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Louis Kossuth's letters from Europe to "The New York Times" (1853-1856)

Summary: Lajos Kossuth Letters written for *The New York Times* in the years 1853-1856 are short essays commenting on current political, social, ethnic and military events associated with the ongoing Crimean War. Originally entitled *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy* and then *Letters from L. Kossuth*, written in exile in England during the Crimean War in Europe, create a very specific series of more than 40 numbered texts in which the Hungarian patriot and the independence activist lectured his point of view, made his reflections, often not without sharp criticism of the great superpowers and the United States, sometimes tinged with a hint of bitter irony and black humor. The primary aim of those Letters, as it seems to be, was not only to bring distant events taking place across the ocean closer to the Americans but also to move consciences, to shake out of indifference, to encourage to more active attitudes and actions towards the Old Continent. Kossuth hoped at the same time that the memory of him, sympathy, enthusiasm and kindness showed to him during his stay in the USA in the years 1851-1852 did not expire and would help him in his arduous educational actions of American society.

Keywords: Lajos Kossuth, The New York Times, Crimean War, Austrian Empire

Louis Kossuth's Letters written for "The New York Times" between 1853 and 1856 are short commentaries on current political, social, ethnic and military developments associated with the ongoing Crimean War. Originally entitled *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy* and then *Letters from L. Kossuth*, written in exile in England during the Crimean War, they constitute a very specific series of more than forty numbered texts in which the Hungarian patriot and the independence activist expounded his point of view, articulated his reflections, often not without sharp criticism towards the great superpowers and the United States, sometimes tinged with bitter irony and black humour. The primary aim of those Letters seems to have been not only to acquaint Americans more closely with far

off events that were taking place across the ocean, but also to prick consciences, to shake people out of their indifference, to encourage more proactive attitudes and engagement towards the Old Continent. Kossuth hoped at the same time that his memory, and the sympathy, enthusiasm and kindness he encountered during his stay in the USA in 1851-1852 had not faded and would help him in his arduous task, which was to enlighten American society on topics which for him were of paramount importance.

His fame in America at the turn of the 1840s and 1850s was indeed exceptional, unique and unprecedented. Acclaimed “the Father of Hungarian Democracy”, he was seen (especially during the Revolutions of 1848) as a symbol of the fight against despotism, tyranny, national oppression and social injustice, in the name of those republican principles that are so close to American hearts. Americans were in the grip of a “Kossuth Craze”. When he arrived in New York¹ on December 4th 1851, a twelve thousand-strong crowd welcomed him as the “Washington of Hungary”. A gun salute announced the arrival of the nation’s special guest.² Mascots dressed in Magyar national costumes were sold in shops and the tricolour bow and characteristic hat that he wore became something of a fad of the day. Four towns, one county and six streets were named after him. He was invited to Washington and was received by president Millard Fillmore in the White House. He spoke in the House of Representatives as the second foreigner after general Lafayette (1828). He visited sixteen states and numerous towns. He attended banquets and receptions at which he would always be asked to speak.³ He made official speeches in the state assemblies of Maryland, Ohio, Indiana and Massachusetts.⁴ He was acclaimed “the champion of revolution” everywhere. Only in the south, because of his negative attitude to slavery⁵, was he received with reserve if not hostility. New Orleans was one of the few southern state cities to send him an invitation. Those meetings, however, were held without the parades and banquets that characterised such events elsewhere.⁶

1 Report of Kossuth stay in New York [in]: *Report of the Special Committee Appointed by the Common Council of the City of New York to Make Arrangements for the Reception of Gov. Louis Kossuth, the Distinguished Hungarian Patriot*, New York 1852.

2 Kossuth was given his title by a special resolution of both houses of the Congress on senator Henry S. Foote’s application of February 17th 1851, S. Beszedits, *The Nation’s Guest: Kossuth in America*, Presentation at the HCCC on Febr. 24th, 2002; A. M. Leffler, *Kossuth Comes to Cleveland*, “Ohio History”, vol. 56, pp. 242-257.

3 More in: J. Kolos, *Louis Kossuth in America, 1851-1852*, Buffalo 1973; D. S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America; A Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy 1848-1852*, Columbia 1977.

4 Kossuth could speak English very well. He learned it in an Austrian prison from the Bible translated into English and from Shakespeare’s works. Sometimes he surprised his listeners with his knowledge of the Old English language, S. M. Papp, *Hungarian Americans and Their Communities of Cleveland*, Cleveland State University 1981, pp. 80-82.

5 More in: V. Steven Béla, *Louis Kossuth and the Slavery Question in America*, “East European Quarterly”, vol. 39 (2005).

6 J. W. Oliver, *Louis Kossuth’s Appeal to the Middle West – 1852*, “The Mississippi Valley Historical Review”, vol. 14, no. 4 (Mar. 1928), pp. 481-495.

Kossuth's visit engendered an Austro-American diplomatic exchange. His enthusiastic reception with a gun salute, which was reserved for official delegations and heads of state, and the speech of the Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, made at the banquet organised by the Congress in Washington, prompted the Austrian representative in the USA – Johann George von Hülsemann, to deliver an official protest on behalf of the government of His Imperial Majesty, on December 13th 1851. This initiated the rapid cooling of relations between the two countries. Vienna was particularly riled by Webster's words about Hungary's right, like that of any other nation, to its own, autonomous state structures and to forge its own destiny without the interference of foreign forces. Webster was to state emphatically: "All I say is, that Hungary can regulate these matters for herself infinitely better than they can be regulated for her by Austria".⁷ During his meeting with Hülsemann, organised by the Austrian chargé d'affaires, president Fillmore orally disavowed Webster's speech, but denied the request to dismiss his Secretary of State, regardless of the possibility of Vienna breaking off diplomatic relations. Irrespective of its strongly-worded protests, Vienna did not want to take any drastic counteraction. Hülsemann found himself in something of a deadlock: being, unable to wait any longer for his government's specific instructions, he took ostentatious actions on his own initiative. He left Washington for about a month and a half and travelled to the southern areas of the continent, reaching Cuba.⁸ He returned at the prompting by count Alexandr Bodisco, a Russian envoy to Washington who mediated in the talks with the American president regarding normalising relations between the USA and Austria.

Hülsemann still demanded Webster's dismissal as Secretary of State, and claimed that the arisen circumstances prevented him from cooperating with the State Department. Being unable to enforce his demands, he decided to leave. He gave notice of his decision in a letter delivered to Webster on April 29th 1852, and courteously thanked the president for their cooperation. Reminding him of the conflict, once again he referred to Webster's speech made in Congress in Kossuth's presence, which he castigated as hostile towards His Majesty, revolutionary, and an open encouragement to Hungarians to rebel and separate themselves from the empire. When Webster handed over his letter to Charles J. McCurdy, the American chargé d'affaires in Austria, the letter sarcastically remarked: "The Chevalier Hülsemann, it appears, has yet to learn that no foreign government or its representative can take just offence at anything which an officer of this Government may say in his private capacity."⁹

Hülsemann's manoeuvre turned out to be a bluff, which may have been an attempt to anticipate or exploit the expected changes in Austrian diplomacy after the death

⁷ Speech at the Kossuth Banquet, Washington, January 7, 1852, *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster*, E. Everett ed., Boston 1903, vol. 13, pp. 452-462.

