an article prohibiting the military from enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850; (2) the District of Columbia Emancipation Act abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia and compensating

63. Pereira, "Alexander II and the Decision," 104–12.

64. Radzinsky, *Alexander* II, 127–28 (addressing the State Council); see also Field, *End of* Serfdom, 95–96, 350 (describing Alexander II's important role in ending serfdom).

65. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 6,

66. Oakes, *The Crooked Path*, 144–46. Within less than two years, several thousand former slaves escaped to Fortress Monroe. See Levine, *Thaddeus Stevens*, 130.

67. Oakes, *The Crooked Path*, 152–53, 156–57, 166–69; Levine, *Thaddeus Stevens*, 132–37.

owners at the rate of $300 per slave; (3) a bill abolishing slavery in the federal territories; and (4) the Second Confiscation Act liberating slaves escaping to Union lines owned by disloyal owners, regardless of whether the slaves had been used in support of the Confederacy, and threatening military expulsion of Union soldiers returning escaped slaves to their owners.[68]

Further reflecting Lincoln's incrementalism, the President wrote no fewer than four drafts of the Emancipation Proclamation: the one he announced to his cabinet on July 22, 1862; the publicly announced Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation of September 22, 1862; a late draft written at the end of December 1862; and the final Emancipation Proclamation publicly announced by Lincoln on January 1, 1863. Each new version liberalized Lincoln's vision of emancipation, adding heft to his promise in the final version that:

> I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

As the drafts progressed, Lincoln abandoned gradual emancipation, compensation to former slave owners, and colonization. Lincoln also permitted freedmen to serve in the Union military.[69] Tens of thousands of black soldiers subsequently enlisted, greatly aiding the Northern cause.[70]

Along with employing similar strategies favoring emancipation as Alexander II, Lincoln appears to have learned from the strengths and weaknesses of the Emancipation Manifesto and the accompanying complex statutes. The Manifesto's summary of the peasants' post-serfdom obligations was "written in . . . incomprehensible language," while the implementing statutes comprised hundreds of pages of dry, legalistic text. Readings of the Manifesto across Russia "left . . .

68. *Ibid.*, 147–50; Oakes, *Freedom National*, 235–36, 302–3.

69. For the text of each version, see Appendix 5 in Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 255–60. Regarding the increasing liberalization of Lincoln's drafts, see Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation*, 103, and Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 567, 574, 579–80.

70. See McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 377–84; Edward E. Baptist, *The Half has Never been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 401–4; Louis Masur, *Lincoln's Hundred Days: The Emancipation Proclamation and the War for the Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 226–28.

audience[s] mute and mystified."[71] Myths quickly arose among serfs about phantom plots of the nobility to misrepresent the Tsar's intentions, with some peasants claiming that Alexander II would never condition emancipation on any substantial labor or loan requirements.[72] The confusing language and remaining peasant obligations resulted in numerous protests, including a "tragic episode" at Bezdna, in spring 1861, at which about 70 unarmed peasants died at the hands of a militia led by nobles.[73] These protests eventually required Alexander II's personal intervention, as detailed in Clay's diplomatic correspondence that described how Alexander II quelled a June 1861 protest in Moscow "[b]y persuasion and arms."[74]

Lincoln also wrote the Emancipation Proclamation in dry, legalistic language. Despite the late addition of a rhetorical flourish to the coda referencing "the gracious favor of Almighty God," the Emancipation Proclamation lacks the flourishes of Lincoln's other great writings such as the Gettysburg Address and his Second Inaugural speech.[75] Lincoln, however, did not suddenly lose his rhetorical powers. This dry prose came by design in language the public and federal judiciary would recognize as resembling a military order.[76]

But Lincoln made at least three significant improvements over the Manifesto and its legislation: brevity, simplicity, and immediacy. At three pages, the Emancipation Proclamation's conciseness stood in marked contrast to the lengthy and byzantine statutory scheme in the Manifesto and its accompanying statutes. Furthermore, the Emancipation Proclamation contained simple and clear directives, especially

71. Michelle Viise, "Filaret Drozdov and the Language of Official Proclamations in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Slavic and East European Journal* 44:4 (Winter 2000), 553 (both quotes above).

72. See Sergei Pushkarev, "The Russian Peasants' Reaction to the Emancipation of 1861," *The Russian Review* 27:2 (Apr. 1968), 203–4.

73. *Ibid.*, 206–7; see also 207–9 (describing numerous and mostly nonviolent protests in the first half of 1861, with one of the few "serious clash[es]" between armed peasants and militia taking place in Penza province in April 1861 and leaving 11 peasants dead and 31 wounded).

74. Clay to Seward, DOS No. 4, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 21, 1861. More generally on the Tsar's actions suppressing serf unrest, see Pereira, "Alexander II and the Decision," 112, and Pushkarev, "The Russian Peasants' Reaction," 212.

75. Lincoln, The Emancipation Proclamation, Jan. 1, 1863, in Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 259 (Salmon Chase suggested this coda, and Guelzo compares it to Thomas Jefferson's invocation of "Nature and Nature's God" in the Declaration of Independence).

