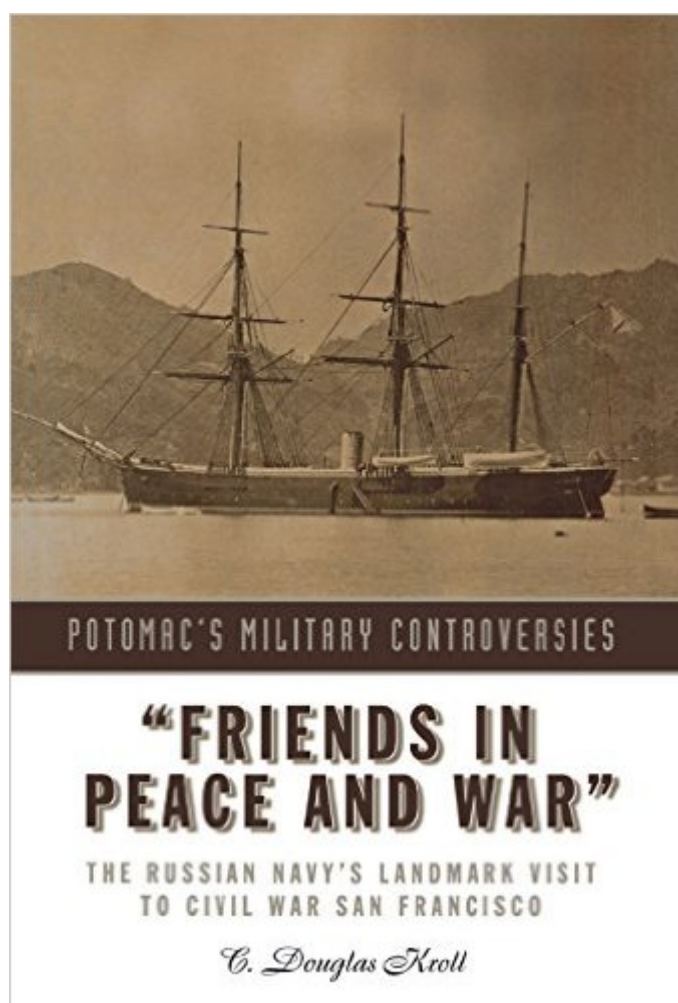


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# "Friends In Peace And War": The Russian Navy's Landmark Visit To Civil War San Francisco (Military Controversies)



## Synopsis

Great friendship existed between the United States and Imperial Russia during the nineteenth century. The Old World Russian autocracy supported the young New World democracy because of the emerging U.S. role as a bulwark against Great Britain's ambitions, in Asia and in the North Pacific Ocean region especially. In fact, when the American Civil War threatened to divide the United States, Russia alone among the European great powers gave no aid or comfort to the seceding states. The surprise 1863 arrival of squadrons of Russian warships and thousands of Russian sailors in New York and San Francisco proved fortuitous, coming when the Union feared British and French intervention on the Confederacy's behalf. C. Douglas Kroll, using both Russian and U.S. documents, investigates why the Russian Pacific Squadron came to San Francisco, a port of departure for California and Nevada gold headed east; what happened during its nearly year-long visit; and how its presence influenced events. With the units of the U.S. Navy's small Pacific Squadron widely dispersed and Confederate commerce raiders on the loose, the Russians' arrival suggested to on-lookers that they intended to defend the Union against interference. Whether actively supporting the Union or training and refitting or both, the Russian officers and sailors endeared themselves to San Francisco's citizens. Parades and balls, as well as dinners hosted by both sides, helped San Franciscans overlook the various differences they had with their Russian visitors. Kroll gives us a thorough examination of the Russians' visit and its social, diplomatic, and military impact.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

