



THE CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

DECEMBER, 1976

Vol. 20 No. 4

---- 167th meeting - Ladies Night ----

Date: Tuesday, December 7th
Speaker: Guy DiCarlo
Subject: "Mother Bickerdyke"
Place: The Hermit Club, Dodge Court
Preliminaries: 7:00 P.M. Dinner: 8:00 P.M.

IMPORTANT: This is Ladies Night. Note that the date has been advanced to December 7; also that festivities have been moved back one hour -- Cocktails from 7 and dinner at 8. You must make reservations. To reserve call Charlie Spiegle at 464-5335.

LET'S HEAR IT LOUD AND CLEAR FOR GOOD OLD GUY! The continuing viability of the Cleveland Civil War Round Table is primarily due to the good works of our speaker. Guy is a charter member and has held every office in our organization. Besides that for many years he edited the Newsletter, obtained the speakers, arranged the meetings, developed the Field Trips, and when necessary "swept the floor"!

Now associated with the New York Round Table, Guy will start editing their Newsletter next year. He is a member of the Company of Military Historians, the American Society of Military

Insignia Collectors, and the Battlefield Preservation Committee. Guy is Commodity Training Director for Merrill Lynch et alia.

Guy's talk is about Mary A. Bickerdyke of Knox County, Ohio. His address will be based upon a post-bellum tribute to her by one of Sherman's troopers.

REPORT ON THE 2nd NATIONAL CONGRESS OF CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLES
held Oct. 21-3 at the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

By our member, Bernie Drews

It is not the intent of the Congress to regulate the Civil War Roundtables but to keep communications open with all the roundtables and to organize efforts toward battlefield preservation.

The first speaker was Dr. Robert Meinhard of Winona State University, Winona, Minnesota. He discussed the condition of the battlefields around the country and rated them according to their relationship to original condition. Receiving the top grade were Shiloh, Wilsons Creek and Appomatox Court House. Francis Wilshin, former Superintendent of Manassas National Battlefield Park, spoke to us on the newly discovered Bullock Maps of First Bull Run. The first afternoon session was chaired by our own Guy DiCarlo with Dr. J. Luvaas, Allegheny College, of Meadville, Pa. as the speaker. Dr. Luvaas spoke on Civil War Tactics and Strategy. The afternoon was concluded with a tour of the War College's Military History Research Collection. This collection is quite extensive and is available to the public.

Friday evening Dr. Harry Pfanz, Chief Historian, National Park Service, spoke on the problems of preservation at Antietam and Gettysburg. Saturday's tour of Antietam Battlefield was directed by Ed Bearss who handled our recent Antietam field trips. The speaker that evening was Ralph Newman, Proprietor of the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, who said he had not noticed any slackening in the interest in the Civil War.

The next Congress will be held in Jackson, Mississippi and I believe we should be represented. One result of the Congress will be to divide the country into six regions with a regional administrator appointed to work with the local roundtables toward battlefield preservation. The Interior Department is interested in this approach and encourages the Congress.

THE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

FOUNDED FEBRUARY 19, 1957

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THE RUSSIAN FLEET VISITS THE UNITED STATES

Written by fellow member, Tim Moran

In the fall of 1863 an event occurred that caused the North to believe that the Union had at least one ally in Europe. It was the arrival of the Imperial Russian Navy to the ports of San Francisco and New York. The effect upon the Union was electrifying. With an ignorance of the political situation in Europe, the public believed that the Tsar of Russia, Alexander II, was demonstrating that the Russians supported the Northern cause. Had not the Tsar liberated the serfs? Therefore, was it not reasonable to conclude that the Russians would support the policy of President Lincoln that led him to proclaim the Emancipation Proclamation?

On September 24, 1863, four days after the North had been defeated in the bloody rout at Chickamauga, the Imperial Russian Navy's flagship, the Alexander Nevski, and the frigate Peresvet, entered New York Harbor. During the following month, four more warships dropped anchor in New York. At the same time, the Pacific Squadron of the Russian Fleet anchored in San Francisco Bay. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles noted in his diary: "... The Department is much gratified to learn that a squadron of Russian war vessels is at present off the harbor of New York, with the intention, it is supposed, of visiting that city. The presence in our waters of a squadron...cannot but be a source of pleasure and happiness to our countrymen... In sending them to this country there is something significant. What will be its effect on France and the French policy we shall learn in due time. It may be moderate..."

Two American Ministers were sent to Russia by Lincoln, Cassius Clay and Simon Cameron. Lincoln in 1862 inquired through Cameron, the Tsar's attitude in case either Great Britain or France intervened in the war. Lincoln was informed by Alexander that, in such case the friendship of Russia for the United States would be shown in a "decisive manner."

Was this show of naval force by the Russians the "decisive manner"?

Events and circumstances that followed the arrival of the Russian Fleet could be interpreted in a variety of ways that would satisfy the people of the Union. On both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts the squadrons were received with warmth and friendship.

New York City rolled out the red carpet. A ball was held that envied the recent ball that was held in honor of the Prince of Wales. Toasts were offered to the Tsar and to Lincoln. Always the name of Alexander was cheered as the emancipator of the serfs and the friend of the North. Likewise, the Russians toasted Lincoln and spoke of the friendship of the two countries.

Most New Yorkers were convinced that the Russian Fleet was here to help the Union. For one feast, Delmonico's prepared 12,000 oysters, 1,200 game birds, 250 turkeys, 400 chickens, 1,000 tenderloins, all to be washed down with 3,500 bottles of wine. According to a reporter at this banquet, the Russian guests were worn out by the expressions of friendship and affection extended to them.

In San Francisco, the Russian Squadron was equally welcome. Not only did the Pacific Squadron aid the city in putting out a fire, but the Russian admiral in command, Popov, declared that his force stood ready to defend the city from the Confederate cruisers Alabama and Sumter should they attack the city. The Confederate Cruisers did not attack and the orders of Popov, which would have made Russia the active ally of the Union, never materialized.

Popov's actions, however, did not meet with the approval of the Russian delegation in Washington. Minister Stoeckl was instructed by the Foreign Minister, Prince Gortchakov, to reprove the Admiral for his unneutral stand and to urge neutrality in the future... "As far as Imperial Russia is concerned...there is neither North nor South, but a United States. Therefore, Russia had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of that country."

Was the real reason for the seven month visit of the Russian Fleet to support the cause of the North? The people of the North long held to this belief.

But the reason was not a common friendship. Rather, it was the political situation in Europe. In the early 1860's, Imperial Russian policies towards Poland caused Russia to look with anxiety towards her relations with France and Great Britain. Russia did not want to have her Fleet bottled up at Kronstadt, as it was during the Crimean War. Therefore, Russia took the precautionary step of assurance that her Fleet would be in a position to act vigorously if hostilities broke out between Russia and France or Great Britain.

One final question needs to be discussed. Did a treaty exist between the United States and Russia? Remember that Alexander had assured Cameron that the Russians would show her friendship towards the United States in a "decisive manner." If a treaty did exist, Lincoln and Seward kept it so secret that not even the President's private secretaries were aware of it.

A myth arose that the Russian Fleet was under sealed orders to come to the aid of the United States if war broke out between the Union and either France or Great Britain or both. This belief was supported by several individuals, including Commander F. E. Chadwick, USN, and George Pierce. Thurlow Weed, who succeeded Clay in Russia, also supported this belief. The fact remains, however, that no official documents or evidence was ever presented to varify secret and sealed orders.

