

## **INFORMATION TO USERS**

**This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.**

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.**

**In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.**

**Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.**

**Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.**

# **U·M·I**

University Microfilms International  
A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
313 761-4700 800 521-0600

**Order Number 9218256**

**The attempted sale of the Danish West Indies to the United States of America, 1865-1870**

**Pedersen, Erik Overgaard, Ph.D.**

**City University of New York, 1992**

**Copyright ©1992 by Pedersen, Erik Overgaard. All rights reserved.**

**U·M·I**

300 N. Zeeb Rd.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

THE ATTEMPTED SALE OF THE DANISH WEST INDIES  
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 1865-1870

by

ERIK OVERGAARD PEDERSEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate  
Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy, the City University of New York.

1992

C 1992

ERIK OVERGAARD PEDERSEN

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Jan. 31, 1992

Date

Harold V. Repass

Chair of Examining Committee

February 3, 1992

Date

Robert S. Well

Executive Officer

Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Professor Hans L. Trefousse

Professor John Diggins

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

## PREFACE

In 1672 the Danish West Indian Company took formal possession of St. Thomas. Danish rule was extended to St. John in 1718 and to St. Croix in 1733. The islands were to remain Danish until they were purchased by the United States in 1916 and subsequently transferred to that nation the following year. Prior to this, in the period from 1865 to 1916, there were a series of attempts to bring about a transfer to the United States.

This study will deal only with the first attempted U.S. purchase of the islands in 1865-1870. Why did the treaty of October 24, 1867 fail and what was the result of this failure? To answer this question, a general account and reevaluation of the history of the treaty is necessary, with special emphasis on the Danish side of the matter and sources discovered in connection with the research for this book. International as well as domestic American issues must also be considered, but the Danish background has not been properly evaluated up to this time.

## FOREWORD

In the first period covered by this study, there was a Conservative Cabinet in Denmark, under Christian A. Bluhme, who also served as Foreign Minister. On November 6, 1865 his Cabinet was replaced by one headed by Count Christian Emil Krag-Juel-Vind-Frijs, who likewise served as Foreign Minister. The original ideological basis for the Frijs Cabinet was the idea of cooperation between the great and small landowners, but in reality only the great landed proprietors were represented in it. Although often seen in American sources, the term "Liberal" should not be used to describe it. Frijs' term in office ended in May 1870.<sup>1</sup>

The events covered by this account occurred in the years immediately following the War of 1864, Danish foreign policy being greatly influenced by the impact of that war throughout the period.

In 1863-64, the Danish Government's attempt to include Schleswig within the Monarchy while cutting all ties to Holstein brought about Prussia's and Austria's short war with Denmark. The results of the war were, of course, disastrous for Denmark, since she lost both Duchies to the German powers.

In North Schleswig a Danish population was now separated from Denmark, and it began a protracted struggle to return to the mother country. The major aim of Danish foreign policy thus became to find a satisfactory solution to this problem. In 1866, a temporary sign of hope appeared when the people of North Schleswig were promised the opportunity of deciding their nationality by plebiscite at some future date. This was provided for in Article V of the Treaty of Prague between Prussia and Austria.

In 1867, the Danish Army was reorganized, to become a small, well-equipped, mobile force able easily to operate together with the army of a major power. In the international political situation after 1864, this could only mean with France. On the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the Danish Government was tempted to join France, but early French defeats led to the abandonment of such plans.<sup>2</sup>

In the years following the emancipation of the slaves in the Danish West Indies in 1848, the islands gradually became an economic burden rather than a source of wealth. New tariffs on sugar from St. Croix in 1863 and 1864 showed that Denmark was in the process of loosening her economic ties with them. A new Colonial Act of 1863 increased the legislative powers

of the Colonial Councils, providing a Bill of Rights as well as a high degree of financial independence. From then on there was little Danish interest in the affairs of the islands.<sup>3</sup>

In 1865, the population of the islands was approximately 38,000. 3-4,000 were whites, whereas the rest were blacks. Among the whites, the Danes, or the people of Danish origin, were in the minority. There were many Englishmen, North Americans, Germans, Jews as well as Southern Europeans. The English language was dominant, but both English and Danish were official languages. The Governor of the islands had extensive executive and (in emergencies) legislative powers, and the two Colonial Councils possessed legislative powers in cooperation with the Danish Rigsdag. The suffrage was extended to any male citizen of 25 with certain residential, property, and income restrictions, which actually disenfranchised most of the blacks.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of selling the Danish West Indies was mooted long before 1865. It was for instance mentioned in the Provincial Estates in 1846, and was discussed again in the Rigsdag in 1852, when two members suggested that Denmark should sell the islands. By this time Denmark's colonies in Africa and Asia had already been sold. The arguments advanced for selling

the West Indian islands in 1852 were that the goods imported from the islands could be obtained elsewhere just as easily, and that Danish exports to her colonies were of very limited extent. Furthermore, the population there could hardly be characterized as Danish, and the possession of the islands would expose Denmark to increased risk in time of war. During the debate in the Folkething, the view predominated that Denmark ought not to offer the islands for sale since they were still of commercial value to Flensburg and Copenhagen. In addition there was much social, economic and political reform work to be done there following the 1848 emancipation of the slaves. On the other hand there was not much enthusiasm about retaining possession of the islands either. The expectation was that if Denmark received an advantageous offer, she would not hesitate to sell.

In 1864 there were other signs that the Danish Government did not accord possession of the islands a particularly high priority and was tired of supporting them financially. During the peace talks that year, the Danish negotiators were instructed to suggest unofficially to Austria and Prussia an exchange of the Danish West Indies for North Schleswig. Both German states, however, refused to enter into any bargain of this kind.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Roar Skovmand, Folkestyrets Foedsel, 1830-1870 (Kbh.: Politikens Forlag, 1971), 491-506.

<sup>2</sup>Troels Fink, Fem foredrag om dansk udenrigspolitik efter 1864 (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1970), 14-17, 20-21.

<sup>3</sup>Ove Hornby, Kolonierne i Vestindien (Kbh.: Politikens Forlag, 1980), 262-293.

<sup>4</sup>Skrubbeltrang, 58-59, 103-107.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 293-295; Fridlev Skrubbeltrang, Dansk Vestindien 1848-1880; vol. 5, Vore gamle Tropekolonier, Ed.: J. Broendsted. 2nd Edn., (Kbh.: Politikens Forlag, 1971), 69-72.

To Jeanette, Mikkel and Somlak

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After completing graduate studies in History at Aarhus University in Denmark, my path towards an American Ph.D. in American and Modern European History began when I received a Graduate Fellowship from the Rotary International Educational Award Foundation in Evanston, Illinois for one year's study at the History Department at Princeton University in 1978-79. Without this support, I could probably not have begun this project. During my family's subsequent stay in New York City in 1981-84, it was possible for me to finish the course requirements for the degree at the Ph.D. Program in History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

After my return to teaching activities in Denmark, I have been much indebted to Professor Hans L. Trefousse's kind and most competent guidance in connection with the oral examination and the preparation of this dissertation. Members of staff of a great many institutions have provided invaluable assistance to me in my research; in particular I wish to thank the staffs of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, the National Archives, Houghton Library and the New York Historical

Society, as well as Landsbiblioteket and Landsarkivet in Aabenraa, Denmark. Furthermore, my work was greatly facilitated by a grant from the Carlsberg Foundation for a research visit to Washington, D.C. Finally I wish to express my gratitude to my friend Elliot Junger for reading parts of the manuscript and providing most intelligent linguistic comments.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT PAGE .....	ii
APPROVAL PAGE .....	iii
PREFACE .....	iv
FOREWORD .....	v
DEDICATION .....	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	xi
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	xiv
CHAPTER 1. THE NEGOTIATIONS UP TO JULY 1866 ...	1
CHAPTER 2. THE NEGOTIATIONS FROM SEPTEMBER 1866 TO THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY .....	44
CHAPTER 3. DANISH RATIFICATION - AMERICAN HESITATION .....	73
CHAPTER 4. RAASLOFF'S MISSION TO WASHINGTON ...	106
CHAPTER 5. DANISH PERSISTENCE - AND FAILURE ...	146
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS .....	199
APPENDIX I SEWARD'S DRAFT TREATY OF MAY 27, 1867 .....	202
APPENDIX II THE TEXT OF THE TREATY OF OCTOBER 24, 1867 .....	204
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	208

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHR	<u>American Historical Review</u>
ASEER	<u>American Slavic and East European Review</u>
JAH	<u>Journal of American History</u>
JNH	<u>Journal of Negro History</u>
Kp.	Konseilpraesidiet (The Danish Prime Minister's Department)
NAR	<u>North American Review</u>
nd.	No date
MS	Manuscript
MVHR	<u>Mississippi Valley Historical Review</u>
UM	Udenrigsministeriet (The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

CHAPTER ONE  
THE NEGOTIATIONS UP TO 1866

The proposed U.S. purchase of the Danish West Indies was initiated a few months before the end of the Civil War. The war had shown the need for a U.S. naval station there, and Denmark was no longer at war with Prussia and Austria. The United States took the initiative through Secretary of State William Henry Seward, and the offer was received by Waldemar R. Raasloff, the Danish Minister Resident in Washington, D.C. Thus, from the beginning, the two main participants in the ensuing negotiations were involved.

Seward served as United States Secretary of State from 1861 to 1869 under Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, i.e. during most of the period covered by this study. From early in his career as a New York politician and a U.S. Senator, in speeches and in writing, he advocated advancing the position of the United States on the American continent and globally. In a speech in St. Paul in 1860, he formulated his ideas of the future greatness of the United States as follows:-

Standing here and looking far off into the northwest, I see the Russian as he busily occupies himself in establishing seaports and towns and fortifications, on the verge of this continent, as the outposts of St. Petersburg, and I can say, "Go on and build up your outposts all along the coast, up even to the Arctic Ocean - they will yet become the outposts of my country - monuments of the

civilization of the United States in the northwest". So I look off on Prince Rupert's Land and Canada, and see there an ingenious, enterprising, and ambitious people occupied with bridging rivers and constructing canals, railroads, and telegraphs to organize and preserve great British provinces north of the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence, and around the shores of Hudson Bay, and I am able to say, "It is very well; you are building excellent states to be hereafter admitted into the American Union". I can look southwest and see amid all the convulsions that are breaking the Spanish-American republics, and in their rapid decay and dissolution, the preparatory stage for their reorganization in free, equal, and self-governing members of the United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

In the historiography of the period, Seward has generally been regarded as a territorial expansionist much in line with Frederic Bancroft's words that:<sup>2</sup> "he felt confident that the United States were to exercise the paramount influence on this continent and in and beyond the Pacific, not only by example, but also by actual governmental control and incorporation".<sup>3</sup> Glyndon Van Deusen, Seward's most recent major biographer, takes the somewhat milder position that "Seward's plans for American greatness involved a steady expansion of influence in areas adjacent to the United States". His aim was to see European colonial influence in the Western Hemisphere replaced by democratic republics friendly to the United States. Van Deusen regards Seward's actual territorial expansionism as limited to his desire for naval stations, particularly in the Caribbean and in the Pacific from Panama to Alaska.<sup>4</sup>

Much in accord with economic-determinist interpretations of American expansionism such as William LaFeber's The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansionism 1860-1898, (1963), Ernest N. Paolino's The Foundations of the American Empire. William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy (1973) argues that Seward, despite his numerous statements to that effect, was not mainly a territorial expansionist. His goal was to establish American global commercial hegemony, and thus he anticipated the expansionists of 1898. His policy of purchasing Alaska and Caribbean islands, as well as his plans for an intercontinental telegraph and international monetary reform, should be seen in this light-:

Seward was not a one-dimensional man. His genius does not lie in his having played the changes on "Manifest Destiny" or in his single-minded pursuit of territory. It lies in the combination of familiar, if unclear, ideas of territorial expansion, deliberate, well-calculated acquisition of terrain, and a profound insight into the true basis of empire: the commercial domination by the United States of the world's markets.

After the Civil War, Seward successfully carried through the annexation of Alaska by the treaty with Russia of March 30, 1867. He also engaged in negotiations for the lease or purchase of Samaná Bay in Santo Domingo and the purchase of Swedish St. Bartholemew and the Danish West Indian colonies. Of these latter negotiations, only those with Denmark resulted in an actual treaty of annexation.

Among the nations of Europe, Denmark was one of the most friendly to the Federal Government during the Civil War. Thus, the Danish Government did not recognize the Confederacy as a belligerent power, and went exceedingly far to make the facilities of St. Thomas available to the United States. However, during the War the U.S. Navy still felt the need for possessing a base and a coaling station in the West Indies. It is interesting to note in this context that Raasloff seems to have believed that the plan to purchase the Danish West Indies originated with Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Vasa Fox.<sup>6</sup>

In her famous article "A Diplomatic Episode" (1887), Seward's adopted daughter Olive Risley Seward claimed that early on in the Civil War Seward and Lincoln became interested in acquiring a naval station in the West Indies:-

... convinced of the actual necessity of securing for that government a fortified naval supply station in the Caribbean, President Lincoln and Secretary Seward summoned Vice-Admiral Porter for consultation in regard to the matter. Admiral Porter procured the necessary charts and descriptions of the region from the Hydrographic Bureau, and laid them before the President and Secretary. Forty-five of these islands have a certain importance, and a glance at the map will show that the Danish possessions, viz., the islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and Santa Cruz, of the Virgin groups of the Antilles, are peculiarly adapted to the purposes of anchorage and defence.<sup>7</sup> Admiral Porter strongly advised their acquisition.

Charles C. Tansill has called attention to the fact that United States Minister to Denmark Bradford R.

Wood in a dispatch to Seward of July 15, 1864 mentioned the danger that Austria might obtain possession of the Danish West Indies in the territorial settlement after the War of 1864:-<sup>8</sup>

... as France will object to the absorption of Denmark by Germany without a quid pro quo (the Rhenish provinces for instance), and Russia, to her alliance with Sweden, she is somewhat in the position of Mahomet's coffin. What share of the plunder will go to Austria remains to be seen. The Danish West Indies are very convenient to the new Empire of Mexico, and our Monroe Doctrine for the present in abeyance I hope Grant will soon make it a living principle.

Seward would later say to Raasloff that the United States would disapprove of the transfer of the Danish colonies to another power, and it is reasonable to suppose that this factor played a part in Seward's endeavors to acquire the islands.<sup>10</sup> The great naval powers Britain and France already had strong footholds in the Caribbean, and the prospect of an Austrian presence there as well would be a strong incentive for the purchase of the islands by the United States.

In a short, important article entitled "The Origin of Seward's Plan to Purchase the Danish West Indies" (1944), Halvdan Koht showed that as early as October, 1863 William Marsh, the U.S. Consul in Altona, Holstein, advised the U.S. State Department to close the harbors of the Danish West Indies to the European naval powers. Marsh had heard rumors that England intended to acquire the Danish colonies.

Koht further showed that on July 9, 1864, the U.S. Consul at Elsinore George P. Hansen, upon learning about rumors of Austrian plans to take possession of the Danish West Indies, advised that "if they ever change ownership, the ownership should be in the United States". Koht thus concluded that "short of other information, George P. Hansen must be remembered as the man who first suggested the idea", implying that Seward's plan did not originate with the U.S. Navy. It is however clear that this has the weakness of being an *argumentum ex silentio*.<sup>11</sup>

It is hardly possible on the basis of the available sources to conclude further than that, at some point during the Civil War, Seward and Lincoln became convinced that a naval station in St. Thomas, with its excellent harbor, was highly desirable. No doubt the U.S. Navy was much interested in the project, and Fox may have been its first advocate in the Administration, as claimed by Raasloff. It is further highly probable that the communications from Hansen and Wood heightened Seward's sense of the urgency of the matter and prodded him into action.

Most significant contributions to the history of the proposed U.S. purchase of the Danish West Indies 1865-70 have considered it a defensive naval project to protect U.S. interests in the Caribbean. This understanding of the plan is fully corroborated by the

available sources.<sup>12</sup> This does not mean, however, that it is not possible to regard it in the wider, general context of Seward's desire for American expansion.

Paolino, in his The Foundation of the American Empire (1973), argues that Seward did desire St. Thomas as a naval base and coaling station but that his major interest was commercial: "The truth of the matter is that in Seward's mind, as in the mind of many in his era, naval objectives were hardly distinguishable from commercial objectives".

In support of his interpretation, Paolino lists a number of sources such as an instruction of April 25, 1866 to Charles Francis Adams, U.S. Minister to Great Britain; President Johnson's third Annual Message to Congress, of December 3, 1867; James Parton's pamphlet "The Danish Islands, Are We Honor Bound to Pay For Them?" (1869), as well as references to Frederick W. Seward's writings and to the New York business community's support of the scheme.<sup>13</sup>

These materials do point to the importance of St. Thomas as a base for the protection and furtherance of American commerce, but this does not change the basic fact that the origin of the project was military and strategic considerations, and that it was primarily treated as such in the subsequent negotiations and political processes. The commercial aspect was mainly used to strengthen the arguments for the purchase when

its execution met with difficulties. However, Seward may also have attached considerable importance to the commercial aspect of his plan after the disappearance of the immediate military exigencies of the Civil War.