⁸ More in: C. Merle Eugene, *Austria and the United States, 1848-1852: A Study in Diplomatic Relations*, Northampton, Mass., 1926, pp. 184-197.

⁹ The Chevalier Hülsemann to Mr Webster, Washington April 29th 1852, Mr. Webster to Mr. McCurdy, Washington June 8th 1852, *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster*, vol. 14, pp. 501-504.

of the Minister of Foreign Affairs – Felix Schwarzenberg. The new minister, Karl Ferdinand von Buol –Schauenstein, left the position in Washington unchanged. Hülsemann, being in the diplomatic service in the USA since 1838, in the beginning as the secretary of the Austrian legation until 1941, then chargé d'affaires until 1855, he remained in the USA until 1863 as Austria's official envoy.¹⁰ His conflict with the American Secretary of State passed into history when Daniel Webster died on October 24th 1852.

Kossuth, probably unaware of the diplomatic game played in his presence, left America on July 14th 1852, and went to England where he settled and wrote his letters to America. He did not let Americans forget him and his national goals. Initially, he wrote anonymously, from an unspecified location in Europe. A series of anonymous articles, starting on June 15th, was published in that way in 1853, under the title *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy*. Already in the first letter announcing firsthand reports from Europe and not from foreign press reprints, he challenged the traditional way of American thinking arguing that: "Were it not the United States – he wrote (however, it may revolt your national pride) though great, glorious and free at home are neither great, glorious nor free abroad (...). United States has been an American power and the only one in America (...), but in the broad, world-wide sense have really no power at all since (...) your free and 'independent' Press picked out from the rubbish of the monarchico-aristocratical English Press."¹¹ This bold thesis was supported by examples. He called the promises made by the Russian Foreign Minister to Lord Palmerston during the drama of 1849, as subsequently relayed to the public by "The Times", that the Tsar had no intention to intervene in Hungary, "an insolent performance" because, Russian troops had already engaged in quashing the insurrection in Hungary. Turning to current issues, he exposed British hypocrisy when "The Times" argued that they ought to support the Greek Orthodox Church persecuted by Muslim barbarians and support the Tsar in his efforts to extend his care to his co-religionists as the head of the Orthodox Church. Kossuth reasoned that the Greeks, satisfied with the circumstances, were not going to change the unlimited freedoms that they enjoyed under the Sultan's rule to slavery under Russian despotism which was euphemistically called "protection". In Kossuth's opinion, Menshikov's ultimatum to Turkey was no more than an arrogant demand involving the transfer of the Sultan's rights to the Tsar, which was accepted according to "The Times" and denied according to Kossuth.¹²

Indeed, Prince Alexandr Menshikov¹³ was sent by Tsar Nicholas I to Constantinople to the Sultan Abd-ul-Majid I on 28th February with a demand to regulate the issue

10 C.W. Efrogmson, *An Austrian Diplomat in America, 1840*, "The American History Review", vol. 41, no. 3 (April 1936), pp. 503-514.

11 *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy*, no. 1, Europe, May 27th 1853, "New York Times", June 15th 1853.

12 *ibid.*

13 Alexander Sergiejevitch Menshikov (1787-1869), high ranking Russian commander, politician, descendent of Alexander Danilovitch Menshikov (1673-1729), the Prince of Russia and Duke

of care for holy places in Palestine in favour of Russia. Initially, the Sultan was prone to accept Russia's demands. He even issued a decree (firman) on June 4th 1853 which guaranteed the rights and privileges of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. But he turned down the further demand to put all Orthodox citizens in the Ottoman Empire under Russian protection.

Nicholas I, dissatisfied with this turn of events, decided to seize Moldova¹⁴ and Wallachia¹⁵ by force of arms; the invasion began on June 21st 1853. In response, British and French fleets were sent to the eastern Mediterranean, and on October 4th, Turkey declared war on Russia thereby ending the preliminary diplomatic stage of the Crimean War (1853-1856) which was also to be known as the Ninth Russo-Turkish War.¹⁶

The Tsar, possessed by the idea of breaking up the Ottoman empire and seizing Turkish -controlled territory in the Balkans, decided on a hazardous step. On the one hand, he naively expected Austria's support which, in his opinion, had a debt of gratitude towards Russia for her help in dousing the flames of revolution in Hungary and, on the other hand, he counted on British and French neutrality because their clash of interests made an Anglo-French alliance unlikely. All his assumptions proved wrong and the mutual rivalries between the two western empires were not as strong as the fear of Russian dominance in the Middle East. In the ensuing war, Turkey

of Ingria, descendent of Michail Golicyn (1675-1730), Russian general, field marshal, Russian governor of Finland.

14 Moldova – the historical land, comprises the territories of the Moldavian Plateau, between the Eastern Carpathians, the Dniestr and delta of the Danube. Currently, it is divided with political borders between Romania (most of the area between the Carpathians and the Prut) and the Republic of Moldova (most of the area between the Prut and the Dniestr – Bessarabia). Fragments of historical Moldova in the north (north Bukovina) and south (former Budziak) now belonging to Ukraine. For centuries it had been the object of conflict among Turkey, Russia and Austria. After Stephen's death, Moldova became almost entirely dependent on the Ottoman Empire and remained its fief until the 19th century. Russia, which had gained strength, took advantage of the gradual weakening of the Ottoman Empire and intensified its influence in Moldova, also using the fact that both countries were inhabited by Orthodox people. At the same time, in Moldova, Turkish Sultans often brought new *hospodars* of Greek origin called phanariotes, who exploited the land they ruled. In 1775, northern Moldova (Bukovina) was annexed by Austria and in 1812, eastern Moldova – Bessarabia and Budziak were annexed by Russia.

15 Wallachia – the historical land located in today's Romania comprising the Wallachian Plain, lying between the southern Carpathians and the lower Danube. For centuries it was the object of conflict between Hungary, Austria, Turkey and Russia. After Hungary collapsed in 1526, it was under Ottoman supremacy. Austria's victory in the war with Turkey, sealed with the peace treaty of Karlovci in 1699, gave power over Transylvania to the Habsburgs. It caused the beginning of a new strong neighbour. Soon, albeit for a short time (1718-1739), the Austrians managed to take over Oltenia. In 1770 Wallachia was seized by the Russians. In 1774 it returned under Turkish rule by virtue of the peace of Kuczuk Kajnardzi. The Russians controlled the country directly in the years 1807-1812, then in 1829-1833. When, in 1833, the Russians withdrew from Wallachia, they transferred official rule to the Turks, however, a Russian consul maintained actual control.

16 Eight earlier Russo-Turkish occurred in 1674-1681, 1686-1700, 1710 -1711, 1735-1739, 1768-1774, 1787-1792, 1806-1812, and 1828-1829.

was supported not only by France, Great Britain and the Kingdom of Sardinia, but also by Austria and Prussia.