76. See Oakes, *Freedom National*, 345–46; James Dueholm, "A Bill of Lading Delivers the Goods: The Constitutionality and Effect of the Emancipation Proclamation," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 31:1 (Winter 2010), 25.

important for slaves in the South—most of whom were illiterate and would receive this news via word-of-mouth.[77] And, unlike the lengthy waiting period for serf liberation that contributed to peasant unrest, the emancipation of the Confederacy's slaves took place in theory immediately upon announcement and in practicality as soon as the Union army conquered Confederate territory.[78]

The Russian experience with serf protests after emancipation may have influenced Lincoln. Clay's June 1861 diplomatic correspondence explained that the protests in Russia resulted from the serfs' poor understanding of the obligations emancipation placed upon them.[79] Lincoln's straightforward language guarded against ambiguity. He also included cautionary language in the Emancipation Proclamation "enjoin[ing] upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense . . . ."[80]

Finally, long after the Emancipation Proclamation's public unveiling, Alexander II's liberation of the serfs remained on Lincoln's mind as reflected by his correspondence with Bayard Taylor almost a year later. Taylor spoke Russian and possessed an academic understanding of Russian history and culture but enjoyed few political connections. He began his service in Russia as a diplomatic secretary and, upon Cameron's departure in the fall of 1862, Taylor led the American diplomatic corps in Russia until Clay-re-assumed the post of Russian Minister.[81] Upon Taylor's return to America, he toured some 30 cities lecturing about his experiences with the Russian people. Highlighting Lincoln's interest in this topic and notwithstanding the Civil War's ever-present challenges, Lincoln attended one of Taylor's lectures.[82] Soon thereafter, on Christmas Day of 1863, the President wrote Taylor

77. See Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 178–79, 258–60; Douglas Wilson, *Lincoln's Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 142. With respect to the Proclamation's oral communication among the slaves, see Franklin, *Emancipation Proclamation*, 81–82.

78. See Oakes, *Freedom National*, 316–17; Cassius Clay, "Speech of Cassius M. Clay before the Law Department of the University of Albany, N.Y." (New York: Press of Winthrop, Hallenbeck & Thomas, 1863 2d ed.), 17–18.

79. See Clay to Seward, Leg. No. 4, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 21, 1861 (explaining how confusion about serf obligations contributed to the protests, although blaming them on misinformation from the nobles rather than any defect in the Manifesto).

80. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 260.

81. See Taylor to Seward, St. Petersburg, Russia, Oct. 29, 1862, in *The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress*.

82. See Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, 4 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1939), 4: 526 (in his diary, John Hay, one of Lincoln's private secretaries, mentions that Lincoln attended a Taylor lecture on Russia).

a letter proposing an additional topic, the benefits of Alexander II's serf emancipation, stating "I think a public lecture or two on 'Serfs, Serfdom, and Emancipation in Russia' would be both interesting and valuable. Could not you get up such a thing? Yours truly, A. Lincoln."[83]

While Taylor often gave travel lectures that contributed to his income, Lincoln's response to this Russian lecture was unique, representing Lincoln's only correspondence with Taylor about one of his lectures. Many months after announcing the Emancipation Proclamation, Alexander II's liberation of the serfs remained on Lincoln's mind. Despite his war duties, the President not only attended Taylor's lecture on Russia, but considered serf emancipation sufficiently important to write to Taylor on Christmas and suggest this additional topic. Perhaps still smarting from being bypassed as Russian Minister in favor of Clay's re-appointment, Taylor politely declined, citing insufficient time to make such additions.[84] Nevertheless, Taylor recognized the benefits to Lincoln from this topic, and in his reply, Taylor agreed that "the complete success of the scheme of emancipation in Russia has much significance for this nation at the present time."[85]

Based upon their twin emancipations, Alexander II and Lincoln were hailed as liberators around the world. However, the great expectations of emancipation were not fulfilled in either country because, in part, the sad specter of assassination attempts represented one more "parallel[]" between Lincoln and Alexander II.[86] In April 1865, Lincoln's assassination shocked the world, with Prince Gortchacow offering heartfelt condolences to America on behalf of Alexander II (who was then mourning the loss of his own son)—"Scarcely has my august master returned to his dominions, when he orders me to testify to you his grief at this painful event. Tried himself by a woeful loss . . . the Emperor joins in the unanimous regrets which encircle the memory of this eminent statesman . . . ."[87] Perhaps had Lincoln lived longer, he

83. Lincoln to Taylor, Washington, D.C., Dec. 25, 1863, *Collected Works*, VII: 93.

84. On Lincoln's bypassing Taylor for the Russian Minister post, see Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians*, 122. In turning Lincoln down, Taylor explained: "It is rather late this winter to prepare a new lecture, especially as I have engaged to deliver on 'Russia and her People' in some thirty different cities; but I fully understand the interest of the subject you propose, and desire to present it, in some way, to the public." Taylor to Lincoln, Dec. 28, 1863, *Collected Works*, VII: 93 & n.1 (quotation in original).

85. *Ibid*.

86. Seward to Clay, DOS No. 208, Washington, D.C., May 3, 1866 (noting the "parallel[]" between the respective assassination attempts).

87. Clay to William Hunter [the acting Secretary of State in Seward's absence], DOS No. 81, St. Petersburg, Russia, May 16–28, 1865, attaching transl. Alexander Gortchacow, "Prince Gortchacow to Mr. Clay," May 16, 1865.

would have explained in detail all of the influences surrounding one of his most enduring historical legacies, the Emancipation Proclamation. But as John Hope Franklin memorably observed, "One cannot know the answer to these questions, for Lincoln, the only one who could do so, never gave the answers."[88] Nevertheless, sufficient clues exist to reach the conclusion that Lincoln borrowed lessons from the Russian experience with serf emancipation.

88. Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation*, 31.