Waldemar R. Raasloff (1815-83), the Danish Minister Resident in Washington in 1865, was a person with considerable qualifications for handling sensitive issues between his Government and the United States Government. After attending the prestigious Soroe Academy for his general education, he had pursued a military career, graduating from the Royal Military Academy as a 2nd. Lieutenant of the Artillery in 1838. In 1840-41 he served in the French Army in Algeria, and he had further combat experience as a Captain in the Danish Army in the campaigns of the Three Years' War. After the war he resigned from the Army, and in 1851 he left for the United States with his family.

In America he worked as a civil engineer, conducting undersea explosions for the United States Government. Raasloff was a man of great practical judgment, with excellent powers of exposition, negotiating talent and personal charm. As he was also good at establishing contacts and felt strongly attached to Denmark, he was able to play an important role in solving the problem of the Sound duties between the Danish and United States Governments 1855-57. After this affair he was appointed Danish Chargé

d'affaires and Consul General in Washington, D.C.. Two years later he was appointed Minister Resident to the United States. In 1861-63 he again proved his diplomatic abilities when, as Minister Extraordinary, he succeeded in concluding a very favorable commercial treaty with China.<sup>14</sup>

When Raasloff attended President Lincoln's New Year's reception for foreign diplomats on January 2, 1865, the President honored him with a long, cordial conversation on general topics. Raasloff thought that there was probably a connection between this special attention shown him by Lincoln and the unexpected content of his conversation with Secretary of State W.H. Seward at a dinner party given by the French Chargé d'affaires a few days later. Before dinner Seward informed Raasloff that the United States desired to purchase the Danish West Indies because "events had compelled the United States to become a great maritime power, and consequently the possession of a harbor and depot in the West Indies had become a necessity".

The Secretary had long desired to make this proposition, but only after the conclusion of the War of 1864 did the time seem right. The proposition was made with the President's approval, and "eventual negotiations would be carried out by the United States in the most generous, chivalrous and delicate manner". It was important to the United States that the islands

were not transferred to another power. The population of the islands could be expected to welcome American annexation because of the economic advantages to be derived from it.

Seward further stressed the confidential nature of the proposition and insisted on complete secrecy, as he feared that premature revelation would cause England and France to interfere in the negotiations.

During the conversation, Seward carefully avoided any expressions that might hurt Raasloff, who was left with the impression that the United States Government was extremely interested in a positive Danish reaction. The Danish Minister confined himself to stating that he did not expect his country would be willing to give up her West Indian possessions after the recent losses to Prussia and Austria. However, he would submit the proposition to the Danish Government and urge absolute secrecy in the matter.<sup>15</sup>

It was quite natural that Raasloff expressed his strong personal feeling to Bluhme that it was almost too painful to entertain the idea that circumstances might lead Denmark to cede her West Indian colonies so soon after the disastrous loss of the Duchies. However on further consideration Raasloff shrewdly thought Bluhme might be able to exploit the American overture to strengthen Denmark's position among the European powers. France and England would most probably oppose

a transfer of the islands. In return for giving up the project, the Danish Government might succeed in winning the support of these powers for a satisfactory solution to the difficult nationality and border issues in North Schleswig. If on the other hand the Danish Government chose to consider the proposition seriously and enter into negotiations with the United States, he thought the matter could be carried through quickly, with a satisfactory financial result.<sup>16</sup>

Raasloff was soon further convinced of the sincerity of the proposition. The project was possibly of immediate political importance to Seward owing to American fears of worsening relations with England and France.<sup>17</sup> The Danish Minister seems to have believed that England and France might become increasingly interested in preventing the transfer, or that the Danish islands would become a strategic asset to the United States in a possible conflict with the major European powers.

Of course, the Danish Government was not blind to the advantages of a sale. It would mean considerable financial gains, and the problems between Denmark and the colonies would be solved. However, as could be expected, the idea of losing further territory so soon after the war in a mood of national humiliation was unacceptable and determined Bluhme's stance. Accordingly Raasloff was to inform Seward that the

Danish Government could not accept the proposition at the present time but might be interested in a resumption of the matter at a later date:<sup>18</sup>

However, though the Royal Government cannot at present accept the proposition made in behalf of the United States, it would clearly be a total misjudgment of Denmark's present financial and political position if the Government, without further and careful consideration, decided upon a rejection of such a sincere offer, and I therefore allow myself to request that, when answering Mr. Seward in accordance with this communication, Your Excellency add the wish that the prospect of a renewal of this proposition may be held out to the Royal Government at a later date.<sup>19</sup>

On March 6, 1865 Sir Augustus Paget, the British Minister to Denmark, asked Bluhme confidentially about a rumor that Denmark intended to sell her West Indian colonies. Sir Augustus asked if any offer had been made to purchase them. Bluhme denied it. In his reply to a letter from Peter Vedel, the Director of the Danish Foreign Office, about this incident, Raasloff stressed that the rumor did not originate with him: he had at no time discussed it with the British Chargé d'affaires in Washington. However, such a rumor had been circulating in the United States and in the Danish West Indies, and advocates of annexation to the United States in the islands might have started it.<sup>20</sup>

On April 8, 1865 Raasloff had still not communicated the Danish answer to the Secretary of State, but as soon as his health improved he would proceed to do so. He thought Seward would be satisfied

with the kind consideration the Danish Government had given to the proposition and that he would be willing to renew the offer at a future date. Raasloff thought that a postponement of the matter would render its execution much less certain. The state of the American finances was already unsatisfactory, but in the prevailing warlike mood the public would still accept the annexation of the islands as a measure intended to strengthen the military position of the country. If, however, the Civil War continued, increasing financial problems might easily cause the popular mood to change. When the war was over, patriotic enthusiasm would soon give way to a realistic assessment of the financial situation, and budgetary restraint would follow. Raasloff was no doubt correct in believing that delay would work against the execution of the plan but may well have been overly optimistic about the popular acceptance of immediate annexation as there is no evidence to support his view.<sup>21</sup>

When Raasloff went to the State Department on April 12, Seward was confined to bed after a carriage accident, but the Danish Minister had the opportunity of telling Assistant Secretary of State Frederick W. Seward that he desired to inform the Secretary about the Danish Government's confidential answer to a confidential communication by the Secretary. On this

occasion Raasloff became convinced that the Assistant Secretary of State had not been initiated into the affair, and it is indeed probable that so far it was only known to the President, Seward, Fox, and Yeaman.

Two days later Seward was seriously wounded in an attempted assassination connected with the assassination of President Lincoln. It would clearly be impossible to discuss the proposed purchase with the Secretary for a considerable length of time, and three weeks later Bluhme instructed Raasloff that he was neither to take the initiative to a discussion of the matter with Seward nor with his possible successor.<sup>22</sup>

Towards the end of April, Raasloff suggested unofficially that Denmark should open confidential negotiations about the sale of the West Indian colonies with Britain, France and the United States simultaneously. This approach would have several advantages. The suggested competition between the major naval powers would secure Denmark the highest price while producing the least danger of friction regarding the sale. In addition it would give Denmark a better chance of exploiting the proposed sale diplomatically, even if she should decide against relinquishing the islands. Should the outcome of such negotiations turn out to be negative, there was the further possibility that the procedure suggested would secure Denmark international guarantees for her West

Indian possessions. This was highly desirable, since Denmark would scarcely be able to maintain her sovereignty over the islands in a war between the United States and one or more of the naval powers.

Raasloff correctly judged the islanders' allegiance to Denmark to be quite weak. As soon as the question of a possible sale became publicly known, a strong wave of public opinion on the islands could be expected in favor of a take-over by the United States. This could easily lead to serious problems in relation to the islands as well as to Danish-American relations, if the sale did not take place.<sup>23</sup>

Contrary to this, Bluhme thought that negotiations with the participation of England and France would be inadvisable. They would force President Andrew Johnson to take a position on the applicability of the Monroe Doctrine to the transfer of a West Indian island from one European power to another. It would also strengthen the bargaining position of the United States vis-à-vis Denmark because the islanders would oppose the idea of French annexation. However, the Danish Government's concern with the problem of North Schleswig can be seen in the fact that it would not proceed to negotiating a sale before it had ascertained the views of England and France on such a step.<sup>24</sup> Therefore Bluhme had already asked the Danish Ministers to England and France to

report on the probable attitudes of these two countries to a cession of the islands to the United States. Bluhme clearly preferred only learning his Ministers' own views to revealing the American overtures to the British and French Governments. Premature revelation might enable these two governments to render the transfer impossible if the Danish Government decided to sell.<sup>25</sup>

Count Gebhard Leon Moltke-Hvitfeldt, the able Danish Minister to France, judging that any contact with the French Government on the question would give rise to rumors, limited himself to his own analysis. France and England would probably oppose the transfer because both nations would regard American expansion by annexation of strategically and commercially important St. Thomas as contrary to their interests. Such a Caribbean foothold would encourage the United States to enforce more vigorously the principles of the Monroe Doctrine. In normal circumstances, such considerations ought not to prevent Denmark from proceeding with a financially promising project. However, a sale to the United States was inadvisable because the Canadian and Mexican situations had the potential for causing serious conflicts between the United States and England or France. This must necessarily be taken into account because Denmark could ill afford friction with these two European nations at a time when she was hoping for

support in a final settlement of the Schleswig-Holstein question. Owing to the Imperial Government's political principles, France was particularly likely to favor a solution of the problem that would be acceptable to Denmark. Another consideration against cession to the United States was that a situation might arise in which cession of the colonies to Prussia would facilitate the return of North Schleswig to Denmark.<sup>26</sup>

Carl Ernest Johan Bülow, the Danish Minister in London, decided to approach Lord John Russell, the British Foreign Secretary, personally regarding the British Cabinet's attitude toward a possible cession of the islands. Russell's intention of impeding and making the possible cession difficult for Denmark became clear in his emphasis on the information Sir Augustus Paget had received from the Danish Foreign Office that Denmark did not intend to sell the islands at the time and that if she decided to sell, all interested powers would have to participate in such negotiations.<sup>27</sup>

Bluhme was concerned that Bülow had not made sufficiently clear to Russell the actual state of the question and how the Danish Government would proceed if it received an advantageous offer from the United States. The conversation referred to by Russell had taken place between Sir Augustus Paget and George Joachim Quaade, Minister without Portfolio, at a time

when Bluhme was ill. In case Denmark decided to sell the islands, Sir Augustus had "exprimé le désir que dans ce cas il fût réservé à L'Angleterre de faire l'acquisition des îles au même prix qu'une autre puissance serait disposé à en payer". Bluhme stressed how different this was from Russell's latest demand that Denmark was to accept an obligation not to sell the islands except in cooperation with England and France. Denmark's freedom of action would be seriously limited. The Danish Government would consider the interests of friendly nations and allies in this as in other matters, "mais il n'entend suivre que sa propre appréciation de ses convenances et de ses devoirs".<sup>28</sup>

Bulow therefore explained to Russell that the Danish Government had taken no position on any sale of the islands and reserved its full freedom of action in the matter. While it might give England certain rights of purchase, it would not agree to letting future negotiations depend on a conference of other powers.<sup>29</sup>

Russell merely expressed his gratitude in reply and raised no objections.<sup>30</sup> He probably believed he had achieved his objective of making the Danish Government understand that England expected to be consulted prior to any cession of the Danish colonies to a competing power.

By the end of June 1865, Raasloff had begun to advocate the cession of the islands. He advised the Danish Government to sell the colonies while it was still possible. His main argument was that Danish possession of the islands had become insecure after the end of the Civil War as it was merely protected by international law. If the United States became involved in a war with England or France, Denmark might be forced to give up the islands. The United States Government did not seem to be heading for war, but how strongly Congress would react to the friction with France and England when convening on December 4 was unpredictable. It was furthermore possible that President Johnson would attempt to overcome rising opposition to his Reconstruction policy through a popular foreign war.

Raasloff urged that any contacts with the English and French Governments regarding the transaction be kept secret. If not, it would seem that Denmark was making a cession dependent on English and French consent. Seward might be brought to understand the Danish motives for this, "but in the hands of politicians and clergymen it would be a potentially dangerous piece of information". Raasloff feared that if the project failed owing to European interference, the United States would no longer feel obligated not to agitate for annexation. This might cause serious difficulties in the islands.<sup>31</sup>

In the summer, fall and early winter of 1865 Raasloff stressed that war between the United States and England or France was becoming less likely, though agitation on the Mexican question might still tempt the Government to attempt to solve domestic problems by means of a popular war. The international situation was thus not unfavorable to negotiations on a cession of the colonies. The domestic situation in the United States had deteriorated, but Raasloff expected that there would still be considerable patriotic support for a policy of strengthening the country militarily and strategically through annexation of the Danish islands.<sup>32</sup>

Raasloff interpreted certain statements by Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Vasa Fox at a dinner party on October 25 to mean that the United States continued being interested in the matter. A confidential conversation with Fox on December 10, 1865 further convinced Raasloff that the United States Government wished to proceed with the project. Referring to a passage in the Report of the Secretary of the Navy on the need for acquiring permanent naval stations, Fox mentioned that the United States must have such a station in the West Indies, and that St. Thomas would be the best choice. The United States would offer to purchase St. Thomas if it could expect a positive Danish reply. If a treaty of annexation were

negotiated, there would be no problem in obtaining the necessary appropriations from Congress. It was most likely that Seward had instructed Fox to communicate this to him, thereby leaving it up to Denmark to decide whether the transaction was to take place.<sup>33</sup>

On November 6, 1865 the Conservative Bluhme Cabinet, which had been appointed during the War of 1864, resigned and was replaced by one headed by Count Frijs. This Cabinet came into being as a result of cooperation between the big landed proprietors and the Liberal farmers' party. However, the Cabinet became completely dominated by the big landowners, who were able to take over the political leadership because the National Liberals had been discredited by their policies, which had led to the War of 1864. As both Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Frijs was to play a central part in the question of the sale of the West Indies over the next four and a half years.<sup>34</sup>

Frijs' accession to office soon resulted in a modification in Denmark's attitude to Seward's proposition of January 7, 1865. Already in November, Otto von Plessen, the Danish Minister to Russia, was instructed to inform Prince Gortchakoff, Chancellor of the Russian Foreign Office, that Denmark might sell her West Indian possessions to the United States. Gortchakoff received the news positively, saying he

would follow the matter with the best wishes for Denmark.<sup>35</sup>

More significantly, the change in Denmark's attitude could be seen in the fact that the talks with Seward on the subject were to be reopened. Though the Danish Government had not made a final decision on the American proposition, she would be interested in a definite offer from the United States. The nature of such an offer would play a major part in the Danish Cabinet's deliberations.

There were, however, some weighty arguments against a sale. First and foremost, the negative reactions to be expected from England and France should be taken into consideration, as the sympathy of these countries was most important to Denmark in her negotiations with Prussia and Austria. The Schleswig-Holstein issue also affected the matter in another way, since a financial settlement had not yet been concluded regarding them, and German demands might increase if Denmark made a profitable sale of her colonies.

Though the question of a sale was thus regarded as having a potentially negative impact on the dominating problem in Danish foreign policy after 1864, the Danish Government might surmount all these difficulties if the United States made a sufficiently liberal offer.<sup>36</sup>

Raasloff consequently informed Seward that the Danish Government now desired a definite offer by the United States, though serious considerations militated against the sale. Raasloff stressed that "it would, in great measure, depend on the liberality of the offer to be made by the United States, whether Denmark could or could not engage in negotiations with the United States for that transaction".

Seward was not sure the present time was favorable for such a negotiation. The original offer had been made when Lincoln was President, and though President Johnson supported the plan, he would have to be consulted before any further steps were taken. As Seward was just about to leave on a voyage to the Caribbean, they agreed to postpone further discussions until after his return.<sup>37</sup>

Seward told Raasloff that he would be visiting Havana, and possibly also St. Croix and St. Thomas, for the purpose of recovering from his injuries. The trip was in no way connected with the proposed purchase of the Danish islands. Raasloff believed this explanation as he knew Seward had earlier been encouraged to make such a trip, but in his Reminiscences of a War-Time Statesman and Diplomat, 1830-1915 (1916), F.W. Seward, who accompanied his father on the journey, mentioned a dual purpose:

He has accordingly decided to take a run down into the genial air of the tropics for a month or so. In so doing, he will accomplish a double purpose. Besides regaining his strength, he will have an opportunity, long desired, of observing the West Indian islands, noting their political, social, and commercial condition, and studying the problems arising out of their proximity to the United States - problems that increase in number and difficulty every year, as our relations with them grow more intimate.<sup>38</sup>

It is thus reasonable to connect Seward's trip with his proposition to purchase the Danish colonies. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles certainly believed the trip should be seen in this light, and Olive Risley Seward, the Secretary's adopted daughter, told Raasloff that St. Croix was actually planned to be the first destination of the voyage. Seward's party departed on December 30, 1865 and did not return until January 28, 1866.<sup>39</sup>

On his return, the Secretary was in an excellent mood and expressed his satisfaction with his visit to the Danish islands. He was now ready to discuss the question of sale with the President and those members of the Cabinet to whom it would be of special interest. He would furthermore study the precedents of the purchases of Louisiana and Florida in order to obtain "a proper basis for the contemplated negotiation".