According to Louis Kossuth, the Crimean War could turn into a golden opportunity for the resumption of the struggle for the independence of Hungary and he hoped that at the same time, it would enable his glorious return from exile as a national hero. The Crimean War also kindled Kossuth's aspirations to assume the role of leader of all oppressed nations within the Austrian Empire, including the Poles. However, he was much surprised by the crystallization of the balance of power in the international arena and the new alliances. The anti-Russian position of Austria strengthened the already strong coalition, and above all, the pro-Russian sympathies of the Americans, preserving formal neutrality in the war, prevented the implementation of basic tasks. Kossuth decided to commence an educational and propaganda campaign in the area of the United States.

In his letters, Kossuth sought to focus his readers' attention on Turkey, speaking of its difficult situation with understanding and sympathy. He argued that: "All Europe, which is not by choice or by necessity identified with the dreadfully revived (un)holy Alliance, agrees in the view that the independent existence of the Turkish Empire is necessary to the world (...) as the instrumentality for reducing the Russo-Austrian absolutistical principle." He greeted the first rumours about Austria's neutrality or Vienna's wish to build a natural barrier for the Ottoman Empire against the Russian Empire with disbelief. "There are certain influential diplomatists of the late Metternich school" – he objected. "Austria a barrier! Why how is it then that in spite of this barrier, Russia has not only robbed Turkey of Mingrelia, one third of Moldova and the all Bessarabia, succeeded to share sovereignty in Wallachia, and the rest of Moldova."¹⁷

He vigorously disputed the reprints from "The Times" which took the view that despite seizing Moldova and Wallachia, Russia did not have any war plans against Turkey and its territorial aspirations would absolutely come to an end. Exposing the tsar's aggressive policy towards both these countries in the past, Kossuth ironically asked "You can easily imagine what was that protection of despotic Russia to constitution Moldo-Wallachia!" He also accused Americans of passiveness and indifference towards injustice in Europe. He candidly asked: "Why, America is represented nowhere! Not one of the diplomatic agents of her democratic Government is yet on his post in Europe; and a Minister to Constantinople, and to Paris, not even nominated yet! Why, Sir, but that's a negligence surpassing imagination; that's a degradation of your national dignity (...)"¹⁸ In another place, he stricture: "But, I ask: at this critical moment when it is clear that a mighty 'push' might be given with a comparatively small assistance; what are the people of America doing? *Nothing*. What is your Government doing? Again, *nothing*."¹⁹

¹⁷ *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy*, no. 2, Europe, June 5th 1853, "New York Times", June 18th 1853.

¹⁸ *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy*, no. 3, no. 8, Europe, June 15th, July 15th 1853, "New York Times", June 28th, August 4th 1853.

¹⁹ *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy*, no. 4, Europe, July 12th 1853, "New York Times", June 28th 1853.

These questions remain unanswered. However American patience seemed to be wearing thin. The reaction to the next letter was immediate and definite. In describing the seemingly minor fact of the Austrian minister baron Karl Ludwig Bruck²⁰ being welcomed in Constantinople with a gun salute by the commander of the American frigate *Cumberland*. Kossuth had written indignantly: "Since when has it been the business of the star-spangled Republican banner to be disgraced by acts of fawning on the envoys of the bloody Austrian tyrant (...), whom, even a too indulgent conservative American Government despised so much as not to care a straw about the interruption of diplomatic relations with its Court in April 1852?" At the same time he argued that such ostentatious American behaviour might have negatively affected the already complicated situation in the region and serve to encourage other actions unfavourable to small European democracies such as e.g. Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Wallachia or Poland. Kossuth revealed that while Americans were welcoming Bruck, the representatives of all above mentioned nations were engaged in talks with Turkey to enter a cooperation and mutual help pact during the war. These talks could fail because of America's reckless gesture.²¹

"The Washington Union", an unofficial government mouthpiece, answered those serious accusations. For the first time revealing the name of the letters' author, it wrote: "The 'Democratic Letters in European Matters and American Policy', which appear in the New York Times, are well understood to be from the prolific pen of Louis Kossuth, and on that account they are entitled to special consideration – not that we regard Kossuth as peculiarly qualified to form reliable and safe conclusions as to European matters, or as being entitled even to the respect due to many other correspondents, when he undertakes to suggest what should be American policy in Europe. He is, however, a man of genius and eloquence, possessing, no doubt, extraordinary facilities for obtaining information as to affairs of Europe, and capable of reasoning plausibly upon the facts within his knowledge."²² It spoke with irony regarding Kossuth's personal attendance during negotiations with the Porte and at the same time expressed dissatisfaction with remarks suggesting that the Sultan was awaiting active support from the United States; and the honourable American cannonade a death knell for his hopes. For Americans, even worse was the supposition that a European democrat could refer to Washington's policy in some secret negotiations with Turkey. The paper asked with exasperation: "how he could base an alliance of the European Democracy with the Sultan upon the assurance that the United States would give active assistance and support to Turkey?"²³

20 Karl Ludwig Bruck (1798-1860), Austrian politician, diplomat, in the years 1848-1851, then minister of trade, and minister of finance in 1855-1860. Accused of embezzlement, he committed suicide.

21 *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy*, no. 5, Europe, July 5th 1853, "New York Times", July 23rd 1853.

22 *American Policy in Europe – Kossuth's Letters, From the Washington Union*, "New York Times", July 28th 1853.

23 *ibid.*

As one “New York Times” reader observed, the editors of the newspaper neither confirmed nor denied the rumours about the identity of the author of the letters. However, it was accepted that Kossuth was the author. It was noticed that they were written from a different perspective with conclusions that were sometimes misunderstood by Americans, and from a standpoint that was excessively moralising and mentorial, which sometimes evoked amusement. There was a clear warning that such texts that raised the alarm on European issues should be approached with the utmost caution.²⁴

Kossuth could not ignore such criticism. In response to the “Washington Union’s” allegations, though still anonymously, he asked, on what basis the authorship of the letters was assigned to a particular person and why the editorial staff did not contradict the rumours, dooming the idea itself to failure. He averred that: “This letters, Sir are anonymous. I write them such because I desire them to be appreciated just according to their internal value -neither more nor less. Nothing is more prejudicial to the independent development of public intellect than the leading- strings of names”. Moving on to the merits of the case, he dismissed the allegations of his lack of entitlement to express his opinion on the negotiations of small democracies with the Porte. He concluded that: “The chance which [the] conflict between Turkey and its ambitious neighbors, must present to the Democracy Europe, is so openly apparent”. With this, he questioned the secret nature of those talks which was assigned to them by “Washington Union” and blamed the newspaper for succumbing to the fascination of the monarchist doctrine of secret diplomacy. He branded as some of the most spiteful insinuations of “Washington Union” that small democracies were acting on behalf of the United States during the talks with the Ottoman Empire. He did not hide the hopes he vested in America. Kossuth asked: “Has not General Pierce, your President at the present time, reminded your nation, on the solemn occasion of July 4th 1852, that you owe a debt yet unpaid, to Europe, for your independence? Has he not pledged his lively sympathy to the cause of Freedom in his Inaugural speech? Has he not represented the universal feeling of all America, and especially that of his party, in professing such sentiments? Has not the presence of M. Kossuth in the United States afforded an opportunity for seeing and hearing such sentiments openly confirmed by members of the Executive Government, by Senators and Representatives of the Union, by State Governments(...)?”²⁵

A unique exception to Kossuth’s critical observation of the time, indeed, was a letter brimful of praise, enthusiasm and excitement, related to the resolution to the Martin Koszta incident. Born in Hungary, Koszta, having fought against the Habsburgs during the Revolutions of 1848, was on the wanted list of the Viennese authorities. He emigrated, via Turkey, to the United States, where he applied for naturalisation. He returned to Turkey in 1853, “on business” as he claimed, before

24 *The New York Times and Kossuth*, “New York Times” July 13th 1853; *American Policy in Europe – Kossuth’s Letters* “New York Times”, August 19th 1853.