C. Douglas Kroll's "Friends in Peace and War" is a brief, yet informative, account of the extended visit of the Russian Navy's Pacific squadron to San Francisco during the American Civil War. During the 19th century, the U.S. and Russia maintained close diplomatic ties. The two nations viewed each other as valuable counterweights to an aggressive and acquisitive Britain and a meddling France. The Tsars had supported America diplomatically during the Revolution and the War of 1812. In 1832, Russia was the first country to receive "most favored nation" trade status with the U.S. During the Crimean War, the U.S. provided Russia with diplomatic and intelligence assistance - one of few nations supporting the Tsarist regime during the conflict. Our relations with Britain and France were troubled throughout much of the 19th century, especially during the Civil War. There was no "special relationship" with Britain. Our dealings with the British were characterized by suspicion and confrontation. We endured long-term boundary disputes in Maine, Minnesota and the Pacific Northwest - including the so-called Pig War of 1859. French bullying of Mexico was threatening to our interests and an infringement on the Monroe Doctrine. The Lincoln Administration was rightly concerned with French and British commercial and diplomatic support of the Confederacy. The prospect of British or French ships attacking American merchant vessels under Confederate letters of marque was a major concern, as was British shipbuilders covertly constructing commerce raiders for the Confederate Navy. Relations with Britain worsened over the Trent Affair, when U.S. Captain Charles Wilkes stopped a British steamer on the high seas and removed two Confederate diplomats bound for London. Only delicate diplomatic maneuvering and a public disavowal of Wilkes' action by Lincoln prevented a serious rupture. Russia was faced with a revolt in Poland during this time. The U.S. accepted Russian suppression of the uprising in the face of strong French and British backing of the Poles. In return, Russia vowed friendship for the Union. Into this shaky situation steamed the Russian Navy. In 1863, the Baltic fleet visited New York and the Pacific Squadron arrived in San Francisco for a seven-month stay. The Russians were feted about town, enjoyed the services of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, and even joined San Francisco's firefighters in quelling a major blaze in October 1863. The Russian Ball was the social highlight of San Francisco's better classes and remembered for many years into the future. San Franciscans were critical of the Union war effort. They believed the Lincoln administration neglected their defense due to their long distance from the seat of power and the difficulties of travel. California contained many Confederate sympathizers and San Franciscans feared conspiracies. The threat of privateers or a naval raid on the city was not unrealistic. During the Civil War approximately \$173 million dollars passed through the Golden Gate from California's goldmines and Nevada's Comstock Lode. The entire Confederacy contained just \$27 million in specie when the

war began. California could have proven a lucrative target for privateers or Confederate commerce raiders, such as CSS ALABAMA or CSS SHENANDOAH. Such attacks were unlikely with a foreign naval squadron present. Russian Admiral A. A. Popov, commander of the Pacific squadron, went so far as to promise San Franciscans his ships would come to the city's defense in case of attack. Mr. Kroll tells the story well. He used a variety of primary and secondary sources for research, including Russian Navy archives. His account is thorough, interesting and leaves the reader with a deeper understanding of the social, diplomatic and military impacts of the visit. This is history not generally known by Americans. Mr. Kroll deserves credit for bringing this episode to light.(less)

when you studied the civil war in school or college, you might have heard of the russian fleet visiting in 1863, probably didn't recall it unless you were a 'buff 'This readable book will help you understand this story from the bay area host to the tsarist asian fleet

I loved this book and I recommend it highly. The author gives a focused and accurate look at life on the west coast, particularly in San Francisco, during the civil war. The relations between the United States and Russia are well presented. As you progress through the detailed accounts of the period, 1860 - 1867 you eventually come to realize the real significance of the special relationships that developed. I was fascinated at every turn of the page as one event after another unfolded. Every detail is presented and documented with press accounts. In the end, one realizes how the special relationship of the San Franciscans with the Russians contributed, inadvertently, to the Union's survival and its ultimate victory. You will enjoy this well written and researched book and come to a deeper understanding of how diplomatic relations can affect future outcomes, even between countries so different in every aspect.

Most Americans only know of the cold war relations between the US and the Soviet Union. But little is known of the times that the growing US was supported by Russia against British attempts to take the country back over. This is the only book that I have found that focuses on this period and really examines the background. For anyone who wants to know more, this book is certainly a great start.

The book has a narrow subject matter, but within it's topic the information is extremely good. Had the South defeated Grant, the North would have had difficulty building the transcontinental railroad along the Northern route. We can only ponder if Imperial Russia would have taken advantage of the Pacific isolation to annex California to Russian America. The book gives us good reason to believe

that may have been the case. Imagine the power of Russia dominating Japan, China and the west coast of North America. A game changer.

"Friends in Peace and War": The Russian Navy's Landmark Visit to Civil War San Francisco (Military Controversies) This book is OK as far as it goes. I would have liked something more detailed about the US-Russian relations of this time period. The book is good in its chronology of the visit to San Francisco during the Civil War but I would have liked to have had more.

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