To Seward's question if he knew at what price the Danish Government would be willing to sell the islands, Raasloff replied honestly that he did not know but that he personally considered \$25 million a reasonable price

and, if he were asked, he would suggest \$20 million as the absolute minimum. He stressed, though that he was not speaking on his Government's behalf.<sup>40</sup>

On January 30 the President and Seward had agreed to let the project rest for a short time to prevent it from being connected with Seward's recent voyage. Seward was also being called on from several quarters to acquire a harbor on the island of Santo Domingo, either by intervention in the uprising there or in the civil war in Haiti. However, he had refused to take this course of action as the United States "could afford to" proceed honestly with regard to annexation in the region. He probably mentioned this to Raasloff in order to speed up the Danish Government's deliberations.

Though, in the beginning of February, Seward and Raasloff agreed that the time was favorable to a negotiation, Raasloff made it clear that the United States would have to make a very liberal offer if his Government were to overcome its natural reluctance to cede the colonies.<sup>41</sup>

In January, February, and early May, Raasloff repeatedly urged Frijs to decide definitely whether to attempt to sell the islands or no. If the Danish Government decided to sell, a minimum price ought to be fixed after which Raasloff would ask for authority to negotiate a treaty. Though he continued to believe

that Seward sincerely wished to carry out the plan, he emphasized that quick action was highly desirable since the Administration's increasing confrontation with the Radical Republicans boded ill for the future political climate in the United States. Raasloff actually thought Seward would be justified in regarding Denmark's very cautious stance with suspicion. He might suspect that Denmark was exploiting the issue to curry favor with England and France. The Danish Government ought to remove any doubts about its position by deciding definitely whether it wished to proceed with the project.<sup>42</sup>

Frijs totally disagreed with Raasloff that Denmark ought to state a minimum price and immediately proceed to conclude a treaty. Probably much influenced by Vedel,<sup>43</sup> Frijs remained determined that Denmark would not state a price. It was the United States that proposed to purchase the islands, not Denmark offering them for sale. It was therefore also up to the United States to propose a price. If this order of things were reversed, it would not only mean a risk to the financial outcome of the negotiations but - more significantly - it would also make Denmark's position vis-à-vis England and France more difficult than it was already. Consideration for English interests had been the main concern under Bluhme, but it was now of paramount importance not to offend France while she was

still involved in the Mexican question. France was the one European power showing some interest in supporting Denmark in the matter of the future of North Schleswig.<sup>44</sup>

Although he personally would have preferred a different course, it was Raasloff's duty to communicate to Seward that the Danish Government would not state a price. On March 16, Raasloff informed the Secretary that there was no change in the Danish position on this matter but that he had desired to see the Secretary because he had earlier received the impression "that the Secretary of State expected the Danish Government to give to this matter a more definite shape before he - the Secretary of State - could submit it definitely to the President, and bring about an action of the United States Government".

However, Seward did not intend to change the basic position of the matter by his statements of March 2. He was still interested in the project equally for military, political and mercantile reasons, and expected to be able to make a definite offer soon upon conferring with the President, with whom he had only discussed the matter in a general way.

Raasloff perceived that Seward felt his position just at that time to be insecure in the conflict between the President and Congress. The Secretary's preoccupation probably explained the diverging

statements as to whether or not he had conferred with the President about the matter.<sup>45</sup>

Raasloff now held the view that the most opportune moment for negotiating a treaty had passed. He realized that the project might never be carried out but hoped that Denmark had been able to exploit the affair in other ways. This was not the case, however.<sup>46</sup>

Until late March the Secretary was occupied with domestic problems and thus had no time for the St. Thomas question. At the end of the month, he and Raasloff again presented their positions to one another. Denmark would not state a price, but would consider a definite offer by the United States, and Seward stressed that it would be difficult to convince Johnson that the United States must offer a definite price. It does seem that Raasloff was probably correct in believing that Seward was trying to win a small diplomatic victory by inducing Denmark to state a price. This might alleviate some of his political problems at home. Seward was delaying the matter unnecessarily as it properly belonged to the American Government, as the party proposing to buy, to state a price.

Being aware of the difficult position of the matter and himself much in favor of conclusion, Raasloff again suggested that if Denmark decided to

sell the colonies, she should set a minimum price and authorize him to negotiate the treaty in Washington. He thus clearly wished to persuade Frijs to change his mind and take positive and definite action.<sup>47</sup>

On March 30, Seward raised the issue of annexation of the Danish West Indies in Cabinet. He suggested offering \$10 million for them. Unfortunately, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles' Diary gives no details of the discussion that probably ensued, but it does reveal that Welles considered it much too high a price: "At least double of what I would have offered when the islands were wanted, and three times as much as I am willing the Government should give now". A few days later he stated his view to Seward.<sup>48</sup>

-On April 6, Seward called Raasloff to the State Department and solemnly informed him that the United States desired to purchase all the Danish islands if the Danish Government would sell them. The United States Government declined to offer a definite sum for them "but expected a proposition to that effect from the Danish Government, which proposition would then be earnestly and kindly considered". Raasloff was the only person outside the U.S. Cabinet with whom the matter had been discussed. Geoffrey H. Yeaman, the American Minister Resident in Copenhagen, would not even receive a reply to his question about the truth of

a rumor that a transfer of the islands was under preparation. Raasloff then asked if this was to be regarded as a definite statement, to which Seward replied:

... that it was entirely definite, and added, that if the Danish Government should not be willing to adopt the proposed course with a view to arriving at an understanding, it would probably be better to let the whole matter drop.

Seward's definite manner convinced Raasloff that the Secretary and the President had decided how they would proceed in the matter. Possibly owing to his own desire to see the project carried out, Raasloff did not repeat the Danish position but confined himself to saying that he would inform his Government of the communication. In these circumstances it would be necessary to postpone the matter until the following winter.<sup>49</sup>

When Raasloff called on the Secretary of State later in the month to reiterate the Danish position that a definite offer must come from the United States, Seward admitted that he now had a larger sum in mind than when he had first proposed the transaction in January 1865. He would not mention the amount he had in mind though, but did say that the matter had made progress. It had now been considered by the Cabinet, which had concluded that the step of mentioning a price had to be "reserved". Raasloff understood this to mean that the Danish Government was if possible to be

induced to mention a price. It seemed that Seward's categorical statements of April 6 should no longer be taken at their face value. He could possibly be moved to offer a price if the Danish Government maintained its firm position.<sup>50</sup>

On May 18, Raasloff was instructed to bring the matter to rest without terminating it. He was to do so in such a way as not to arouse the suspicion of the United States Government, thereby tempting it to obtain possession of the islands by exploiting the opinion for annexation there.

Vedel, who had written the instruction, discussed the reasons for the Danish position at great length. The problem of the financial settlement with the German powers concerning the Duchies no longer existed as an agreement had been arrived at, and the Mexican question now played only a minor role. However the impact of a cession of the colonies to the United States on Danish relations with Britain and France had to be taken very seriously. In addition, careful investigation had disclosed that when Denmark had purchased St. Croix from France in 1733, France was guaranteed the right of preempting the island at the same price as she had sold it for in the event of Denmark desiring to sell it.

In certain circumstances Denmark might have been able to disregard these considerations. However, the prospect of French assistance in obtaining a

modification of the Treaty of Vienna regarding the status of North Schleswig in the near future ruled this out.

When the fate of the Duchies had been determined, Vedel thought Denmark would be freer to obtain English and French acceptance of a cession of all the islands, or to act independently with regard to St. Thomas and St. John.<sup>51</sup>

In a conversation with M. Adolphe Dotézac, the French Minister in Copenhagen, Frijs denied rumors that the Danish Government was involved in negotiations with the United States regarding a cession of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John. If the United States made a sincere offer, Denmark would take French interests into account. However, Frijs declined to promise not to cede the islands without French consent.<sup>52</sup>

Frijs was determined that as long as there was any danger that the Mexican question could cause conflict between the United States and France, he would not consent to the sale of the islands. When, however that danger no longer existed, he did not find "in the interest of the Colonial Powers a sufficient reason not to accept a very advantageous offer from the United States".<sup>53</sup>

The position Moltke-Hvitfeldt took in Paris was different from that of his chief. In his opinion, the problem of the future status of the Duchy of Schleswig

could only be solved satisfactorily with diplomatic support from France. Denmark ought to give full and open diplomatic support to France, the proposed purchase by the United States being a suitable occasion for demonstrating this line in Danish foreign policy. Moltke-Hvitfeldt therefore desired to be able to inform the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Drouyn de Lluys, that Seward had made a definite offer which was extremely tempting because of the prospect of great financial gain, but that Denmark would still refuse to sell the islands if France opposed the sale and if she could hold out to Denmark the prospect of "a restitution of her national integrity".<sup>54</sup>

Frijs would not be moved from his position: that the Danish Government would not negotiate a cession of the islands as long as the Mexican question was causing problems and as long as there was no solution to the problem of the future status of the Duchies. However, upon thorough deliberation he had also decided against exploiting Seward's proposition to gain increased French diplomatic support against Prussia. He thought such a step would hardly be likely to result in any definite promises from the French and that it would thus add nothing to the advantages to be gained from the political conditions already obtaining. He thought Moltke-Hvitfeldt's plan might have the undesirable effect of Denmark being forced to promise never to sell

the Danish West Indies to the United States in connection with a solution of the Schleswig-Holstein question.<sup>55</sup>

On June 14 Raasloff told Seward that his Government still desired to see the plan carried out but that "it was surrounded with grave difficulties" on the Danish side. It would therefore require a definite and liberal offer from the United States, where the matter was not surrounded with the same difficulties, for Denmark to be able to act at the right moment. Raasloff stressed that "nothing but a liberal offer and a prospect of considerable pecuniary advantages could counterbalance the great inconveniences connected with such a sale under the most favorable circumstances".

Raasloff was planning to go to Europe on leave of absence and Frijs wished to confer with him on the proposed purchase. The Danish Minister would be in a position to promote the project in Copenhagen and much desired to be the bearer of an American offer. He hoped eventually to be able to return to Washington with definite instructions and full powers to negotiate a treaty of transfer.

Though the matter was equally difficult on the American side, Seward promised to make another attempt to persuade the President and Cabinet that the United States ought to make an offer. He asked Raasloff to write a memorandum containing the substance of their

conversations about the matter "and especially the arguments put forth by the Danish Minister to show that the first definite step towards a negotiation ought to be taken by the Government of the United States". Raasloff agreed to draw up such a memorandum because he had become convinced that it was not intended to pressure him into making concessions but merely as a support to the Secretary in his discussions with the U.S. Cabinet.<sup>56</sup>

Raasloff gave Seward the memorandum a few days later. It was composed as a fictitious dialogue between person A, who was desirous of buying for his company some property belonging to another person, B. the general arguments from Seward's and Raasloff's conversations were expressed in the dialogue, whose final paragraph stated the Danish position:-

B therefore suggests to A - if the latter seriously contemplates the transaction which he has proposed - to state the price he is prepared to pay for the whole or for a portion only of the property, B desiring to retain the garden south of the house and lying at some distance from it, if the house with the garden to the east of it should answer A's purpose. B at the same time expresses himself quite determined to overlook and set aside all considerations militating against the sale of the property, if the offer made by A shall be such as to justify him in doing so.<sup>57</sup>

Raasloff's memorandum did not immediately change the position of the U.S. Government but may still have played a role in the following course of events.<sup>58</sup>

At Secretary of the Navy Welles' request in late June, Rear-Admiral William Branford Shubrick submitted a memorandum to him on "the necessity for coaling stations for supplying our steam vessels of war, bound from the United States around Cape St. Rogue to the south coast of Brazil, and around Cape Horn". Shubrick concluded that it was absolutely necessary to have coaling stations on the islands along the route "at distances which can be reached in succession in from seven to ten days' steaming". Upon due consideration, he found that the first of the stations should be in the Danish West Indies whose purchase he thus recommended.<sup>59</sup>

One week later Seward asked Shubrick and Major - General Richard Delafield in confidence to give him their opinions on the least and greatest amounts that the United States ought to offer for the Danish colonies. The two officers submitted their views separately. Shubrick suggested \$4 million as the least and \$7 million as the greatest amounts. Delafield's suggestion was more moderate: \$3 million as the lowest and \$5 million as the highest sum. These sums were of course much below Danish expectations.<sup>60</sup>

Before Raasloff departed for Europe, there was a significant change in the American position. At Seward's request, he went to the State Department on July 17. The Secretary had sent for Assistant

Secretary of State F.H. Seward, who had handed Seward a letter which he then read to Raasloff and signed. By this document, which was addressed to Raasloff, the United States offered to pay \$5 million for all the Danish West Indian islands:-

(Confidential)  
 Department of State  
 Washington, July 17th, 1866

Sir,

I have the honor to propose to you that the United States will negotiate with the King of Denmark for the purchase of the Danish islands in the West Indies, namely St. Thomas and the adjacent islets, Santa Cruz and St. Jan. The United States would be willing to pay for the same five millions of dollars of gold, payable in this country - negotiations to be by Treaty, which you will of course understand, will require the constitutional ratification of the Senate. Inasmuch as you propose to visit Copenhagen, the United States Minister at that place, will be instructed to converse with you or with your Government on the subject, but should your Government conclude to negotiate, the proceeding will be expected to be concluded here and not elsewhere.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my high consideration.

William H. Seward.

His Excellency  
 General Raasloff  
 etc., etc.<sup>61</sup>

The United States Minister in Copenhagen would be instructed to observe great discretion in the matter and to take no action with regard to it before Raasloff's arrival. Raasloff would not be reaching Copenhagen for some time, as he was planning a stay of some duration in Switzerland to recover his health, but Seward "was not pressed for an answer and would now

leave it entirely with the Danish Government to negotiate how and when they thought proper". With ill-concealed satisfaction, Raasloff informed Frijs that the Secretary had taken the step to which he had been attempting to move him.<sup>62</sup>

The Bluhme Cabinet had turned down Seward's proposition of January 7, 1865 to purchase the Danish West Indies mainly because of the recent loss of the Duchies to Germany. In November, the Frijs Cabinet, strongly influenced by Raasloff, changed this position by being now willing to accept an American offer with the prospect of considerable financial gains. Seward had tactically declined to make an offer owing to the conflict with the Radical Republicans and the division in the Cabinet on the issue. Only when it had become evident that Denmark, hoping for French support in the Schleswig Question, was definitely refusing to make an offer, was Seward finally moved to make a definite offer to buy the three islands.

The initiation of the treaty shows that the Danish reaction to Seward's plan was influenced by the consequences of the War of 1864 in several ways: Bluhme's negative position, Frijs' worry not to offend France, the prospect of economic compensation from a sale after the loss of 1/3 of all Danish territory as well as the idea of rejecting Seward's plan to win French favor. The St. Thomas sale question was thus

intensely related, but secondary, to the Schleswig-Holstein question.

---

<sup>1</sup>The Works of William H. Seward, vol. 4, ed. George E. Baker (New York: Redfield, 1853-1861), 333

<sup>2</sup>I.e. Seward.

<sup>3</sup>Frederic Bancroft, The Life of William F. Seward. 2d vol. (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967, reprint), 470; for similar views, cf. Th. A. Baily, A Diplomatic History of the American People, 7th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), 360; Samuel F. Bemis, A Short History of American Foreign Policy and Diplomacy (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1959), 320; Julius Pratt, A History of the United States Foreign Policy (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1955), 320; Frederick Merk, Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 228

<sup>4</sup>Glyndon Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 526

<sup>5</sup>Ernest N. Paolino, The Foundation of the American Empire: William H. Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1973) cf. the summary of the author's views, 8-40, 204-212

<sup>6</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 9 January 1865, MS, UM; The Diary of Gideon Welles with an Introduction by John T. Morse, Jr., 2d vol. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1911), 466; Raasloff to Fox, 14 September 1868, private and confidential, G. V. Fox Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Scribner's Magazine, vol. II (July-December, 1887): 586

<sup>8</sup>Charles C. Tansill, The Purchase of the Danish West Indies (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968, reprint), 7

<sup>9</sup>Wood to Seward, 15 July 1864, NA M41 R10

<sup>10</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 9 January 1865, MS. UM

<sup>11</sup>H. Koht, "The Origin of Seward's Plan to Purchase the Danish West Indies", A.H.R. vol. 50, No. 4 (Oct. 1944), 762-767

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Tansill, The Purchase, 1, 5-6; Koht, Origin of Seward's Plan, 762; A.M. Stickles, "The Danish West Indies and American Ownership", JAH vol. VII, No. 4 (1913), 854

<sup>13</sup>Paolino, Foundation of American Empire, 119-128.