25 *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy*, no. 10, Europe, August 16th 1853, “New York Times”, September 6th 1853.

he received his American citizenship. Despite the protection of E. S. Offley, the American consul in Smyrna, and George Perkins Marsh, the American chargé d'affaires in Constantinople, he was kidnapped by armed bandits, employed by the Austrian consul in Smyrna (Izmir) and put on the Austrian battleship "Huszár".²⁶ The appeals of the American representatives in Turkey to release Koszta proved unavailing. The Austrians treated him as their citizen, and proposed to transfer him via Trieste to their territory and imprison him for his rebellion against the Crown.²⁷ This was followed by the bold intervention of American captain Duncan Ingraham, the commander of the corvette "St. Louis"²⁸, who, prompted by Washington, threatened to open fire on "Huszár" if Koszta was not released. Koszta was transferred to the French consul general in Smyrna and released after an American-Austrian exchange of diplomatic notes, and allowed to return to the USA.²⁹

The incident did not go without some repercussions at the highest level. On August 29th 1853, the Austrian chargé d'affaires in Washington, Hülsemann, issued an official protest against what he described as hostile American behaviour and, as a neutral country, its violation of sea laws. He demanded Koszta's extradition, so as to put him in an Austrian prison. He demanded the withdrawal of American agents³⁰ and satisfaction proportionate to the gravity of the insult. The American Secretary of State William L. Marcy delivered a lengthy response on September 26th in which, point by point, he rebuffed the Austrian allegations and took an official stance in defence of America's conduct. He believed it was entirely lawful to defend an American citizen and he expressed the hope of restoring Austro-American relations to the *status quo ante*.³¹

In his letter to "The New York Times", Kossuth, focusing his attention on the bold action of captain Ingraham, wrote: "The people of Smyrna witnessed with the liveliest enthusiasm these proceedings. They went on for hours to cheer America, and to

26 American chargé Mr Brown to Secretary of State Mr Marcy, Constantinople, June 28th 1853, dispatch no. 41, *Martin Koszta Correspondence*, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, ex, doc. 91, pp. 8-12.

27 American charge Mr Brown to Secretary of State Mr. Marcy, Constantinople, July 5th 1853, dispatch no. 42, *Martin Koszta Correspondence &c*, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, ex., doc. 91, pp. 12-31.

28 American corvette "St. Louis" remained in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Smyrna according to the American principle of neutrality and freedom of the seas. A little earlier, chargé Marsh made a diplomatic journey to Athens.

29 American charge Mr Brown to Secretary of State Mr Marcy, Constantinople, July 7th 1853, dispatch no 43; Mr Offley to Mr Marcy, Smyrna September 17th, September 22nd, September 27th 1853, *Martin Koszta Correspondence &c*, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, ex., doc. 91, pp. 31-38, 78-84.

30 The government in Vienna believed that Koszta, who formally was an Austrian subject, was sent to Turkey in 1853 to the war-torn area as a special American agent.

31 Important from Washington: Protest of Hulsemann, Austrian Chargé d'Affaires, Reply of Secretary Marcy, "New York Times", September 30th 1853; A. Dowty, *The Limit of American Isolation: The United States and the Crimean War*, New York 1971, pp. 47-48.

shout ‘Vive la Republique!’ Thanks have been voted to Captain Ingraham and to the United States Consul at Smyrna, and a complimentary address to President Pierce, directly expressing the gratitude of the people of Smyrna for seeing the honor of their port so nobly vindicated, and the rights of humanity so generously protected by Republican America.” Kossuth added: “Poor people – too often have they seen European Governments daring with impunity to violate justice, right and humanity, and nobly to oppose their insulting outrages.” He encouraged further actions with the rousing exhortation “Go ahead America!”³²

America took great pride in the actions of its representatives in the Aegean Sea region, as was confirmed by a long excerpt from president Pierce’s State of the Union address, in which he gave an account of America’s diplomatic actions to release Koszta, and the joint resolution of both houses of Congress passed on August 4th 1854 which obliged the president to give captain Ingraham a medal for his bold action.³³

This is one of the rare examples of direct and open American intervention and involvement in the Crimean imbroglio which Kossuth saw as a positive development. However, his general opinion on the American response towards the “Oriental” conflict was negative.

Unexpectedly, the *Democratic Letters on European Matters and American Policy* stopped at the end of August 1853 and Kossuth remained silent for over a year. Over this period, the military conflict gathered momentum. After the Russian naval victory of Sinop in the Black Sea on November 30th 1853, British and French fleets entered the Black Sea in January 1854. Russia declared war on France and Great Britain in February 1854. Taking advantage of their naval victory, Russian forces crossed the Danube in April and seized Dobruja. Tsarism’s further attempts to instigate Serbian and Bulgarian uprisings against Turkish rule, ended in failure. The seizure of Varna by the allied forces in June 1854 while Austrian forces were concentrated in Transylvania, a peripheral province of the empire, was followed by Austro-Turkish negotiations on the takeover of Moldova and Wallachia after Russia’s withdrawal, further to which Austrian troops under the command of general Heinrich Hess entered into both principalities in August and September 1854. As prearranged, Austria was supposed to support, control and secure the seized territories as a neutral zone between the warring parties and guarantee the status quo in the Balkans. This situation prevailed until the end of March 1857.

To begin with, Vienna’s attitude was not clearly defined. Its final position crystallised under force of events which posed a threat to Austrian interests. In seizing Moldova and Wallachia, establishing control of the lower Danube, aimed at engendering revolutionary movements in the Balkans, were all designed to strengthen Russia’s position in violation of the existing balance of power. France and Great

32 *Democratic Letters On European Matters and American Policy*, no. 7, no. 10, Europe, July 12th, July 29th 1853, “New York Times”, August 2nd, August 12th 1853.

33 F. Pierce, *State of the Union Address*, December 5th 1853; “Congressional Globe”, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, June 15th 1854, p. 1760, August 3rd 1854, pp. 2185, 2187; R. Franklin Nicholas, Franklin Pierce: *Young Hickory of the Granite Hills*, Philadelphia 1958, p. 298.