<sup>14</sup>C.F. Bricka, ed. Dansk Biografisk Lexikon. Tillige omfattende Norge for Tidsrummet 1537-1814 vol. XIII (Kbh.: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1899) s.v. "Waldemar Rudolf Raasloeff", by P.N. Nieuwenhuis; P. Engelstoft, ed. Dansk Biografisk Leksikon vol. XIX (Kbh.: Schultz Forlag, 1933-44) s.v. "Waldemar Rudolf Raasloeff" by P. Engelstoft; H. Hollboell, "Generalloejtnant Wald. Rud. Raasloeff", Illustreret Tidende 57 (1916), 60-61; F. G.-N. "W.R. v. Raasloeff", Nutiden No. 336 (1883), 213-214

<sup>15</sup>Memorandum on the Danish West Indian Islands, 1866, discussing the United States desire to purchase them from Denmark, and private negotiations between the Secretary of State and the Danish Minister. Reports of Clerks and Bureau Officers of the Department of State, 1790-1911, Vol. 6, 1850-88, NA M800. This source is hereinafter referred to as Memorandum 1866; Raasloff to Bluhme, 9 January 1865, MS. UM; the citations in the text are from this memorandum.

<sup>16</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 9 January 1865, MS. UM

<sup>17</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 18 January and 6 February 1865, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 4-5

<sup>18</sup>Bluhme to Raasloff, 24 February 1865, MS, UM

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Minutes of English enquiry, 6 March 1865, MS, UM; the document is incorrectly dated 6 March 1864; Raasloff to Vedel, 30 March 1865, MS, UM

<sup>21</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 8 April 1865, MS. UM

<sup>22</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 22 April 1865; Bluhme to Raasloff, 13 May 1865, confidential, MS, UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 5-6

<sup>23</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 29 April 1865, private and confidential, MS. UM

<sup>24</sup>Bluhme to Raasloff, 25 May 1865, MS. UM

<sup>25</sup>Copy of a confidential instruction from the Danish Foreign Office to the Danish Ministers in London and Paris, 13 May 1865, MS. UM

<sup>26</sup>Moltke-Hvitfeldt to Bluhme, 1 June 1865, MS, UM

<sup>27</sup>Bülow to Bluhme, 12 June 1865, MS. UM

<sup>28</sup>Bluhme to Bülow, 17 June 1865, MS. UM

<sup>29</sup>Bülow to Lord Russel, 6 July 1865: Bülow to Bluhme, 16 July 1865, MS. UM

<sup>30</sup>Lord Russel to Bülow, 15 July 1865, MS. UM

<sup>31</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 25 June 1865, confidential, MS. UM

<sup>32</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 8 & 30 August, 26 October and 18 November 1865, confidential; Raasloff to Frijs, 27 November and 11 December 1865, confidential, MS. UM

<sup>33</sup>Raasloff to Bluhme, 26 October 1865, MS. UM; Raasloff to Frijs, 11 December 1865, confidential, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 6-7; cf. Congress, House, Executive Documents. Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 39th. Cong., 1st sess., 1865-66 (Wash.: Govt. Printing Office, 1866): 13-15

<sup>34</sup>R. Skovmand, Folkestyrets Foedsel, 495-506

<sup>35</sup>Plessen to Frijs, 1 December 1865, confidential, MS. UM

<sup>36</sup>Frijs to Raasloff, 2 December 1865, confidential, MS. UM

<sup>37</sup>Raasloff to Frijs, 29 December 1865, confidential, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 7-11

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.; Frederick W. Seward, Reminiscences of a War-Time Statesman and Diplomat, 1830-1915 (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1916) 263-343

<sup>39</sup>Raasloff to Frijs, 8 January 1866, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, 11; Diary of Gideon Welles, 2d vol, 406

<sup>40</sup> Raasloff to Frijs, 8 February 1866, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 11-13

<sup>41</sup> Raasloff to Frijs, 8 February 1866, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 13-15.

<sup>42</sup> Raasloff to Frijs, 8 January, 8 February and 3 March 3, 1866; Raasloff to Frijs, 20 & 25 February, 2 & 6 March 1866, private, MS. UM

<sup>43</sup> Vedel opposed the sale of the islands all along, arguing that it would damage relations with England and France and that it might mean that Prussia would reap the economic gains in the settlement regarding the debt of the Duchies. He may have been the originator of the idea of exchanging the islands for N. Schleswig in 1864. In later years (1875 and 1890) he would return to this possibility. However, he realized that Raasloff's influence on Frijs was much greater than his in this matter. Cf. V. Sjoegvist, Peter Vedel, Udenrigsministeriets Direktør, Bd. II (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1962), 44-46

<sup>44</sup> Frijs to Raasloff, 5 February 1866, MS. UM; cf. L.D. Langley's analysis of Seward's attitude to the French intervention in Mexico in his Struggle for the American Mediterranean. United States-European Rivalry in the Gulf-Caribbean, 1776-1904 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 115-133

<sup>45</sup> Raasloff to Frijs, 3 March 1866, confidential, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 16-19

<sup>46</sup> Raasloff to Vedel, 18 March 1866, private, MS. UM

<sup>47</sup> Raasloff to Frijs, 30 March 1866, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 19-20

<sup>48</sup> Diary of Gideon Welles, 2d vol., 466-7, 473

<sup>49</sup> Raasloff to Frijs, 7 April 1866, confidential, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 20-24: the citations are from this document; cf. Yeaman to Seward, 9 March and 9 April 1866, NA M41 R10; Seward to Yeaman, 20 April 1866, NA M77 R50

<sup>50</sup> Raasloff to Frijs, 24 April 1866, confidential, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 24-28

<sup>51</sup>Frijs to Raasloff, 18 May 1866, MS. UM; re the special conditions pertaining to Denmark's right to sell St. Croix, cf. Frijs to Wegener, 28 February and 13 March 1866, confidential, MS. UM; Wegener to Frijs, 7 March 1866, MS. UM; Wegener's memorandum of 14 April 1866, MS. UM

<sup>52</sup>Frijs to Moltke-Hvitfeldt, 24 February 1866, confidential, MS. UM

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Moltke-Hvitfeldt to Frijs, 22 March 1866, confidential, MS. UM; cf. Moltke-Hvitfeldt to Frijs, 12 May 1866, confidential, MS. UM

<sup>55</sup>Frijs to Moltke-Hvitfeldt, 6 April 1866, confidential, MS. UM

<sup>56</sup>Raasloff to Frijs, 29 June 1866, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 28-32

<sup>57</sup>Raasloff's memorandum handed to Seward on 18 June 1866, MS. UM; Raasloff to Frijs, 29 June 1866, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 32-33

<sup>58</sup>Raasloff to Frijs, 29 June 1866, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 28-32

<sup>59</sup>W.B. Shubrick's memorandum entitled "Some remarks on the necessity for coaling stations for supplying our steam vessels of war, bound from the United States around Cape St. Rogue to the south coast of Brazil, and around Cape Horn", 28 June 1866, Gideon Welles Papers.

<sup>60</sup>Seward to Delafield and Shubrick, 7 July 1866, confidential, NA M179 R241; Shubrick to Seward, 10 July 1866; Delafield's memoir to Seward, 9 July 1866, NA M179 R241

<sup>61</sup>Note from Seward to Raasloff, 17 July 1866, confidential, MS. UM

<sup>62</sup>Raasloff to Frijs, 20 July 1866, MS. UM; Memorandum 1866, pp. 35-36

## CHAPTER TWO

## FROM SEPTEMBER 1866 TO THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY

Raasloff's planned stay in Switzerland was curtailed by his being called to Copenhagen by Count Frijs. On his arrival home on September 28, he was strongly exhorted to accept a seat in the Cabinet as Minister of War. Raasloff accepted the post for patriotic reasons, since Frijs considered him the right man to carry out a reorganisation of the Army. The very next day Raasloff wrote to Seward informing him of his new status and assuring the Secretary that he would continue working towards the sale of the Danish West Indies:

I trust however that the negotiation I alluded to will be brought to a happy end. I have taken upon myself to assure Count Frijs that you would deal liberally and generously with us and I think I shall succeed in bringing about a decision and the necessary action.<sup>1</sup>

When Raasloff received Seward's communication of July 17, 1866, Yeaman also received a copy. As Yeaman was not allowed to mention the matter unless the Danish Government wished to discuss it, it was not until September 30 that Raasloff and Yeaman discussed the subject for the first time.<sup>2</sup> Raasloff really seemed to wish to carry the project through so his remaining in the Danish capital would probably facilitate the process.<sup>3</sup>

In the months following his appointment to the Danish Cabinet, Raasloff's duties kept him so occupied that he had little time to spend on the West Indies plan. Nevertheless he kept assuring Seward privately that he was working to secure friendly Danish-American relations and that the sale question was making slow but steady progress.<sup>4</sup>

In January, 1867 Seward urged Yeaman and Raasloff to speed up the negotiations.<sup>5</sup> Raasloff would do his best though he was much occupied with other affairs. On the Danish side, the only impediment was Count Frijs' caution and hesitation. Yeaman assured Raasloff that the President could request the Senate to remain in session and that it was unthinkable that Congress would refuse to appropriate the necessary money.<sup>6</sup>

By the middle of February Raasloff had begun to worry about the outcome of the proposal to impeach President Johnson, and Yeaman did not succeed in calming his fear that the St. Thomas negotiations would be affected. Raasloff was also concerned about the reports of Frederick Seward having gone to Santo Domingo and the prospect of an American naval station there. Yeaman hoped that the reports had hastened matters in Copenhagen, but he was not sure that this was the case.<sup>7</sup>

On March 8, Seward sent Yeaman the following telegram via the United States Legation in London:-

Confidential despatch received want yea or nay now. We can read Danish politicians as well as Danish politicians can read American in Copenhagen.

Upon receiving this telegram, Yeaman immediately sought an interview with Raasloff and enquired what progress was being made.

The exchange between Yeaman and Seward focussed on the following points. The American minister stressed that the United States wanted a prompt answer, but Raasloff could only say that though Frijs wanted to carry out the project, he was not ready to conclude yet. The Danish Government wanted "something more definite and positive" from the United States to act on. The Danes merely considered the terms of Seward's confidential note of July 17, 1866 as being meant to open the negotiations. For a conclusion in the near future, it would be necessary to know, at least approximately, what price they could really expect. Even those who favored a sale in Denmark could not accept the price offered. Of course Yeaman disagreed with their view and expressed the need for a prompt answer.<sup>9</sup>

Later in the month Seward instructed Yeaman to ascertain from General Raasloff if the United States might expect a communication from the Danish Government

in the near future about the prospects of negotiations. If Raasloff's reply was negative, Yeaman was authorized to submit an offer to Frijs for the purchase of the islands in accordance with Seward's note to Raasloff of July 17, 1866.<sup>10</sup>

In Copenhagen, Yeaman came to the conclusion that the negotiation ought to be carried out as soon as possible because a military bill before the Rigsdag would be made a ministerial question and, in the event of war between Prussia and France, the neutralist Frijs Cabinet might be forced out of office and replaced by one wishing to make common cause with France. Such a Cabinet would be strongly influenced by France and thus less likely to sell the colonies.<sup>11</sup>

In late April Raasloff informed Yeaman about the results of a Cabinet meeting held the day before. Though communicated unofficially, Raasloff's views were of great interest as they were given with the consent of Cabinet. The Danish Government would treat if agreement could be obtained on the price. There was no doubt that the Rigsdag would ratify the treaty. One member of the Cabinet was, however, so strongly opposed that he would resign if the transaction took place.

Raasloff said that "nothing could be done on the present offer, and he was satisfied that three times the amount would ensure success - and he was not certain that less could". Yeaman subsequently wrote to

Seward that \$10,000,000 was about what the Danish Government expected and would accept.

To Yeaman's question about what prevented Denmark from making an offer, Raasloff replied that Denmark was opposed to making such an offer. A communication from the Royal Government

would be rather an intimation of a willingness to treat, an expression of unwillingness to accept the terms offered, and would have the matter in that form, open for renewed proposals from the United States; that if other propositions were made and found acceptable, the matter would be accomplished, otherwise not.<sup>12</sup>

Raasloff explained the obligation to offer St. Croix to France first if Denmark wished to sell it. He saw a point in Yeaman's suggestion that St. Thomas and St. John be disposed of before approaching France about St. Croix. The Danish Minister further stressed that Denmark would demand a plebiscite in the islands. The Western Powers (England and France) would heartily disapprove of the whole transaction but Raasloff "hoped for compensation in a nearer alliance with Russia and the United States", although he realized this could not easily be expressed in a treaty. Yeaman, who thought Raasloff was emphasizing the matter too much, only said that a transaction would strengthen the friendship between the two countries and that "no other government could make trouble out of it without an affront to the United States".

Raasloff further mentioned that the presence of an American and Russian fleet in Copenhagen in the summer "would be vastly beneficial to Denmark, to neutral rights, and probably to the matter we were discussing".<sup>13</sup>

On the morning of May 17, Yeaman was called to Frijs' residence for a conference, at which Raasloff was also present. At this meeting, Yeaman was told of the Danish Government's conclusion as to Seward's note of July 1866.

In due course the Danish Government unanimously rejected the terms offered by the United States but now proceeded to make a counter-proposal:

to cede the group of three islands to the United States for fifteen million dollars, or, in the alternative, the two islands St. Thomas and St. John for ten millions and Santa Cruz for five millions, with the option of taking the two former and rejecting the latter.<sup>14</sup>

France would need to accept the sale of St. Croix but this would hardly create difficulties. The Danish Rigsdag must ratify the treaty, and the Government would demand a vote in the islands. The negotiations must be in Copenhagen and be concluded swiftly "to avoid objections and remonstrances from other powers". Yeaman immediately sent a telegram to Seward describing the conversation.<sup>15</sup>

In the ensuing days Seward formulated the terms and conditions on which the United States would be

prepared to purchase the Danish West Indies, and drew up a draft treaty. The special conditions (not mentioned in the draft treaty) were: that the consent of the inhabitants was unnecessary, and that Denmark must sign and ratify it before August 4, 1867, while the United States were to ratify before May 1868. Further, the United States reserved the right to withdraw their offer until receipt of notification of Danish ratification.

The draft treaty stated that cession would include all three islands. The United States were to have property rights in all public real estate. The inhabitants of the territory were to be given the option of reserving their national allegiance for two years and returning to Denmark within that time. If they remained in the islands, they would become U.S. citizens. The document also contained articles providing for the transfer of the possessions as well as for payment and ratification. The purchase sum was set at \$7 1/2 million in gold, for all three islands.

The draft treaty and full powers were sent to Yeaman on May 27, with authorization to conclude the negotiation of a treaty. If Denmark "substantially declined" the above terms, Yeaman was instructed to withdraw the offer at once.<sup>16</sup>

Before receiving the draft treaty Yeaman was informed about its contents by cable via London. He

was thus able to present Frijs with a note containing the American terms and conditions on May 28. Yeaman at once offered all he was empowered to offer as an ultimatum as he thought this would facilitate a speedy conclusion. The Danes promised Yeaman a quick response. Raasloff's private opinion was that it would be negative.<sup>17</sup>

In April, 1867 Seward learned that Senator James R. Doolittle, of Wisconsin, was to go to St. Petersburg on a business mission for the Western Union Telegraph Company. Seward took this opportunity to have the Senator look into the reasons why the negotiations were not making progress.<sup>18</sup>

On June 6, Senator Doolittle arrived in Copenhagen. Seward's instructions are revealing as to the amount he was ready to offer in April and early May of 1867:

The price offered is five millions, which we have always stood ready to advance to ten millions. With a view to be able to do this we have, as the President knows, stopped upon Samana and Santo Domingo. If you find you can succeed for ten millions and no less, say so to the Danish Government.

it.<sup>19</sup> If you find you cannot, then say nothing about

On Doolittle's arrival he and Yeaman had two interviews with Raasloff. At their second meeting, Raasloff stated unofficially but emphatically to Doolittle that

the offer of seven millions and a half will not be accepted, and quite as distinctly that another sum, eleven millions and a quarter, would certainly be accepted and enable them immediately to close and ratify the treaty, adding that the offer of ten, or ten and a half, might be considered by the Government, but with what result he could not say.

Yeaman felt rather embarrassed by this statement, not knowing if he should interpret it as meaning that Seward's proposition was "substantially declined" and that he should thus withdraw it. He was inclined to do so, but as Doolittle was opposed, he decided to await a response from Frijs. Actually Doolittle thought that ten million would secure the purchase of the islands, and he much regretted Seward's subsequent instructions to Yeaman, which modified the instructions the Senator had received. Doolittle's regret is understandable, and it is likely that the negotiations could have been closed with his original instructions.<sup>20</sup>

One week later Frijs officially informed Yeaman of the Danish Government's conclusions regarding Yeaman's confidential note of May 28, 1867. Frijs definitely rejected the offer of \$7,500,000 for the three islands,

but the Danish Government would accept seven millions and a half for the two islands of St. Thomas and St. John, and half that sum for Santa Cruz, the two offers being distinct and independent and might be accepted or rejected severally, each as one entire proposition, and if both are accepted the negotiations and treaties to be separate, the cession of Santa Cruz depending upon the consent of France for reasons heretofore explained ...

The Danish Government declined to ratify absolutely before August 4 but was willing to be obliged equally with the United States within a given time. In addition, Frijs would not accept the United States' right to withdraw the proposition at any time before receiving notice of Danish ratification. The negotiations must be conducted on reciprocal terms.

Finally, the Danish Government would demand the consent of the people of the islands. The Government would not dispense with this, for two reasons. It had become modern practice in Europe that almost amounted to public law. Most importantly, however, it impacted on the future of North Schleswig in a most significant manner.

Under the treaty of Prague Denmark was working for a plebiscite in North Schleswig to determine whether this area was to be Danish or German. This being the most important problem in Danish foreign policy after 1864, it would have a negative effect on Danish interests to sell the Danish West Indies without letting the people there have a vote.

In accordance with his instructions, and with the effect of a formal note, Yeaman then withdrew the American offer and terminated the negotiations.<sup>21</sup>

Yeaman had never thought the Danish Government would accept less than ten million, and now he expected Denmark to demand the sum of the counter-proposal. It

had thus been clear to him all along that Seward's offer would not be accepted. If Seward considered the islands worth ten million, an attempt ought to be made to reach a conclusion on that basis. If Yeaman were acting under full power and his own judgment of the naval value of the islands to the United States, he would not hesitate to pay 7 1/2 million for St. Thomas and St. John and have the question of St. Croix postponed, to be settled later in separate negotiations.

Subsequently Seward instructed Yeaman by telegraph via London to close with Denmark's offer of 7 1/2 million for St. Thomas and St. John. The instruction thus omitted St. Croix. Yeaman received the instruction on July 6 and immediately informed the Danish Government of its contents.<sup>22</sup>

Yeaman desired to negotiate the treaty as soon as possible in order that it might be ratified before the adjournment of the Rigsdag in a few days. He urged the Danish Government to relinquish the vote in the islands.

The Danes wanted to think the matter over as there were doubts about several points. As Yeaman thought that one of the problems seen from the Danish point of view was the American demand for Danish ratification by August 4, he decided to waive this demand. Later he received Seward's telegraphic instruction to this effect.

Between August 6 and 12, Yeaman had several interviews with Frijs and Raasloff, in which Yeaman urged the immediate negotiation of the treaty until he realized this could not be done, which he regretted very much: "Moreover, to say the truth, one cannot easily hasten affairs of any sort in Denmark. In anything, from cobbler to King, they are the most deliberate and leisurely people in the world".

The Rigsdag would adjourn on July 13, and Frijs would not ask it to remain in session. However, the Danish negotiators seemed to believe that all difficulties were out of the way except the problem of the vote, about which no agreement had been reached. Yeaman argued that cession should be absolute, without any provision for a vote, saying that otherwise the treaty might fail after having been signed and that a vote would invite English, French and Spanish interference. Frijs argued that there was no danger of failure and that there would be little time for interference by the great powers. Furthermore the Schleswig question made the vote crucial to Denmark, as Yeaman fully realized:

My opinion is that this latter consideration is the only real difficulty in the way, and I have to admit to you my appreciation of its force from the Danish standpoint. They speak very frankly about the matter and have indicated that it is possible the Cabinet may be brought to waive the vote, but have not given me any substantial reason to hope that it will be given up.<sup>23</sup>

On July 15, Yeaman asked Seward by telegraph for instructions as to whether he was to agree to the vote. Before receiving Seward's negative reply five days later, he had another conference with Frijs and Raasloff at Frijs' residence. Yeaman there accepted to give up the demand for Danish ratification by August 4. They agreed that the only material difference now regarding the treaty was the matter of the plebiscite. This issue was discussed at great length. Frijs again explained why it must be in the treaty, whereas Yeaman presented his arguments for not including it at all. Frijs and Raasloff recognized the weight of the arguments for not including such a clause, but the Danish Government "would hesitate, (if the vote must be taken,) to put itself in the attitude of negotiating a treaty positively, and then making its ratification depend on a condition or event not provided for in the treaty". Owing to this statement, Yeaman hoped Frijs would give up the vote altogether, but was far from certain this would be done. Still, he would propose to negotiate the treaty unconditionally at their next interview. Frijs promised to reconsider before their next meeting if he could relinquish the vote or, if not, to propose the definite form he wished to give it in the treaty.<sup>24</sup>

In several of the interviews between Yeaman and the Danish negotiators up to August 8, the Danes made it clear that they would not give up the vote, and they made persistent enquiries about the United States' position on the Danish proposition regarding St. Croix. The Danish Government expected that the United States would accept the Danish proposition in full and said that the negotiation for St. Thomas and St. John was only being moved along separately for reasons which would be useful to the United States. Yeaman, who had no instructions as to St. Croix, encouraged Frijs to make it clear that if the United States ever intended buying St. Croix for the price proposed by Denmark as it would facilitate the negotiations considerably.<sup>25</sup>

During a conference at Frijs' residence on August 10, Frijs stated that he preferred alluding to the vote in the treaty in such a way that it showed that Denmark intended taking it. But he gave up making a decisive vote an explicit condition. Though Yeaman would not accept this, as he argued that it would be construed as American willingness to submit the cession to a plebiscite, he accepted taking it ad referendum. He asked Frijs for the exact wording of the part referring to the vote so that he could submit it as a question. Though Frijs promised to do so soon, a ministerial crisis and the negotiations concerning the

execution of Article V of the Treaty of Prague delayed matters for some time. In letters to both Yeaman and Raasloff, Seward urged that the negotiations should be concluded quickly. By the beginning of September, the ministerial crisis had passed.<sup>26</sup>

If there had been a change of cabinet in Denmark, Yeaman estimated it might have seriously endangered the West Indian negotiations:

I am now inclined to think that this movement,<sup>27</sup> has been in some measure foreseen for several weeks, and has been another reason, beside the Sleswig question, that has prevented me from making any more satisfactory progress. I am confident of ultimate success if the present ministry remain in office. If another government is formed it is impossible<sup>28</sup> to tell what would be their opinion of the measure.

On August 28 and September 3, Seward instructed Yeaman by telegraph that he was not allowed to enter into negotiations regarding St. Croix and (further) that there must be no mention of a plebiscite in the treaty. However, the United States would accept Denmark's taking a vote outside the treaty.<sup>29</sup> As late as October 7, Yeaman had not been able to read the telegram of September 3, and by then its contents had been superseded by more recent instructions.<sup>30</sup>

When meeting with Raasloff on September 5, Yeaman was again presented with the Danish Government's desire to know the United States Government's attitude to the Danish offer of St. Croix. Yeaman again suggested to Seward that American acceptance of St. Croix would alleviate Danish concerns.<sup>31</sup>

It seems to have created a better climate for the negotiations that on September 21, Admiral David G. Farragut arrived in Copenhagen with his fleet for a week's visit. The American Admiral and his officers made an exceedingly favorable impression on the Danish Court and public. In his despatch to Seward on the visit, Yeaman thus concluded that "wherever they have gone, the effect of their visit and their intercourse with society has been an unmixed advantage to our reputation and to our political interests".<sup>32</sup>

Between September 27 and October 4, a series of interviews took place between the Danish negotiators and Yeaman. Frijs and Raasloff would not give up the plebiscite and continued pressing for American acceptance of St. Croix, though it was to be dealt with in a separate negotiation. This latter point was also the subject of a letter from Raasloff to Seward.<sup>33</sup> Yeaman thought a vote could not be avoided and expected the result to be affirmative.<sup>34</sup>

On October 2, Yeaman sent Seward the following telegram stating the position of the negotiations on that date:

Denmark quite ready to conclude if vote mentioned in treaty. Considers favorable vote sure. Desires explicit acceptance of Santa Cruz.<sup>35</sup>

In a conference the following day, Frijs submitted to Yeaman the desired form of the reference to the plebiscite in the treaty:-

It is however understood that His Majesty the King of Denmark, before proceeding to the ratification of this convention, reserves to himself to give to the populations of the above named islands an opportunity (occasion) of<sup>36</sup> freely expressing their adhesion to this cession.

Raasloff's view differed from that of the Danish Cabinet on this point. If he were Minister of Foreign Affairs, he would probably not insist on the vote in the treaty. However, Frijs earnestly desired to accomplish the transaction, and preferred failure to yielding the point.<sup>37</sup>

In early October, the French Minister in Copenhagen inquired of Frijs whether the rumors of a sale of the islands to the United States were true. Frijs said that an offer had been made by the United States but that the parties were not in agreement. Both Yeaman and Raasloff expressed the view that remonstrances were now to be expected from other nations, and encouraged the Secretary to send instructions to close.<sup>38</sup>

Yeaman's telegram to Seward of October 4 reads as follows:-

France knows our offer and remonstrates. Denmark expects other remonstrances. Prompt action desirable. Vote in treaty indispensable.<sup>39</sup>

Seward sent the following telegram to Yeaman on October 4:-

No condition of vote in treaty. If Denmark wants to negotiate for Santa Cruz by separate<sup>40</sup> treaty, let her send a draft here for consideration.

But already the next day the Secretary sent another telegram allowing Yeaman to concede the popular vote.<sup>41</sup>

On receiving the first of these telegrams, Yeaman immediately proposed to Frijs and Raasloff that the treaty should be closed by inserting a clause to the effect that the people of the islands would be given the opportunity of freely consenting to the cession.<sup>42</sup> By October 12, after finally deciphering the second telegram, Yeaman felt confident that a treaty could be signed within a couple of weeks. Denmark would send a Commissioner to St. Thomas on November 2. Raasloff had asked to be sent out in this capacity but Frijs would not allow him to go, owing to the tension between Prussia and France. Edward James Arnold Carstensen was appointed instead. He had experience from the similar function when he had handed over the Danish possessions on the coast of Africa to England. Raasloff now requested that Carstensen should have an able collaborator from the United States. Further, he asked that the United States Consul and the Commanding Officer of the Navy be instructed to assist the Danish Commissioner.<sup>43</sup>

In the final phase of the negotiations, Yeaman felt that Vedel, the Director of the Danish Foreign Office; Jacob Broennum Scavenius Estrup, Minister of the Interior; and Christian Andreas Fonnesbech,

Minister of Finance, were delaying the process unnecessarily. Consequently, at Raasloff's request, Yeaman wrote a note for the Danish Minister's use in convincing his colleagues that the United States would concede no more and that prompt action was essential if a result were to be obtained.<sup>44</sup>

The American minister wrote a full account of the difficulties to be overcome in the final weeks of the negotiations. Carl Edvard van Dockum, the Minister of Marine, would resign if the treaty were signed, whilst Estrup and Fonnesbech, though accepting the cession, were overly cautious and exacting in matters that involved their own departments of government. Yeaman also thought the Director of the Foreign Office had been using considerable influence to delay a conclusion: "He had been entirely opposed to this cession and, I am now well satisfied, has sought to discover and even to magnify obstacles".<sup>45</sup>

Vedel thus pressed the question of a promise by the Danish King to join a treaty between France, Spain, Brazil and Mexico, giving a certain French national the exclusive rights to laying submarine cables. Denmark's joining would extend these rights to the Danish West Indies. Yeaman rejected any stipulation in the treaty about such rights, as well as another suggestion, of renewing a Danish citizen's telegraph rights in the islands. Vedel's delaying tactics were to be expected

as he had all the time been very hesitant about the whole affair.

He further rejected proposals that the United States should succeed to previous treaty and contractual obligations concerning the islands, or that it should accept the responsibility for any debts due to or by the Colonial Treasury. But he conceded the reservation asked for regarding debts owed to the Danish Treasury by individuals.

The Danish side further desired to change Seward's draft treaty with regard to the status of the population in the islands to just expressing "that the people of the islands either become citizens of the United States, or retain their national allegiance". Yeaman found this too sweeping, and at his suggestion Article 8 of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo became the basis of the Article in the final version.<sup>46</sup>

The debate that took place in the Council of Ministers of State on October 18, when Frijs asked for the Royal Assent to the signing of the treaty, shows how the matter was viewed by the King and Cabinet of Denmark.

Admiral van Dockum was the only member who opposed the transaction outright. He could not accept the cession of territory and an important naval base after the losses of the recent War of 1864. He argued

that Denmark's relations with England and France would be damaged, which would be most unfortunate at a time when she was still hoping for French support in the Schleswig question.

The King shared van Dockum's feelings about the cession, but he also attached great weight to the argument that Denmark would probably be unable to uphold the neutrality of the islands in a war and, indeed, might lose them without compensation. Van Dockum replied that the risk of foreign entanglement would still be present, because St. Croix was not being ceded.

Frijs said that experience showed that the neutrality of St. Croix was not such a serious problem and that Denmark must look to her own problems more than to those of France. At any rate the prospects of French support towards the execution of Article V were slim. The Ministers of Finance, the Interior, and Cultural Affairs supported Frijs, agreeing that the sale would relieve Denmark of an economic burden and of the risk of foreign entanglement.

The King repeated that his personal feelings were against cession but that he would accept it, as it seemed necessary. He would however prefer postponing it until after execution of Article V, but Frijs thought that the matter had already been postponed for three years on account of the Schleswig question but

that now, the United States having met all Denmark's demands, it could be postponed no longer. Raasloff and Estrup concurred, the latter even adding some interesting reasons why he thought the sale ought to be carried out before execution of Article V: (1) it would show Prussia that Denmark could act independently of France; (2) after possible French support for Denmark against Prussia, Denmark would have to take French interests into account to a greater extent, and (3) if the Schleswig question were later resolved at a European conference, this might lead to the uncompensated loss of the West Indian colonies.

The King then consented to the signing of the treaty, and van Dockum announced that in these circumstances he would beg leave to resign from the Cabinet.<sup>47</sup> In his memoirs, Livserindringer (1893), he gave his own account of his opposition to the treaty. The moment the issue was discussed at a Cabinet meeting in 1866, he had made his opposition clear to Frijs. He found it unacceptable that negotiations should continue during the following months without their being brought up in Cabinet, and was of the opinion that Raasloff was hoping to take advantage of the prospect of receiving a considerable sum from the sale, to advance his legislation in the Rigsdag. On the morning of October 18, 1867, when the question of the sale was on the agenda of the Council of the Ministers of State,

van Dockum officially asked leave to resign, referring to his disagreement over Government policy in the West Indies question. His request was granted on November 1.

Though van Dockum was undoubtedly sincere in his opposition to cession, it should also be taken into account that his ideas of naval organization had met with strong opposition in the Folkething, a fact which had weakened his position in the Cabinet.<sup>48</sup>

At long last, on October 24, the parties were ready to sign the treaty. A few hours before signing, Yeaman received Seward's instructions to concede the vote, which had, of course, already been done.<sup>49</sup> Yeaman was relieved at having achieved a result and he sincerely hoped that ratification would not create problems in the United States.<sup>50</sup>

The treaty said that the Danish King would cede St. Thomas and St. John to the United States for \$7,500,000 in gold, to be paid at the treasury in Washington, D.C. within three months upon exchange of ratifications. The United States would obtain full sovereignty in the islands, and all Danish State property, with the exception of the churches belonging to the Lutheran Church, was to be transferred to the United States. A reference to the plebiscite was an addition to the draft treaty.

The inhabitants' religions, property and private rights were protected. The islanders further had the option of retaining their allegiance to Denmark. They were to announce their intention to do so within two years after the exchange of ratifications. Otherwise they would become U.S. citizens.

Ratifications were to be exchanged at Washington no later than four months after the date of the treaty.<sup>51</sup>

Seward was highly satisfied with the treaty, believing that the United States had achieved everything possible. He instructed Yeaman that if Denmark also wished to negotiate for the cession of St. Croix, she would need "to make a distinct and separate offer by formal dispatch".<sup>52</sup>

Raasloff was actually planning to ask France to accept the cession of St. Croix to the United States. On receipt of the expected French consent, the Danish Government would draw up a treaty, and Raasloff requested that Seward should instruct Yeaman for this eventuality.

Regarding his own part in the negotiations, Raasloff made the following appropriate comment in a private letter to Seward:

I trust you will be satisfied with the Convention. I have assisted in the negotiation as a kind of mediator. Having taken the view - which I still believe to be correct - that your interests and ours in this matter were not only not incompatible, but on the contrary, <sup>53</sup> in all essential points identical or nearly so, ...

The treaty was finally concluded, after a long period of inaction. Seward had begun pushing this plan of naval expansion, probably realizing that future relations with Congress might make later action impossible. Frijs would enter into the bargain because the plebiscite, demanded by the problem of North Schleswig, had been secured, and, additionally, an economic settlement had been reached with the German powers. The Alaska treaty, which was negotiated on March 30, 1867 provided for the transfer of that territory from Russia to the United States. The treaty was ratified, and the transfer of territory took place on October 11, 1867. This must have given rise to Danish expectations that the St. Thomas treaty could be ratified easily, giving Denmark a much needed victory in foreign policy. If ratification met with insurmountable political obstacles, it would certainly be another serious defeat for Danish foreign policy after the disaster of 1864.