Britain, as sea powers, were primarily interested in military action in Asia, the Crimean Peninsula and at sea. They had an instrument to hold Vienna in check by the possible initiation of national movements in Europe: in Poland, Hungary and Italy. Prussia, on the other hand, could threaten Austria's position in the German Confederation. The result of these threats was that Austria adopted an attitude of armed neutrality in order to maintain her imperial integrity, the security of her southern borders and peace in the Balkans. This found expression in her official accession to the anti-Russian coalition on December 2nd 1854 which involved military activity in the Danube region, mediation initiatives aimed at putting an end to the armed conflict and an attitude of total passiveness in the remaining war zones – the Black Sea, the Crimea, the Caucasus and the Azov Sea.³⁴

At the time, Vienna remained a very important centre of international diplomatic activity. In the summer of 1853, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Édouard Drouyn de Lhys, after talks with Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Buol and other great power representatives, put forward the first proposal to resolve the escalating Russo-Turkish points at issue. Russia accepted these proposals; Turkey rejected them – being sure of its success on the battlefield. Another attempt at salvaging peace involved including France, Great Britain and Austria in negotiations on the "Vienna Four Point" proposal put forward in a note of August 8th 1854. It was established that normalising relations between the Ottoman Empire and Imperial Russia would not be possible without building solid, lasting foundations, i.e. firstly, substituting the Russian guarantee of Moldova and Wallachia with a European guarantee, secondly, "free navigation on the Danube River", thirdly, examining the sea convention of July 13th 1841 with due regard to equal navigation rights through the straits for all European powers, and finally, Turkey's Christian subjects were to go under the protection of Europe as a whole, and not just of Russia. This plan was rejected by Russia on August 26th 1854. Further proposals evaluated in Vienna in December 1854 and January 1855, without Turkey's participation, did not yield satisfactory results.³⁵

At the same time, preparations for war were in progress. The first important encounter came on September 28th 1854 at the River Alma, where Anglo-French forces under general Saint-Arnaud and Lord Raglan defeated general Menshikov's army. The road to Sevastopol seemed open. However, due to the city's heavy fortifications, the allies decided to approach the fortress from the east, to capture the nearby ports. So, on October 25th 1854, the French, British and Turkish forces on

34 P.W. Schroeder, *A Turning Point in Austrian Policy in the Crimean War: The Conference of March 1854*, "Austrian Historical Yearbook", vol. 4-5, 1968-1969, pp. 164-165; A. Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815-1918*, London, New York 1994, pp. 168-171.

35 Westmorland an Clarendon, Vienna, August 8th 1854 [in]: *Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkriegs: Englische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkriegs*, W. Baumgart ed., München 2006, series III, vol. 2, dok. 343, 344, pp. 559-560; G. B. Henderson, *The Diplomatic Revolution of 1854, I - The Four Points*, "The American Historical Review", vol. 43, no 1, (Oct. 1937), pp. 22-50; J. Barbara, *The Habsburg Empire in European Affairs, 1814-1914*, Chicago 1969, pp. 74-76.

one side, locked horns with the Russians on the fields of Balaclava. The Allies paid a steep price for their victory. The well known Light Brigade, later celebrated in film and literature, incurred heavy losses. France and Great Britain also won the Battle of Inkerman on November 25th 1854. But this too did not prise open the gates of Sevastopol to them. The siege of the fortress commenced in September 1854 and finished a year later, in September 1855.

Louis Kossuth was particularly concerned with the occupation of Moldova and Wallachia by Austrian troops and with the persecution of his emissaries operating in that area. In Transylvania and its neighbouring principalities, Hungarian emissaries such as Sándor Gál or László Berzenczey had been operating there for some time, recruiting volunteers for a future war of liberation in the entire Danubian region. In October 1853, Kossuth entered into an agreement with Dumitru Brătianu, a participant of the 1848 revolution in Wallachia and the future Prime Minister of Romania in 1881, on joint Hungarian – Romanian action against the Habsburgs. They strove to agree the future status of Transylvania (either as an independent principality or in union with Romania) which ultimately was supposed to be determined by the region's population. Those plans were destroyed by the Allies when they did not attack Russia from the lower Danube, and Austria took control over the entire region.³⁶

The balance of power as it stood in 1855, seemed inauspicious to the conspirators, and previous futile attempts to achieve revolutionary goals were fighting a losing battle. Probably because of that, Kossuth, looking for allies, returned to the idea of mobilising America. This time, openly, under his own name, he started publishing a series titled *Letters from Kossuth*. In his inaugural column, in a specific way, he hit hard when he wrote: "In the meantime I will but say, that I know of no instance in history where it had been so easy for any man to become 'great' and to hand down his name to the blessings and veneration of generations to come, as has been the case of General Pierce. I know of no instance in history where it had been so easy for any nation – at no cost, at no sacrifice at all – to become the first, the leading power on earth, as it has been with your country in 1853 – 54. "The question: why did America fail to seize this chance was accompanied with a bitter assertion: "A Whig Government is hostile to our aspirations; a Democratic Government is, practically, not a bit better in foreign policy; and the Young America³⁷ Government has proved worse than both."³⁸

36 Z. Szász, *The Age of Absolutism in Transylvania 1849-1867*, [in]: *History of Transylvania*, 3 vols., B. Köpeczi, gen. ed., L. Makkai, A. Mócsy, Z. Szászed., Boulder, Colo., Highland Lakes, N.J., New York, 2001-2002, pp. 387-391.

37 President Zachary Taylor and the Secretary of State Daniel Webster originated from the Whig Party. President Franklin Pierce was a democrat. Young America was in the mid 19th century a popular political and cultural movement in America inspired by European movements (e.g. Young Italy) which aimed at freedom of trade, American expansion to the south of the continent. Abroad, it supported republican, anti-monarchist and anti-aristocratic movements. Representatives of Young America held important diplomatic positions in Pierce's administration, e.g. John O. Sullivan in Portugal, George N. Sanders in Great Britain, Pierre Soulé in Cuba.

38 *Letters from L. Kossuth*, no. 1, London, February 9th 1855, "New York Times", February 23rd 1855.

The goal Kossuth set himself was far from easy. Indeed, it was almost impossible to achieve. The United States albeit neutral, paradoxically set all its hopes on the Crimean War, but primarily in conjunction with the development of events in Latin America and in contradiction to interest of Europe's subjugated people. The key to understanding the American attitude lay in Cuba – the object of American expansionism and rivalry with Spain. News of Spanish plans – supported by London and Paris – to release all the slaves in Cuba which would lead to the "Africanization" of the island and, further to that, the disruption of America's course of action in that area, seriously alarmed Washington. Tension in relations with Madrid escalated even more after March 1854 when the American ship "Black Warrior" was captured. Its cargo was confiscated, and its crew arrested. A secret plan known as the *Ostend Manifesto* involving the acquisition of Cuba for 130 million dollars, and even risking war with Spain, did not bring the expected results.³⁹ It was commonly believed that as long as French and English forces remained embroiled in the Crimean War, the conditions were propitious for the USA to successfully resolve the Cuban issue.