-----

<sup>1</sup> Raasloff to Seward, Sept. 29, 1866, private and confidential, NA M52 R T-4; cf. Yeaman to Seward, Sept. 29, 1866, NA M41 R10. The reorganization of the Danish Army carried out by Raasloff in 1867 made it possible for the Danish forces to cooperate with France in a European war: cf. Troels Fink, Estruptidens politiske historie, 1875-1894, Bd. I. (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1986) 91-92

<sup>2</sup> Seward to Yeaman, July 17, 1866, NA M77 R50

<sup>3</sup> Raasloff to Seward, Sept. 30, 1866, NA M41 R10

<sup>4</sup> Raasloff to Seward, Oct. 21, 1866, private and confidential, NA M52 R T-4; Raasloff to Seward, Dec. 25, 1866, private and confidential, Seward Papers

<sup>5</sup> Seward to Yeaman. Jan. 12, 1867, telegram, NA M77 R50

<sup>6</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Jan. 21, 1867, NA M41 R11

<sup>7</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Feb. 16, 1867, confidential, NA M41 R11. In early December 1866, Seward (with the approval of the President and the majority of the Cabinet) launched a campaign to secure Samana Bay as a naval station. In January 1867, Frederick W. Seward and Vice-Admiral David D. Porter were sent to Santo Domingo to negotiate either a lease or a cession of Samana Bay, but their mission failed. A subsequent authorization to the U.S. Commercial Agent in Santo Domingo, J. S. Smith, bore no fruit either, and was withdrawn in May 1867. Cf. Charles C. Tansill, The United States and Santo Domingo, 1798-1873. A Chapter in Caribbean Diplomacy (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), 234-244; D.D. Porter, "Secret Mission to San Domingo", NA CXXVIII (1879), 616-630, and F. W. Seward's correspondence to Seward from the mission in the U.S. Dept. of State. Special Agents, 1861-1869, NA M-37 R 11

<sup>8</sup> Seward to C. F. Adams, Mar. 8, 1867, NA M77 R50

<sup>9</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Mar. 13, 1867, NA M41 R11

<sup>10</sup> Seward to Yeaman, Mar. 28, 1867, NA M41 R11

<sup>11</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Apr. 27, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>12</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Apr. 30, 1867, confidential, NA M41 R10

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Yeaman to Seward, May 17, 1867, confidential; Telegram, Yeaman to Seward, May 17, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; Frijs' memorandum covering the period May 2 to Oct. 4, 1867, entitled Udsigt over de Forhandlinger og Samtaler, der har fundet Sted vedrørende den vestindiske Sag efter at General Raaslöff har forladt Amerika eller Washington, UM. This memorandum will hereinafter be referred to as Frijs' Memorandum

<sup>16</sup> Seward to Yeaman, May 27, 1867, NA M41 R10; cf. Appendix 1.

<sup>17</sup> Seward to Yeaman, May 27, 1867, NA M77 R50; Note from Yeaman to Frijs, May 28, 1867, confidential; Yeaman to Seward, June 7, 1867; Yeaman to Seward, June 13, 1867, NA M41 R10; Frijs' Memorandum, MS, UM

<sup>18</sup> Seward to Doolittle, April 30, 1867, confidential, J.R. Doolittle Papers

<sup>19</sup> Seward to Doolittle, Apr. 30, 1867; Seward's memorandum to Doolittle, May 8, 1867, NA M-77 R154, cf. J.R. Doolittle Papers

<sup>20</sup> Yeaman to Seward, June 7 and 17, 1867, NA M41 R10. Doolittle's visit to Copenhagen gave rise to rumors in the U.S. press about the purpose of his visit. Another planned visit by the Senator before leaving Europe was therefore cancelled, cf. Yeaman to Doolittle, Aug. 8, 1867, J.R. Doolittle Papers

<sup>21</sup> Yeaman to Seward, June 17, 1867, NA M41 R10; Frijs' Memorandum, UM

<sup>22</sup> Telegram from Seward to Adams, July 2, 1867, NA M77 R10; Yeaman to Seward, July 7, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>23</sup> Yeaman to Seward, July 22, 1867, NA M41 R10; Frijs' Memorandum, MS, UM

<sup>24</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Aug. 8, 1867, NA M41 R10; Frijs' Memorandum, MS, UM

<sup>25</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Aug. 8, 1867, NA M41 R10; Frijs' Memorandum, MS, UM

<sup>26</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Aug. 17 & Sept. 2, 1867; Yeaman to Seward, Aug. 22, 1867, confidential, NA M41 R10; Frijs' Memorandum, UM; Seward to Yeaman, Aug. 7, 1867, NA M77 R50; Yeaman to Raasloff, Aug. 8, 1867, Seward Papers

<sup>27</sup>"this movement" = the ministerial crisis. Its origin was disagreement between the King and his Cabinet over the influence of certain of his advisers.

<sup>28</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Aug. 29, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>29</sup>Telegram, Seward to Adams, Aug. 28, 1867; telegram, Seward to Yeaman, Sept. 3, 1867, NA M77 R50

<sup>30</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 7, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>31</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Sept. 5, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>32</sup>Farragut to Yeaman, Sept. 20, 1867; Yeaman to Seward, Sept. 21, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>33</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Sept. 27, Oct. 1, 3 & 4, 1867, NA M41 R10; Raasloff to Seward, Sept. 10, 1867, Seward Papers; Frijs' Memorandum, MS, UM

<sup>34</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 3, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>35</sup>Telegram, Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 2, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>36</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 3, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>37</sup>Raasloff to Seward, Oct. 4, 1867, private, Seward Papers

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.; Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 3 & 4, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>39</sup>Telegram, Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 4, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>40</sup>Telegram, Seward to Yeaman, Oct. 4, 1867, NA M77 R50

<sup>41</sup>Telegram, Seward to Yeaman, Oct. 5, 1867, NA M77 R50

<sup>42</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 7, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>43</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 12, 1867, NA M41 R10; Raasloff to Seward, Oct. 15 & 27, 1867, private, Seward Papers

<sup>44</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 15, 1867; Yeaman to Raasloff, Oct. 14, 1867, copy, NA M41 R10

<sup>45</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 25, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>46</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 25, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>47</sup>Statsraadets Forhandlingar, 1848-1912, 3. udg., Bd. XI (Kbh.: Munksgaards Forlag, 1972), 165-177

<sup>48</sup>C. van Dockum, Livserindringer (Kbh.: Wm. Carstensen, 1893), 50-53

<sup>49</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 25, 1867, NA M41 R10; Telegram, Seward to Yeaman, Oct. 24, 1867; Seward to Yeaman, Oct. 24, 1867, NA M77 R50

<sup>50</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Oct. 25, 1867, NA M41 R10

<sup>51</sup>Seward's draft treaty of May 27, 1867, NA M77 R50, cf. Appendix 1; Convention between His Majesty the King of Denmark and the United States of America concerning the cession of the Islands of St. Thomas and St. John in the West Indies, UM, cf. Appendix II

<sup>52</sup>Seward to Yeaman, Oct. 25 & 31, Nov. 15, 1867; Telegram, Seward to Yeaman, Oct. 28, 1867, NA M77 R50

<sup>53</sup>Raasloff to Seward, Oct. 27, 1867, private, Seward papers

## CHAPTER THREE

## DANISH RATIFICATION - AMERICAN HESITATION

Only a few days after the signing of the St. Thomas treaty, the Danish West Indies were visited by a series of natural disasters. First, on October 29, 1867, the islands were struck by a terrible hurricane, causing great material damage and loss of life. Then, on November 18, a powerful earthquake and tidal wave hit the islands, again with great losses. Earthquakes continued to strike during the ensuing weeks. These disasters had the immediate effect of delaying Carstensen's work but, more importantly, they had a negative impact on U.S. public opinion. The anti-Administration press naturally exploited them for its own purposes.<sup>1</sup>

Seward met the Danish wish for American representatives in St. Thomas to assist Commissioner Carstensen in carrying out the vote by sending the Reverend Charles Hawley, of Auburn, N.Y., on a mission there to help Carstensen in showing "those who may have votes upon the subject the advantages which they would derive from transferring their allegiance to the United States, should they think proper to remain in the islands". Rear-Admiral James S. Palmer of the United States Navy, with the "Susquehannah", was sent there with similar instructions.<sup>2</sup>

When Hawley arrived in the islands on November 12, news of the treaty also reached St. Thomas. Hawley soon realized that a major question would be whether St. Thomas would be able to continue as a free port.<sup>3</sup> Upon Carstensen's arrival there three days later he received the same impression. Hawley summed the situation up as follows:-

So commanding is this interest that I am not without fears it might control the votes of the less intelligent class. A guarantee from the United States that no change would be required in the present status of the port would relieve the whole question of embarrassment; but though urged at this point, both by the governor and the commissioner, it is an assurance which, of course, I am not authorized to give.<sup>4</sup>

At a public meeting in St. Thomas on November 26, Carstensen read the "Royal Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Islands of St. Thomas and St. John", informing the islanders of the treaty and its background. Though it seemed to be the general opinion among those present that the vote would be favorable, it was considered that this would be so only if guarantees were given of the continuation of St. Thomas as a free port. The American representatives could give no such guarantees but could only say that they were sure the islands would be treated generously in that respect by the United States.<sup>5</sup>

The Administration had early attempted to influence public opinion favorably towards American annexation in the West Indies by asking Vice-Admiral

David D. Porter to write a report advocating such a purchase, to be published in the press. Porter's report appeared in the leading papers in mid-December.<sup>6</sup> His main argument was that the United States needed St. Thomas as "a naval station and a great commercial station". The island could be defended easily as it was "a small Gibraltar in itself". In the event of war with a European power, the United States would be at a disadvantage without a naval depot. Such an enemy would have a naval depot in the area, while the United States in case of damage would need to seek far-away ports.<sup>7</sup>

Part of the American press accepted these views and Seward's diplomacy,<sup>8</sup> but many papers were highly critical of the treaty of October 24, 1867. The New York Daily Tribune was most outspoken in its criticism. It argued that the islands were of no value; pointed to the fact that Seward had not consulted Congress in regard to the matter; gave the natural disasters extensive cover, and ridiculed Porter's article as "Porter's Pastoral".<sup>9</sup>

An article appearing in the Merchant's Magazine and Commercial Review illustrates well the main points put by the opponents of the treaty. Rather than adding to the safety of the U.S. coasts, naval stations in the West Indies would be the first object of an enemy's attack. Thus such outposts would rather be sources of

weakness than of strength. Furthermore, the American people were generally against the purchase and unwilling to pay for it. In addition, the taxation of the islands would not be able to pay for their fortification and government.<sup>10</sup>

Carstensen decided to go to Washington with Hawley to attempt to secure such changes in the articles of the treaty of October 24, 1867 as would meet the commercial concerns of the merchants.<sup>11</sup> Governor Vilhelm L. Birch supported the idea and on December 4 sent Carstensen a memorial signed by 130 merchants and proprietors asking the Commissioner to obtain "if not perpetually, yet for as many years as possible, those immunities and privileges of this port and its commerce which we have hitherto possessed and enjoyed under the Danish Government". The proposed additional articles that were enclosed with the document asked for a guarantee of 20 years as a free port for St. Thomas.<sup>12</sup>

Carstensen's and Hawley's journey to Washington in December was fruitless: Seward firmly declined to reopen the negotiations. Hawley was instructed to give Carstensen the following reasons for the rejection:-

In the judgment of the President supplemental negotiations would only tend to embarrassment and delay, while they are deemed altogether unnecessary.<sup>13</sup>

The Danish Government fully shared this view.<sup>14</sup>

On his return to St. Thomas on January 1, 1868, Carstensen prepared the vote in the two islands. It was to take place in St. Thomas on January 9, and in St. John the next day.<sup>15</sup> On January 4, Carstensen held a meeting for merchants and proprietors in order to explain the results of his visit to Washington. His speech revealed that his mission had failed, but he still formed it into an argument for annexation, and thus for a positive vote:

In my official capacity I am not at liberty to say more in reference to your memorial than "the inhabitants of St. Thomas by annexation to the United States, will secure rights superior even to those they have so long enjoyed as a colony under the protection of Denmark".

The impression I bring with me from the United States is that the United States are determined on having a military and commercial station in the West Indies - if not at St. Thomas, then at some other West Indian locality. I bring with me the conviction that these plans involve the future mercantile prosperity of St. Thomas, and that the inhabitants of St. Thomas by opposing annexation might prejudice the future commercial position of St. Thomas.<sup>16</sup>

As an article it published on December 4 shows, the St. Thomas Tidende was a strong advocate of the cession, and to a great extent it may probably be taken as a reliable measure of public opinion on the islands:

... We consider it nevertheless a duty to express our opinion upon this sudden yet not unlooked for change in the government of these islands. Let us then, at the risk of being crude in our judgment or limited in our vision, say, with candor and frankness, that we heartily and unhesitatingly hail with joy and hope that which now presents itself to us. ... As is everywhere known, the States and Territories of the United States enjoy in the highest degree all municipal freedom and self-government; it will then be our own fault if we remain satisfied with less.

The paper went even further than public opinion, saying that it would amount to an act of bad faith to attempt to obtain guarantees as to import duties and the future system of government. It concluded its article as follows:-

Let the transaction be done, then, as the charter parties say, in good faith, and we shall win the gratitude of Denmark, and become the pet of the United States.<sup>17</sup>

The St. Croix Avis took a negative view of the fact that St. Croix was not included in the treaty. Thus on December 12, 1867 it wrote "that it would be unprofitable for Denmark to hold their colony without the others, separated, as this plan is, so many hundreds of miles off, from the Mother Country". It encouraged the people to remain quiet. But it warned against false ideas about American intentions to reintroduce slavery if it purchased the island: "No! the Americans are too honorable, too just, and too generous ever to be guilty of such a crime. History tells, of late times, the greatness of that Nation!"<sup>18</sup>

Later, this paper brought even more strongly worded articles in favor of annexation to the United States.<sup>19</sup>

As expected, the result of the vote on January 9 and 10 was an almost unanimous approval of the cession. In St. Thomas there were 1,039 votes in favor and 22 against; in St. John all 205 votes were in favor.<sup>20</sup> Consul Perkins commented that "the colored people and the blacks were all in favor of the United States, and the merchants in St. Thomas .... behaved remarkably well. Many voted for us and but a few against us, while others abstained from voting".<sup>21</sup>

The Danish Government appointed Frantz Ernst de Bille as new Danish Chargé d'affaires in Washington in November. In a private letter from Raasloff to Seward that Bille carried with him to Washington in December, Raasloff recommended the new Chargé warmly to the Secretary of State and mentioned that Frijs would soon announce his willingness to cede St. Croix also. Raasloff therefore suggested that Yeaman be given instructions regarding this matter.<sup>22</sup>

On receipt of Raasloff's letter, Seward instructed Yeaman to tell Raasloff that it would be necessary to approach the St. Croix issue quite differently:

Any negotiation to have a prospect of success must be opened by Denmark, not at Copenhagen, but here. The whole question, including price, must be considered entirely open, free from all former discussion. No reservation of plantation or of law could be allowed.<sup>23</sup>

Bille, who arrived in Washington on December 28, soon realized that the St. Thomas treaty was up against heavy odds in the United States Senate. The treaty was presented to Congress on December 3 in President Johnson's third Annual Message.<sup>24</sup> The documents relevant to the cession were given to Charles Sumner, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Sumner informed the Committee but would hardly bring the matter up for discussion until the middle of January 1868.

A great many factors were working against immediate ratification by the Senate. The American people had lost their interest in naval matters and saw no need for the purchase of St. Thomas as a naval station. The plan suffered from being perceived as Seward's scheme, from the public expenditure involved, and it was seen as the beginning of a path towards undesirable colonial expansion. Upon the closing of the Civil War the anti-expansionists wanted the Administration to devote its time and energy on Reconstruction and internal improvement programs. Furthermore, the Cabinet had not supported the plan wholeheartedly. Thus, the Congressional opposition to

Johnson and Seward was exploiting the matter to oppose territorial expansion in general and to advocate budgetary restraint in particular. On November 25, the House of Representatives had adopted by a large majority Representative Cadwallader C. Washburn's resolution against further purchases of territory and against appropriating money for such purposes.<sup>25</sup>

The natural disasters in the island had also served to put the transaction in a very bad light. However, Bille mentioned that in New York there was a generally positive attitude to the transaction. This also applied to the moderately Republican New York Times.

On December 31, Bille had an interview with Seward, who conceded that the treaty had not been received as positively by the public and Congress as he had expected. As reasons, he mentioned the protracted negotiations, the Alaska treaty, and the efforts to control the budget. Though he expected the Senate to act soon, influenced by a large pro-annexation vote in the islands, he did say it might become necessary to prolong the term of ratification.