Russia, as an opponent of the western European imperial coalition, became a tacit yet valuable American ally. Friendly Russo-American relations were all the easier to nurture because Russia recognized the independence of the USA, its right to territorial integrity and to its expansion in the western hemisphere. The USA reciprocated by evincing an exceptional degree of understanding, even sentiment, towards the Tsar and his imperial regime. Closer Russo-American relations were to surface during the Crimean War in a significant way. On July 22nd 1854, Washington and St. Petersburg signed an agreement endorsing the rule of free transport of goods to the war zone on the principle that "free ships make for free goods" except from contraband and the rule of non-confiscation of goods of neutral countries carried by ships of parties in conflict. It is important to appreciate this solution in the context of the British blockades of the Danish straits which disabled Russia from exporting corn and other goods. With Russia's productive help, the USA signed a trade agreement with Persia which until then had been consistently blocked by Great Britain. The USA thereby established its trade representatives in the Amur River region in Eastern Siberia and on the island of Sakhalin, and appointed a consul for those areas. Assistance in the selection of this location was provided by Mikhail Muraviev, the governor of Siberia, a well known Americanophile. In return, not only did America support Russian trade but it also disabled Spanish help to the western allies by their diplomatic actions, stopped British recruitment in America, enabled Russia to sell its trade ship interned in an American port and protected the Russian ships *Diana* in the Far East and *America* in Rio de Janeiro. Thus, the United States exploited the Crimean War as a unique opportunity to further its business interests.⁴⁰

39 A. Dowty, op. cit, pp. 112-114, 150-153.

40 R. Franklin Nicholas, op. cit, p. 345; E. Dvoichenko-Markov, *Americans in the Crimean War*, "Russian Review", 1954, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 137-145; F. A. Golder, *Russian-American Relations During the Crimean War*, "American Historical Review", vol. 31, no. 3, 1926, p. 474.

Kossuth, observing the development of the international situation, from his vantage point as leader of a small nation subjugated by the Hapsburgs, did not approve of Washington's stance. In a separate letter, entirely devoted to Cuba, he analysed the possible scenarios: 1) Spain would withdraw from the island and leave its inhabitants to declare an independent state that would then voluntarily declare its unification with the USA; 2) the USA would purchase Cuba from Spain; 3) the USA would annex Cuba by force by inciting and supporting revolution on the island. Kossuth believed that nobody would oppose any of these options although all of them are equally feasible, but remarked that: "Nobody will contradict me, I trust when I say that supposing, for the sake of argument each of these alternatives equally practicable, the first alternative certainly the most, I would almost say the only honorable." He condemned the *Ostend Manifesto* which, in his opinion, sanctioned every action aimed at Cuba's separation from Spain. He thundered: "I protest in the name of Republican principles, against this." He made no bones about his overall disappointment with America's attitude towards the European crisis when he bitterly observed that: "Europe has ceased to hope anything from America. It is not our fault. It is yours. And believe me, it is not good to forfeit the sympathies of the world."⁴¹

The death of Tsar Nicolas I on March 2nd 1855, and the coronation of Tsar Aleksander II a few days later, gave Kossuth the pretext to expose the real goals of Tsarism and to warn the gullible and the unaware Americans of the brutal truth when he wrote: "The history of Russia may be condensed in this single sentence: 'A continual struggle for power.'" In this fight he distinguished two stages: 1) aiming at internal and national consolidation, 2) expansion towards the open seas. In his opinion, Russia had already completed the first stage and had embarked on the pursuit of the second. "The conquest of Poland, Kurland, and, Finland led but to the Baltic – an inner lake rather than a sea (...). Remained the South? Which South? The Black Sea? No! The Black Sea is like the Baltic, an intermediary station, not a terminus, leading but to a gate in the possession of a foreigner. (...). Down, down to the sunny shores of the Mediterranean." Having recalled the time-honoured words of Tsar Alexander I: "Constantinople is the key to my own house", Kossuth compared them to the latest declarations of Tsar Alexander II that his aim was "to maintain Russia on the highest standard of power and glory, and to accomplish the incessant wishes and views of Peter, of Catherine, of Alexander and of Nicholas."⁴²

Kossuth also observed other symptoms of America's desertion of its ostensible ideals which bore negative consequences for the peoples of Central Europe with growing astonishment and anxiety. Neither 1854 nor 1855 resembled the years of enthusiasm and hope of 1849-1851. America was becoming indifferent. The most visible example of that, which could not be ignored, remained Kossuth's personally addressed memorandum to president Pierce of August 1854, which he handed to

⁴¹ *Letters from L. Kossuth*, no. 3, no. 6, London, February 23rd, April 6th 1855, "New York Times", March 19th, April 24th 1855.

⁴² *Letters from L. Kossuth*, no. 4, London, March 8th 1855, "New York Times", March 28th 1855.

the American envoy in London - James Buchanan, which remained unanswered. A year later, the text was published in the "The New York Times" and it contained important questions regarding the chances of obtaining specific kinds of American help for Hungarian and Italian fighters in the upcoming fight for independence: "Whether in the event of a revolutionary contest in Hungary and Italy, American ships will be permitted, under the laws of the United States, to clear for ports in the possession of the insurgents? (...) but most especially is it of high commanding importance to the people of Hungary

and Italy, because, if once assured of free trade with the people of the United States during their approaching struggle, it is a virtual guarantee that through the enterprise of American merchants and the unquestionable acquiescence of Austria in any decision upon this point which may be promulgated by the United States, the Republican party in Hungary and Italy would enjoy the precious advantage of receiving, by means of American ships, abundant supplies of food, clothing and all the necessaries of life." With the perspective of time, the much-discouraged Kossuth concluded: "I have every reason to say, that if the political situation of Hungary could have been at an early moment strengthened by a recognition from the United States, the occidental powers of Europe could not have persisted in disregarding the gigantic struggle on the banks of the Danube."⁴³

Another serious setback to the independence movement in Europe was the recall of George N. Sanders – the representative of Young America – from his post of American Consul in London in 1854. This known sympathiser of the Revolutions of 1848, who organised arms deliveries for the insurgents, was in Paris in 1848 on his private mission of help. He was also involved in supporting the democratic movements of the smaller European nations during the Crimean War. Appointed consul to Great Britain in the early years of Franklin Pierce's presidency, he quickly organised a contact centre for the subjugated nations in London. Meetings which were infused with the idea of an American alliance with the federation of the free European nations, were attended by Louis Kossuth, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Giuseppe Mazzini, Alexander Herzen, Arnold Ruge and Alexandre Ledru-Rollin. Sanders also held talks with representatives of the Ottoman Empire in order to entrust Kossuth with the leadership of the Hungarian units fighting against Austria, to take over their supervision in Moldova and Wallachia. The conspiracy activity of the American consul⁴⁴ expanded with the propagated anarchist idea of an attempt on Napoleon III's⁴⁵ life; this did not win Washington's approval and forced the Senate to undertake immediate action.

To Kossuth, Sanders was a true republican, a man of principle, huge heart, and a true friend of European emigrants. The Senate's decision struck him as unjust, as

43 *Letters from L. Kossuth*, no. 14, London, August 10th 1855, "New York Times", August 24th 1855.

44 More in: M. E. Curti, *George N. Sanders – American Patriot of the Fifties*, "South Atlantic Quarterly", XXVII (January 1928), pp. 79-87.

45 Sanders' participation in attempts on president Lincoln's life is also suspected.

a blow against Europe and its independence movements. The severity of the blow was revealed in, Kossuth's letter to "The New York Times" published 18 months after the American diplomat left his post in London. The reason to express his opinion was given by a strong attack on Sanders by the "Richmond Examiner". Rising in defence of the former consul, Kossuth wrote: "I desire to avail myself of the opportunity of paying a public tribute of grateful acknowledgment, in my own and in the name of the nation of exiles of every land, for the brotherly friendship, affectionate interest, and all the marks of republican fellowship and benevolent sympathy Mr. Sanders surrounded us with, both in public and private life, while in London. (...) But we know what he has been to us, and we know what we have lost by his recall; (...) it left us doubly homeless and doubly forsaken."⁴⁶

Kossuth could not agree with one more American phenomenon - the indigenous national movement called Know Nothing.⁴⁷ It was established ten years earlier as the American Republican Party, renamed the Native American Party, which finally took the name the American Party; it demanded a privileged position for native Americans, and had an acutely anti-Catholic immigrant edge, especially against the Irish, who were perceived to be under the control of the Pope in Rome. For Kossuth, this movement was the denial of all the much vaunted American ideals of democracy and liberty, ideals which were held to personify America.