In these circumstances Seward did not wish to negotiate for the purchase of St. Croix. He thought that this question would present itself when the cession of St. Thomas and St. John had been executed. Bille concluded that there was good reason to worry

about the outcome of the Senate vote on the treaty. Still, he found that a favorable vote was not unlikely, but that the matter must be handled most carefully and that unfavorable public opinion needed sufficient time to change.<sup>26</sup>

On December 13, Yeaman reported to Seward that Washburn's resolution had had an impact on the thinking of the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs. Whereas Frijs had thought earlier that a positive vote in the islands, and preferably some positive expression from the Senate, would be a sufficient basis for him to act on, he now also seemed to hold an expression from the House of Representatives necessary. Yeaman attempted to quiet Frijs' anxiety by saying it was highly improbable that the House of Representatives would not appropriate the money necessary for the execution of a ratified treaty.<sup>27</sup>

In a rather sharply worded instruction, Seward answered Yeaman's despatch on January 2, 1868. After describing the division of powers between the Executive and Congress, he wrote:-

It would not be becoming for me to entertain correspondence with a foreign state concerning incidental debates and resolutions in regard to the treaty for the two Danish islands while it is undergoing constitutional consideration in the Senate and in Congress. I may add that I think that it belongs to the Executive of Denmark, so that it always proceeds in good faith towards the United States to determine when and how it will submit the treaty for the consideration and ratification of the Rigsdag; and when he shall so have submitted it,

that the current debates it shall call forth in the Danish Legislature will not probably be made the subject<sup>28</sup> of attention by the President of the United States.

Yeaman was subsequently able to inform Seward that Frijs had changed his mind and become willing to submit the treaty to the Rigsdag as soon as he received news of a favorable vote in St. Thomas and St. John, without awaiting ratification in Washington.<sup>29</sup>

The ratification process in Denmark was rapid, which should be seen in the light of the fact that in both Chambers of the Rigsdag and in most of the press there was a consensus that the transaction was advantageous to Denmark. The only major Danish paper to oppose the cession outright was the National-Liberal Dagbladet. It recognized that the money from the sale would be welcome in the Danish Treasury and that it would be difficult to hold the colonies in time of war, but at the same time it claimed that, despite the differences of race and language, the population of the islands still felt themselves part of the Danish people. The paper further postulated that Carstensen had put undue pressure on the population in the island before the vote.<sup>30</sup>

Faedrelandet, another National-Liberal paper, had already declared itself in favor of the treaty on August 29, 1867. It found that the cession would be an economic and military advantage to Denmark. In

addition, the Negro population would be treated well as U.S. citizens, and the planters would profit from the transaction. The paper did not think that consideration for England should keep Denmark from selling. Only if abstaining from selling would secure French assistance in the Schleswig question would it be worth considering. However, Faedrelandet thought that Denmark would win French assistance more easily if she strengthened her position through a sale of St. Thomas.<sup>31</sup> The Conservative Berlingske Tidende followed the fate of the treaty extensively from November 1867 onwards.<sup>32</sup> It was positive towards the treaty, but did not express this stance very strongly.<sup>33</sup>

On January 6, Frijs formally informed the Folkething and Landsting about the conclusion of the treaty.

Then, on January 18, Frijs informed the Folkething of the result of the vote in the islands and said that on this basis he would propose a Bill to the Rigsdag, which he did on January 20, when he asked the Folkething's consent to the treaty of October 24, 1867. He explained the results of the vote and asked for quick action in the matter.<sup>34</sup>

Next day, the Folkething resolved to constitute itself as a committee of the whole and then, on the submission of the committee report, to consider the Bill in two readings with suspension of the ordinary

time limits. On January 23, the committee reported its recommendation of consent. At the first reading on the next day, there was little drama. The Speaker mentioned as arguments for ratification the recommendation of the committee, the islanders' own wish to become Americans, and the fact that the islands would be ceded to a great and free state. Frijs stated that the islands could look forward to a brighter economic future under the United States. It is noteworthy that he also mentioned that the money Denmark would receive from the sale would be some compensation for the losses in the recent war. At the second reading the next day, the Folkething gave its unanimous consent to the measure.<sup>35</sup> On the same day, the Bill was sent to the Landsting, which adopted procedures similar to those of the Folkething, and without complications gave their unanimous consent to the cession on January 30. In the short debate on the first reading, Frijs made a point of the loyalty and consideration shown to Denmark by the United States Government throughout the negotiations.<sup>36</sup>

On January 31 the Danish ratification process was brought to a conclusion when the transaction received the Royal Assent.<sup>37</sup>

When Bille wrote a despatch to Frijs on January 9, 1868, he no longer thought, as he had in late December, that with patience and careful tactics a

change in American public opinion would lead to ratification. He now found it rather more probable that the treaty would be rejected by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and by the Senate. The first meeting of Congress had shown Congressional hostility towards Johnson's Reconstruction policy to be so great that the President and Seward might even decide against advocating ratification of the treaty. In addition, there was a strong general demand for cutting public expenditure, and the Samana issue was on the agenda again. A commissioner of the Dominican Republic had arrived in Washington on January 7 with full powers to complete the bargain. Seward now entered into discussions on the matter.<sup>38</sup>

In an interview with Seward on the date of the despatch, Bille failed to obtain any statement from the Secretary on the projected purchase of Samana by the United States, but Sumner had said earlier that both purchases would hardly be carried out. However, he did accept Bille's point that the fact that the St. Thomas treaty had already been concluded in good faith between the parties must have a special weight.<sup>39</sup>

Bille continued emphasizing the Congressional opposition to Johnson as the most important factor in preventing Senate action on the treaty.<sup>40</sup>

On January 23, Seward was informed by telegraph of the conclusion of a treaty between the Republic of

Columbia and the United States for the construction of a canal through the Isthmus of Darien. Together with the existing railroads, it was to complete the uniting of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and Seward regarded it as very important. Bille spent the rest of his despatch of January 25 on the restless activity in the United States for westward expansion in order to bring the East into contact with the Pacific. The transcontinental railroad, the purchase of Alaska, the project of the Darien canal, and the commercial treaty with the Sandwich Islands were all signs of this. Bille pointed out that there was an opposition to this development which claimed that the moral and political power of the United States would not grow proportionally as wealth might grow.<sup>41</sup>

Yeaman informed Seward about the Danish ratification on January 31, mentioning at the same time that he had learned from confidential sources that in the capitals of the major powers it was believed the treaty would fail owing to Congressional opposition. Frijs would send the ratified treaty to the United States Despatch Agent in London to be forwarded to Bille through the official despatch bag.<sup>42</sup>

The telegram from Yeaman to Seward informing the latter of the Danish King's signature on January 31 reads:-

Treaty sent to Washington ratified by Rigsdag and signed by King. Several European powers hope it will fail in Congress.<sup>43</sup>

On February 4, Bille wrote to Frijs that Seward had been informed about Danish ratification of the treaty. Bille assumed that the Secretary was still hoping for better chances for American ratification and that he therefore did not mind the Senate Foreign Relations Committee not having discussed the issue yet.<sup>44</sup>

On the same occasion Bille called Frijs' attention to a series of articles by Robert J. Walker in the Washington Morning Chronicle, a Republican paper. Bille considered these articles the most thorough and well-written contributions in favor of the annexation of St. Thomas. He thought the articles might be so powerful that they could bring about a change in public opinion.<sup>45</sup>

On February 18, Bille received the ratified treaty from Copenhagen, and on February 24 he informed Seward by note that he was ready to proceed to an exchange of ratifications when it suited Seward. In his note of reply, the Secretary informed Bille that the Senate had not yet ratified the treaty. When this had happened he would inform Bille, so that an exchange could take place.<sup>46</sup>

Seward regretted the criticism Yeaman had to face in Copenhagen because of the delay in ratification, but

alluding to the purchases of Louisiana and California, argued that in a republican system a new national policy needed to be thoroughly examined before being enacted. However, time would prove his policy right.<sup>47</sup>

In another private letter, which was probably also written in late January, Seward said that ratification was only hindered by domestic considerations, but he thought public opinion was improving. Still, he realized that an extension - maybe even until the next administration - might be necessary.<sup>48</sup>

In his despatches to Seward in March, Yeaman related how the delay of ratification created problems of various kinds in Denmark. The members of the Folkething were making frequent inquiries about the matter and it was becoming a destabilizing factor for the Cabinet, though its life was not in immediate danger. Some blamed the Danish Cabinet for not having waited for action in Washington before itself initiating ratification procedures.

Feeling for annexation was strong in St. Croix, and criticism of the Danish Government was loud there. Yeaman even reported hearing malicious voices suggesting the United States would reject the treaty in order to obtain the Danish West Indies cheaper, or for no money at all, at a later date.

About the embarrassing situation, Yeaman told the Danish Government "that, under the existing circumstances, the delay which has occurred cannot be held an unfavorable indication, and that future action on the matter will prove satisfactory".

Frijs accepted this statement, though not all the members of the Cabinet shared his attitude.<sup>49</sup>

Seward approved of Yeaman's handling of the situation but still retained the reserve he had observed so far. In his private correspondence with Yeaman, he explained that the impeachment trial was the real cause of the delay.<sup>50</sup>

Frijs also wrote to Bille on March 27 that there was an uneasy mood in St. Croix at the thought of becoming separated from the other islands. The Danish Cabinet had taken measures to control the situation by giving the Governor instructions to that end and by ordering the Naval vessel "Dagmar", which was there already, to remain there for a longer period.

In Frijs' view it was absolutely necessary to await changes in the United States before ratification could take place there. When the impeachment trial was over he expected ratification to be secured more easily. If Johnson were acquitted, Frijs expected the Administration would be strengthened so much that the treaty must pass. Even if the President were convicted, Frijs found it improbable that the

Republicans would abandon a treaty so obviously advantageous to their country.<sup>51</sup>

In a despatch on April 7, Bille told Frijs of an important conversation he had had with Sumner who, though he much regretted all the embarrassment caused by the delay in ratification, did not think it would be possible to obtain Senate consent to it. He further doubted that the arguments he had used for the Alaska treaty would receive a favorable hearing again. He therefore saw only the alternatives of submitting the treaty to the Senate, which would mean rejection, or of leaving it unacted on in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Bille emphasized that he was without instructions for this situation, but that he preferred to let the matter rest until his Government had had an opportunity of considering it.<sup>52</sup>

When Bille wrote to Frijs on May 18, there had been a vote in the Senate which seemed to have secured Johnson's acquittal. Bille called on, and congratulated, Seward, who said that he now had new hopes of the Senate acting on the treaty soon, but Bille dared not predict that the treaty could now be ratified. Further clarification would be necessary.<sup>53</sup>

On June 15 Bille wrote to Vedel privately about the situation of the ratification issue after the failure of the attempt to impeach Johnson. Carstensen had announced his arrival in Washington the next day in

connexion with his return to Copenhagen, so Bille would postpone an official despatch until after Carstensen's visit.

Bille adjudged the position of the treaty to be most difficult. In the present session of Congress it had no chance of being ratified. The majority in Congress, that could not recur conviction of the President, would be willing and able to defeat the treaty at any time. Bille had information from a reliable source that the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations were opposed to the treaty, and purely out of consideration for Denmark they would let it die in silence instead of voting it down. Bille had no doubt that it would be in Denmark's interest to let the matter rest until the December session of Congress, as there was at least a chance that the situation would be more favorable by then.<sup>54</sup>

In a despatch dated June 19, Bille informed Frijs of another interview he and Carstensen had had with Sumner about the prospects of the treaty. The Chairman had said on that occasion that he was not personally hostile to the treaty. If he could have prevented its negotiation he would have, but he now fully recognized the embarrassment if the treaty were not ratified. He understood the difficult situation for Denmark, which had entered upon the negotiations in good faith. If, however, the question came to a vote in the Senate, it

would certainly fail. Therefore when he put the treaty on the agenda for informal discussion in the Committee on Foreign Relations and reviewed its history, he had advised the Committee to let the matter rest, which it agreed to do. Bille concurred that this was the best approach in the circumstances, but he objected when Sumner said that he must regard the St. Thomas issue as practically finished. The Chairman subsequently agreed that there was a minimal chance that the situation might improve after the Presidential election.<sup>55</sup>

In January 1868 the Danish Government began sounding out the French Government about its attitude to the cession of St. Croix to the United States. Moltke-Hvitfeldt, Danish Minister in Paris, received the impression early on that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Marquis de Moustier, was favorably disposed, and on May 14 he informed the Danish Minister that the French Government had decided not to object to a cession. In a note from de Moustier to Moltke-Hvitfeldt on July 30, 1868, France formally relinquished her rights with regard to St. Croix.<sup>56</sup>

On May 18 Frijs informed Yeaman that France would not oppose a cession of St. Croix. After receipt in the Danish capital of a petition from the people of St. Croix expressing the desire of St. Croix not to be separated from the other islands, Yeaman suggested to Seward on June 11 that a negotiation for St. Croix

could now be carried out more easily and possibly on better terms.<sup>57</sup>

In an instruction to Yeaman dated June 29, Seward acknowledged receiving the despatches with Yeaman's suggestion regarding St. Croix. The Secretary explained that important domestic questions had kept the House of Representatives from appropriating the money for the Alaska purchase and had delayed the Senate's consideration of the St. Thomas treaty. He expected the Alaska appropriation to pass before Congress adjourned but that the St. Thomas treaty would have to be postponed for consideration until the following session of Congress. In the meantime it would be easier "to collect the public sentiment" in regard to the treaty. As to Yeaman's suggestion of a negotiation for St. Croix, he wrote:-

Your suggestion in regard to the island of Santa Cruz will, in the meantime, be held in reserve. On your part you may, unofficially and informally, and without committing the Department, ascertain and communicate any change of sentiment that may exist on the part of the Danish Government in regard to the transfer of the last mentioned island.<sup>58</sup>

In his weekly interview with Yeaman, Frijs mentioned on July 23 that he desired an expression from the United States Government because of the delay in the ratification procedures, but at the same time he expressed confidence in the loyalty of the United States Government. On this same occasion, Yeaman

carried out Seward's instruction of June 29 regarding St. Croix.<sup>59</sup>

Frijs wrote a lengthy instruction to Bille on July 9, in which he mentioned that he thought that the Congressional opposition in the United States would now take revenge, after the failure of its impeachment trial, by working against the President's policy of territorial expansion amongst other things. Bille was instructed to seek an interview with Seward and tell him that the Danish Government wondered why no steps had been taken by the U.S. Government to fulfil its obligations with regard to the St. Thomas treaty when the Danish Government had ratified it. This had made Denmark's relations with the islands very difficult, particularly after the vote had been taken. Bille was to obtain assurances that the American Government would neglect nothing to advance the matter. He was further authorized to say that although no formal answer had yet been received from France with regard to St. Croix, Count Moltke-Hvitfeldt had been informed by the French Government that they would not object to a cession of the islands to the United States. Thus, Frijs saw a chance that it might facilitate U.S. ratification if the treaty were extended to include St. Croix as well.<sup>60</sup>

In an interview with Seward on July 23 or one of the days previous, Bille mentioned Frijs' desire for an

American statement. The Secretary responded most satisfactorily to the Danish request for sincere American efforts in the matter. As far as the idea of including St. Croix in the transaction was concerned, Seward said it was not alien to him but that he had abstained from any comment on the treaty owing to the violent attacks the Administration had suffered since its signing. The appropriation for the Alaska treaty had passed and the time was approaching when the St. Thomas treaty could be brought to the center of attention, but he preferred waiting until after the adjournment of Congress. They agreed to meet again after that date.<sup>61</sup>

Yeaman directed the discussion onto the St. Croix issue in an interview with Frijs on August 6. Frijs stated that France had now officially consented to a cession and, further, that the terms had been agreed on in connexion with the St. Thomas negotiations but that he would prefer to know if the United States were still interested before offering to open negotiations. Yeaman said that the terms had only been suggested but had never been agreed on in a way that obligated the parties. The natural disasters and the views of the population of St. Croix "would justify Denmark in either making or receiving any modified propositions, or in treating it entirely as an open question". Frijs responded that he would prefer not to change what could

be done at St. Croix. He concluded the conversation in a way that doubtless reflected his disappointment at Yeaman's statements. Denmark would be justified in withdrawing from its obligations, but so far he had not wished to do so as he continued to trust in the sincerity of the United States Government and was aware of its difficulties.<sup>62</sup>

When Bille and Seward met again on August 25, the latter had concluded that he did not desire to extend the treaty to cover St. Croix because the increase in the purchase price would render appropriation of the amount impossible.