Therefore, trying to make Americans aware of the dangers resulting from such hostile attitudes towards foreigners and Catholics, Kossuth wrote: "The policy of isolation is a bad policy – freedom is not secure only by community; the ocean is no barrier against the hostile principle of depotism (...). May the old affections of your heart serve you to preserve your new fatherland from the danger of isolation. Yours is the task of gathering the twig of philanthropy upon the stock of American patriotism." He expressed surprise at the hidden nature of the group established in a free and democratic country with a free press and so far without national, racial or religious prejudices. He asked about its aim and sense. He warned against the negative effects of the movement in the form of e.g. a civil war. *Peior medicina morbo* (illness worse than death) he quoted from the Latin, and borrowed from the classics again, to conclude *Dixi et salvavi animen* (I said, warned and saved my soul i.e. I saved my conscience).⁴⁸

For obvious reasons, Kossuth paid a lot of attention to Austria, particularly its participation and mediation in working out compromise peace conditions. Sparing neither criticism nor comment, he asserted: "These Vienna negotiations with their four points are really the most extraordinary tragico-comedies which diplomatic

⁴⁶ Letters from L. Kossuth, no. 18, London, September 6th 1855, "New York Times", September 26th 1855.

⁴⁷ This name comes from a standard answer of members of this group to questions concerning the activities of their party. Wishing to maintain the clandestine character of this organization, many used to say "I know nothing".

⁴⁸ Letters from L. Kossuthmercilessly, no. 9, no. 10, London, June 15th, June 22nd 1855, "New York Times", July 2nd, July 10th 1855.

poetry could imagine." He laid bare Turkey's helplessness and the cynical game of its allies. "One would think, that as Turkey, is the party attacked, as Turkey is the principal party in the war, she had before all to be asked on what terms she would be ready to negotiate?. But that is not the case." he argued. In his opinion, it was Metternich who arranged their contents, Drouhyn de Lhuys handed them over, England approved them, and Austria praised them. In a very subjective and emotional analysis, Kossuth attributed to Austria a very minor if disastrous role. According to him, only because of their fear of Austria's reaction, did France and England abandon the firm solutions with regard the Danubian principalities. For fear of Austria, France and Britain accepted the mediation of Vienna. This fear was generated by one factor - knowledge of the instability of the pro-Turkish alliance and the possibility of its weakening under the impact of an Austro-Russian rapprochement. "That Austria, Sir, which means the Hapsburgs, whom I, a plain, unpretending citizen weighed in the hollow of my hand just seven years ago; the very existence of whom depended on a breath of mine; whom I saved with ill-fated generosity, fool as I was, to trust a king's oath; whom the people of Hungary has humbled to the dust, unarmed, unprepared, forsaken, and hermetically secluded as we were; those Hapsburgs whom the Czar propped up for a while (...) ⁴⁹ – Kossuth explained adopting a mock- haughty tone laced with irony.

Finally, with the utmost attention, Kossuth followed the diplomatic arguments and discussions of the European powers and mercilessly condemned their inconsistencies and injustices perpetrated against weaker nations, their cynicism and hypocrisy. In his opinion, those characteristics were becoming increasingly accentuated as the war ran its course and the search for mutually acceptable terms of peace intensified. The final schedule of negotiations and meetings was as follows: the final conference in Vienna (March 15th – May 4th 1855), the Austrian memorandum addressed to France and Great Britain (November 14th 1855), preliminaries (December 16th 1855), the ultimatum to Russia (December 26th 1855), Russia's counterproposals (January 6th 1856 onwards), the peace conference in Paris (February 25th – March 30th 1856) led the allies above all to establish the balance of power and to protect their own interests.⁵⁰ Kossuth presented his sad and pessimistic reflections to Americans in "The New York Times." However, they were bereft of that energy and enthusiasm, the encouragement to act, the appeals for help or invocations of the democratic world and its responsibilities. All that filled these reflections was muted grief and reproach.

Keeping strictly to four points: Danubian principalities, navigation on the Danube River , the reduction of Russian armed forces on the Black Sea, the protection of Christians in Turkey, he juxtaposed the promises and expectations with the reality.

⁴⁹ Letters from L. Kossuth, no. 5, no. 7, London, March 30th, April 20th 1855, "New York Times", April 19th, May 5th 1855.

⁵⁰ More in: E. Henry Nolan, *The Illustrated History of the War against Russia*, London 1857, vol. 2, pp. 263-271, 626-634, 679-712; W. E. Moss, *How Russia Made Peace – September 1855 to April 1856*, "Cambridge Historical Journal", vol. 11, no. 3, 1955, pp. 297-316; H. Temperley, *The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and Its Execution*, "The Journal of Modern History", vol. 4, no. 3, (September 1932), pp. 387-414.

“Poor Turkey, betrayed Turkey” – was the mantra he repeated more frequently to Americans. The allies, in his opinion, though they agreed to maintain the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire which constituting an indispensable part of Europe, in accordance with the newly-forged principle of neutrality of the Black Sea – put the obligation to liquidate the whole military arsenal along the coast, seriously weakening at the same time the Turkish state. While in the first version presented on April 3rd 1855 by the British Foreign Minister, Clarendon, in correspondence with John Russell expressly mentioned both the Black Sea and the Azov Sea, the modified proposals that were to follow spoke only of the Black Sea. “What does it mean?” – asked Kossuth and immediately replied: “Turkey – poor, betrayed, Turkey – does absolutely gain nothing by them; (...). This is no trifling circumstance indeed. Varna, Sisepolis, Bourgas, Trebizonde &c.,-fall under the blow, while Russia keeps Nicolaieff [located on the Southern Bug – a note by HMZ] intact, and the Sea of Azoff unfettered.” Shocked, he stated: “Poor Turkey instead of gaining some security, is deprived of her means of defence. She had an arsenal at Varna; henceforward she will forbidden to maintain it.”⁵¹ In the provisions of the Peace Treaty that was signed in Paris, articles XI-XIII really regulated all the issues connected with the Black Sea without mentioning the Azov Sea.⁵²

With great attention and even greater foreboding, Kossuth also followed the demands of the great powers, especially those of Britain, France and Austria to have their frigates (two of each country) in the Bosphorus and Dardanelles area in connection with the planned revision of the London Straits Convention of 1841.⁵³ Those demands deprived the Ottoman Empire of control over the straits and in connection with the neutralisation of the Azov Sea, it would pose a serious threat to Turkish independence. In frustration, Kossuth wrote: “It would be better for Turkey to be knocked down at once, than to be thus deprive of her sovereignty and independence. Her control on the Straits lost, is her existence lost.” To his amazement, he observed the growing position of Austria and its desire not to weaken Russia’s influence. “Now you see that Austrian proposition is just the reverse of any limitation of the naval force of Russia.”⁵⁴ he pronounced. Luckily, the allies abandoned the intention of revision of the Straits Convention of 1841 and left it in its unchanged shape. The Peace Treaty’s article X left that issue to be regulate individually, and finally the *status quo ante bellum* was reimposed in a separate annex.⁵⁵

51 *Letters from L. Kossuth*, no. 27, no. 28, London, January 21st, February 3rd 1856, “New York Times”, February 12th, February 27th 1856.

52 General Treaty between Her Majesty, the Emperor of Austria, the Emperor of the French, the King of Prussia, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Sardinia, and the Sultan, Paris, March 30th 1856 [in:] *The Illustrated History of the War against Russia*, vol. 2, p. 695.

53 Under the terms of the Treaty of 1841 the passage of alien warships through both straits during the peace was not allowed.

54 *Letters from L. Kossuth*, no. 11, London, August 13th 1855, “New York Times”, July 27th 1855.

55 General Treaty between Her Majesty, the Emperor of Austria, the Emperor of the French, the King of Prussia, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Sardinia, and the Sultan, Paris, March 30th 1856 [in:] *The Illustrated History of the War against Russia*, vol. 2, p. 695.

However, it did not change Kossuth's general conviction of the existence, by proxy of Austria's inordinate influence, of secret Franco-Russian negotiations resulting in a series of concessions to Russia.

Another excruciatingly painful issue for Kossuth, even personally painful, was the attitude of the great powers to the issue of Moldova and Wallachia and their subsequent Russian and then Austrian occupation. Analyzing the course of events, Kossuth protested against interfering into the internal matters of both principalities which did not participate in the war, but, unfairly, found themselves to be victims of this war. "Neither is the crime of arrogant interference on, the part of Russia, the enemy; Austria, the 'neutral fox in the poultry yard'; and England and France, the uncalled-for meddlers, lessened by the trick that the contracting parties did nominally stipulate to 'consult the population itself, and give them an organization conformable to their wishes.'" – he unceremoniously admonished the peacemakers. He ridiculed the idea that both these subjugated principalities were to act as security barriers in the region and he argued that "only independent Moldova and Wallachia having independent Poland and Hungary as neighbours could become a guarantor of security in Europe." Meanwhile, Austria, as he explained, stood in the way of all national movements. He also opposed the unjustified use of the term "protectorate" in relation to the Russian occupation of these principalities. "It is a strange blunder on the part of England and France to speak of a Russian Protectorate, and it is still more strange that, though the Sublime Porte, in its instructions to Ali Pasha⁵⁶, formally protested both against the word and its misinterpretation" – he explained. And, as he emphasised, no Russo-Turkish treaty, including the one signed in Adrianople in 1829, had ever consented to the establishment of a Russian protectorate.⁵⁷

We can find traces of those arguments in articles XXII-XXVII of the peace treaty regulating the issues of Moldova and Wallachia. The Sultan's sovereignty over the two principalities was restored; their independent national administration and national armed forces were guaranteed, and the contracting parties were forbidden any other protection or individual rights to interfere in the internal affairs of these two principalities, with the word "protectorate" being avoided in any context.⁵⁸

He did not write much about the commencing peace conference in Paris, limiting himself only to a few words of criticism about Great Britain, a weak link in the coalition's chain, giving in on everything, thereby uniting in common purpose with Austria, France and Russia. As a matter of fact, in evidence of the unique Franco-Russian friendship, he quoted a passage from an article printed in the "Northern

56 Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha (1815-1871), Turkish diplomat, served in Turkish diplomatic missions in Vienna, St. Petersburg and London, several times minister of foreign affairs, in 1855 Turkish representative at the conference in Vienna.

57 *Letters from L. Kossuth*, no. 30, London, March 7th 1856, "New York Times", March 26th 1856.

58 General Treaty between Her Majesty, the Emperor of Austria, the Emperor of the French, the King of Prussia, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Sardinia, and the Sultan, Paris, March 30th 1856 [in:] *The Illustrated History of the War against Russia*, vol. 2, pp. 696-697.

Bee” (“Северная пчела”⁵⁹) speaking of the huge friendship and respect which French people had towards Russians, admiring their courage and taking advantage of every opportunity to show their sympathy. However, the British, according to Kossuth, always with their different opinion, adopted the wrong tactic for too long, passively watching how the forces were reshuffled. Kossuth reasoned that: “Now – no matter what England would suggest, everything would be opposed.” He bitterly recalled the latest British reassurances and Lord Russell’s words promising freedom to Europe, civilization and constant security; the speech, in which a chivalrous England in a war fought by noble knights, was to have achieved peace that was fair for all. He reminded Lord Clarendon, the British Foreign Minister as from March 31st 1854 – of his commitment to Turkey’s defence, Russia’s defeat and the struggle of civilization with barbarism in order to achieve an independent Europe. He sounded a reminder about the British Convention signed by Louis Bonaparte, on April 15th 1854, to restore peace between Russia and Turkey and European freedom. In dismay at the denouement, he wrote: “Now I would ask: can the stipulated preliminaries of peace answer the programme thus defined?” adding “They are the four points of “sham, snare and delusion” reputation, with many a thing left out, but with nothing, absolutely nothing, new added. Not even the addition of a fifth point is anything new; - it was in the original four points likewise, only with the rather ridiculous sleight-of-hand modification, that then it stood in the prologue; now it stands in the epilogue.”⁶⁰

These were some of the last words Kossuth addressed to the readers of “The New York Times” in his series of *Letters from Kossuth*. Discouraged and despondent at the development of the situation, the lack of the possibility to implement their plans and intentions, not waiting for the official and final results of the peace conference in Paris, he stopped writing letters, which did not bring any meaning, to the Americans.

The outcome of the Crimean War was a defeat for the cause of independence of Europe’s subjugated nations. All of Kossuth’s hopes of independence for Hungarians, Romanians and Poles at the side of Turkey, supported by France and Britain, of the triumphant return to his country, and, above all, of the help and kindness of the USA, turned out to be a pipedream. Americans, sensitive to criticism in matters which concerned them directly, such as foreign policy, reacted vigorously and emotionally to Kossuth’s letters. However, in the remaining issues, they reacted indifferently and with distance. It should be admitted that Kossuth’s at times impenetrable rhetoric and over-complicated style, had the effect of pitching his arguments at a level which required more in-depth background knowledge, and did not help in establishing rapport with the average American reader. The different, if not to say

59 Semi-official political-literary body issued in St. Petersburg from 1825. Unofficially, the body of the Third Unit of the Tsar’s Office (III отделение собственной Е.И.В канцелярии). Its founder was Faddey Bulgarin (Фаддей Венедиктович Булгарин).

60 *Letters from L. Kossuth*, no. 29, no. 30, London, February 22nd, March 7th 1856, “New York Times”, March 11th, March 26th 1856.

abstruse, interpretive vantage points adopted in his letters were not always understood. Thus, the American response was weak. On the one hand, this method of educating and sensitizing the American public, did not prove to be of much use, but, on the other, this response brought some results – it did not allow Americans to forget about Hungary and her aspirations to independence.