Seward went on to suggest an additional article to the treaty which would extend the time stipulated for ratification by 12 months from the date of the additional article. Bille said that he was not authorized to consent to such an article but that he expected the Danish Government would be interested in such an alteration in the position of the treaty. To Frijs he wrote that several difficulties might be out of the way when a new administration took over in March 1869.<sup>63</sup>

In the Danish Government there was some reluctance to accept the idea of an extension as it was believed it might limit the Government's freedom of action. At Frijs' request, Yeaman addressed a verbal note to him on September 17.<sup>64</sup> It explained in detail

how domestic political questions had made it impossible until then to obtain the Senate's approval of the treaty and that Congress had adjourned, probably not to meet again until December.<sup>65</sup>

Frijs saw no alternative to accepting the additional article, though he much regretted having to do so. He instructed Bille to make it clear to Seward how essential it was to Denmark and the islands that the United States Government made all possible efforts to obtain the Senate's approval of the treaty.

When Frijs sent Bille full powers to sign the additional article, he also discussed the St. Croix issue. Whereas he recognized the weight of Seward's arguments in this regard, he did consider the United States obligated to accept a Danish offer of St. Croix when conditions were favorable, on the grounds that there had been an oral agreement with Yeaman to that effect in connexion with the St. Thomas negotiations. Frijs wished Bille to be aware of this but also told him not to mention it directly in his conversations with Seward.<sup>66</sup>

When on October 11 Bille informed Seward of Frijs' response to the idea of extension, he mentioned that the Danish Government had followed the unfortunate fate of the treaty with great interest and now expected the United States to do everything in its power to secure ratification within the next 12 months. The

suffering of the Danish West Indian population was not only an embarrassment to the Danish Government but was also damaging to the United States' relations with her future possessions. Seward replied that he expected there was a good chance that public opinion would change after the approaching election campaign.<sup>67</sup>

The signing of the additional article to the treaty of October 14, 1867 took place at the State Department on October 15. The time for exchange of ratifications was thereby extended by twelve months.<sup>68</sup> On the same day the Secretary addressed a note to Bille as a response to the latter's note of October 11. It expressed the United States' sincere intention of carrying out "such further proceedings as are necessary to give full effect to the Treaty referred to".<sup>69</sup>

In late November 1868, Frijs decided to authorize Bille to inform the United States Government confidentially that he was provided with instructions and full powers to negotiate the sale of St. Croix if the United States should find this advantageous before the St. Thomas treaty was signed. The general terms and conditions were to be those of the St. Thomas treaty and the price \$3 3/4 million in gold, as originally agreed on when the United States had desired to purchase all three islands.

The French Government would not object to the transaction, and the population of St. Croix had shown

their keen interest in accompanying St. Thomas and St. John. Though Seward had expressed a view that an increase in the purchase sum would be a barrier to ratification, the Danish Government still hoped that the inclusion of St. Croix in the transaction would change its character, making it easier to persuade the Senate to accept a transaction that they had so far opposed. This view was at least partially based on communications which Raasloff had received from private sources in the United States.<sup>70</sup>

Thus whereas the treaty was easily ratified in Denmark because it was viewed as financially advantageous upon the loss of the Duchies and because the population of the islands welcomed it, it met either with outright opposition or with indifference in the United States. It became a victim of the ongoing battle between the Administration and Congress. It had therefore been necessary to adopt an additional article extending the term of ratification. Denmark was now in a difficult position by having ratified the treaty whereas American ratification remained uncertain.

-----  
<sup>1</sup>The catastrophes may be followed in e.g. the U.S. Consul in St. Croix, E. H. Perkins' despatches, cf. Perkins to Seward, Nov. 13 & 23 and Dec. 11, 1867, NA T-233 R7, and in U.S. Consul in St. Thomas, E. B. Simmons' despatch to Seward, Oct. 31, 1867, NA T-350

<sup>2</sup>Seward to Hawley, Oct. 26, 1867, in Senate Document No. 231, 56th Congress, 2nd Session, Compilation on reports of Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 1789-1901. Treaties and Legislation Respecting Them, vol. VIII (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 198-9

<sup>3</sup>Hawley to Seward, Nov. 13, 1867, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Hawley to Seward, Nov. 22, 1867, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Hawley to Seward, Nov. 29, 1867, *ibid.*; Consul E. H. Perkins to Seward, Dec. 4, 1867, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>F. W. Seward to Porter, Nov. 5 & 12, 1867, confidential; Seward to Porter, Nov. 9, 1867; Porter to F. W. Seward, Nov. 5, 11 & 14, 1867, Seward Papers

<sup>7</sup>Cf. e.g. N. Y. Times, 14 December 1867

<sup>8</sup>Cf. e.g. N. Y. Times, 5 November, 14 & 25 December 1867; Commercial and Financial Chronicle, 14 December 1867, 743-5

<sup>9</sup>N. Y. Tribune, 8 November and 14, 19, 24 & 31 December 1867

<sup>10</sup>Merchant's Magazine and Commercial Review. Vol. 58, January to June, 1868, pp. 17-19

<sup>11</sup>Hawley to Seward, Nov. 30, 1867, Sen. Doc. No. 231, vol. VIII, 198-199

<sup>12</sup>Birch to Carstensen; Merchants of St. Thomas to Chamberlain Carstensen; Proposed Additional Articles, Dec. 4, 1867, *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Seward to Hawley, Dec. 16, 1867, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Jan. 8, 1868, NA M41 R11

<sup>15</sup>Perkins to Seward, Jan. 13, 1868, *ibid.*; Bekendtgoerelse, St. Thomas, 1ste. Jan., St. Thomas Tidende, 4 January 1868

<sup>16</sup>St. Thomas Tidende, 4 January 1868

<sup>17</sup>St. Thomas Tidende, 4 December 1867

<sup>18</sup>St. Croix Avis, 12 December 1867

<sup>19</sup>Cf. e.g. *Ibid.*, 10 January 1868

- <sup>20</sup>The ballots are kept in Kp
- <sup>21</sup>Perkins to Seward, Jan. 13, 1868, Sen. Doc. No. 231, vol. VIII
- <sup>22</sup>Raasloff to Seward, Nov. 27, 1867, private, Seward Papers; Yeaman to Seward, Nov. 8, 1867, NA M41 R11
- <sup>23</sup>Seward to Yeaman, Dec. 30, 1867, NA M77 R50
- <sup>24</sup>James D. Richardsen, A Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents, vol. 6 (N.Y.: Bureau of National Literature, 1911), 580. In his Message, the President argued that it was in the United States' interest to secure lawfully a naval base in the West Indies for defensive purposes against "any trans-Atlantic enemy". "The islands of St. Thomas and St. John, which constitute a part of the group called the Virgin Islands, seemed to offer us advantages immediately desirable, while their acquisition could be secured in harmony with the principles to which I have alluded".
- <sup>25</sup>Congressional Globe, 40 Cong., I Sess., 25 November 1867, 791-793. In the debate on the resolution, Washburn made it clear that the rumor of a treaty with Denmark had caused him to propose the resolution: "I intend to serve notice upon the Kingdom of Denmark that this House will not pay for that purchase; and I mean to serve notice upon the world that we will pay for no purchases that the Secretary of State, on his own motion, may see proper to make - that no purchase will be sanctioned that is not demanded by the public sentiment and the best interest of the country".
- <sup>26</sup>Two despatches from Bille to Frijs, Dec. 31, 1867, MS, UM
- <sup>27</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Dec. 13, 1867, NA M41 R11
- <sup>28</sup>Seward to Yeaman, Jan. 2, 1868, NA M77 R50
- <sup>29</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Jan. 4 & 16, 1868, NA M41 R11
- <sup>30</sup>Dagbladet, 1 Februar 1868; cf. also Ibid., 1, 7 & 31 Januar, 3, 9, 10, 21 & 27 Marts and 7 & 14 April 1868
- <sup>31</sup>Faedrelandet, 29 August 1867; the paper also covered the Danish ratification in January 1868

<sup>32</sup>Berlingske Tidende, 16 November, 10, 16 & 18 December 1867, and 6, 8, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28 & 29 Januar 1868

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 16 November 1867

<sup>34</sup>Rigsdagstidende. Oversigt over Forhandlingerne i Folkethinget i Rigsdagens ordentlige Samling 1867-68, cols. 460-461, 947, 1033-5; Oversigt over Forhandlingerne i Landstthinget i Rigsdagens ordentlige Samling 1867-68, col. 257-258. Frijs also submitted a lengthy report to both chambers of the Rigsdag describing in detail the background of the transaction and the course of the negotiations, cf. Beretning angaaende Forhandlingerne om Afstaaelse af de vestindiske Besiddelser til De forenede Stater, meddelt af H. E. Udenrigsministeren til Rigsdagens Thing, Januar 1868, UM

<sup>35</sup>Rigsdagstidende. Oversigt over Forhandlingerne i Folkethinget i Rigsdagens ordentlige Samling 1867-68, cols. 1045, 1063 & 1068; Tillaeg B, Udvalgenes Betaenkninger, Ordentlig Samling 1867-68, 70

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. Oversigt over Forhandlingerne i Landstthinget i Rigsdagens ordentlige Samling 1867-68, columns 598, 652, 659-661 & 781; Tillaeg B, Udvalgenes Betaenkninger, Ordentlig Samling 1867-68, 70

<sup>37</sup>Allerunderdanigst Forestilling, Jan. 31, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>38</sup>The Republic of Santo Domingo desired to conclude a treaty for the lease to the United States of the peninsula and bay of Samana. Over the next two months, disagreements regarding the terms and conditions were settled, but when the Commissioner and Seward were nearly ready to conclude, a revolution overthrew the President of the Republic, Cabral, and the Commissioner informed Seward that his mission had come to an end, cf. Charles C. Tansill, The United States and Santo Domingo, 1798-1874. A Chapter in Caribbean Diplomacy (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1938) 250-256; cf. also Seward to Yeaman, Jan. 29, 1868, NA M77 R50

<sup>39</sup>Bille to Frijs, Jan. 9, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Bille to Frijs, Jan. 17 & 27, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>41</sup>Bille to Frijs, Jan. 25, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>42</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Jan. 20, 28 & 31, 1868, NA M41 R11

<sup>43</sup>Telegram, Yeaman to Seward, Jan. 31, 1868,  
NA M41 R11

<sup>44</sup>Bille to Frijs, Feb. 4, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., cf. B. Dyer: "Robert J. Walker on  
Acquiring Greenland and Iceland", MVHR vol XXVII (June  
1940 to March 1941), 263-266

<sup>46</sup>Bille to Frijs, Jan. 31, Feb. 18 & 24, 1868;  
Note from Seward to Bille, Feb. 20, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>47</sup>Seward to Yeaman, Jan. 29, 1868, private and  
confidential, NA M77 R50

<sup>48</sup>Seward to Yeaman, n.d., private, NA M77 R50

<sup>49</sup>Yeaman to Seward, Mar. 6, 18 & 23, 1868,  
NA M41 R11

<sup>50</sup>Seward to Yeaman, Mar. 25 & Apr. 10, 1868,  
private, NA M77 R50; on Feb. 21, 1868, Johnson  
dismissed Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, and on Feb.  
24 the House of Representatives impeached the President  
for violating the Tenure of Office Act, cf. Harold W.  
Chase et al., eds., Dictionary of American History,  
no. ed. (1976-78) s. v. "Impeachment Trial of Andrew  
Johnson" by L. T. Stephen

<sup>51</sup>Frijs to Bille, Mar. 27, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>52</sup>Bille to Frijs, Apr. 7, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>53</sup>Bille to Frijs, May 18, 1868, MS, UM; the first  
ballot in the Senate took place on May 16 and was one  
vote short of the necessary two-thirds majority to  
convict Johnson. Another vote on May 28 had the same  
outcome, and the President was thus acquitted

<sup>54</sup>Bille to Vedel, June 15, 1868, private, MS, UM

<sup>55</sup>Bille to Frijs, June 19, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>56</sup>Frijs to Moltke-Hvitfeldt, Jan. 4, Apr. 2 &  
July 15, 1868; Moltke-Hvitfeldt to Frijs, Jan. 17, Mar.  
28, May 15, July 10 & Aug. 4, 1868; note, Marquis de  
Moustier to Moltke-Hvitfeldt, July 30, 1868; note,  
Moltke-Hvitfeldt to Marquis de Moustier, July 25, 1868,  
MS, UM

<sup>57</sup>Yeaman to Seward, May 18, 1868, confidential;  
Yeaman to Seward, June 5 & 11, 1868, NA M41 R12; cf.  
also St. Croix Avis, 28 April 1868

<sup>58</sup> Seward to Yeaman, June 29, 1868, NA M77 R50

<sup>59</sup> Yeaman to Seward, July 23, 1868, NA M41 R12

<sup>60</sup> Frijs to Bille, July 9, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>61</sup> Bille to Frijs, July 23, MS, UM

<sup>62</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Aug. 8, 1868, NA M41 R12

<sup>63</sup> Bille to Frijs, Aug. 25, 1868, MS, UM; Seward to Yeaman, Aug. 27, 1868, NA M77 R50; on Aug. 17, 1868, Seward wrote privately and confidentially to Yeaman:- "There is manifest in the public mind something of a reaction in favor of the recent treaty acquisitions of Alaska and St. Thomas, and the establishing of reciprocal trade with the Sandwich Islands. I do not however find this reaction as yet sufficiently strong to justify an expectation that the addition of Santa Cruz with an increase of the purchase money stipulated in our Danish Treaty would probably render it more acceptable to the Senate and Congress. The nation just now has its attention turned quite away from foreign affairs, and fastened upon its own internal forces and interests. Things may change, however, after the lapse of some time. In that case, you will be advised", NA M77 R50

<sup>64</sup> Yeaman to Seward, Sept. 18, 1868, NA M41 R12

<sup>65</sup> Verbal note, Yeaman to Frijs, Sept. 17, 1868, NA M41 R12

<sup>66</sup> Allerunderdanigst Forestilling den 14. Sept. 1868; Frijs to Bille, Sept. 19, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>67</sup> Note, Bille to Seward, Oct. 11, 1868; Bille to Frijs, Oct. 13, 1868, UM; cf. A. Skrike to Frijs, Oct. 31, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>68</sup> Bille to Frijs, Oct. 15, 1868; Additional Article to the Convention of the Twenty-Fourth of October, last, between His Majesty the King of Denmark and the United States of America, MS, UM

<sup>69</sup> Note, Seward to Bille, Oct. 1, 1868; Bille to Frijs, Oct. 19, 1868, MS, UM

<sup>70</sup> Allerunderdanigst Forestilling den 25. Nov. 1868; Frijs to Bille, Nov. 26, 1868; Bille to Frijs, Dec. 22, 1868, MS, UM

## CHAPTER FOUR

## RAASLOFF'S MISSION TO WASHINGTON

When, in 1868, the ratification of the West Indies treaty ran into severe difficulties, Raasloff was doubtless interested in cultivating his relationship with Gustavus Vasa Fox. In his letters, Fox provided Raasloff with information on the political situation in the United States and on the prospects of ratification. Fox was willing to work for the treaty, and was still optimistic about ratification as late as July 16. In his view, some of the difficulties were that Seward had negotiated the treaty without consulting leading members of Congress, and that, owing to the tension between the Executive and Congress, many politicians wanted to prevent the Administration from getting any credit for the treaty.<sup>1</sup> In his service to Raasloff, Fox even went so far as to promise to see President-Elect Ulysses S. Grant about the matter.<sup>2</sup>

By early summer, Raasloff was considering going to Washington to work for the treaty. It was probably Yeaman who first suggested this. The idea then became the subject of confidential discussions between Yeaman, Raasloff and Count Frijs. In a letter of May 24, Raasloff asked Fox's opinion about the advisability of such a step.<sup>3</sup> The sources do not reveal whether Fox recommended the idea, but by September 14 Raasloff was

ready to go if his doing so would seem to increase the chances of ratification. He was well aware that the failure of such an effort would have negative consequences for the Danish Government, as the following excerpts from his letter to Fox show.

I shall be ready to go to the U.S. if my going should be considered necessary or at least desirable but you will easily understand that, if a member of the Danish cabinet is sent, or goes as a private tourist, - a failure becomes a very serious affair for this country.

...; a member of the Danish cabinet having under these circumstances, been sent and having failed would as you will easily understand, put the climax on this unpleasant position and make us the laughing stock of the whole world.

Raasloff also revealed to his friend why he was ready to undertake a task which, if unsuccessful, would make his Government "the laughing stock of the world". He explained that the situation had become quite unacceptable to the Danish Government:

... it is incompatible with our dignity as a nation to let the treaty stand - as it stands now, and the state of affairs which has been (in consequence of the treaty and its non-ratification) created in the islands cannot be endured much longer.<sup>5</sup>

If the treaty failed, Raasloff would resign, and this might bring down the Danish Cabinet. He was quite frank about his sense of personal responsibility for the whole matter:

... , as I have advocated the transaction at a time when the Danish Government were but little inclined to enter into the negotiation, or to consider the proposition made by the U.S. Government, and as I have on all occasions unhesitatingly vouched for the good faith of your Government and people, the failure of the treaty would of course render my

remaining in the Government quite impossible, and probably break up the whole cabinet.<sup>6</sup>

Raasloff remained optimistic that the treaty would eventually succeed, though he shared Fox's views regarding the factors working against it. He found it extremely important that action should be taken by the December session of Congress, and he saw a chance of ratification being secured soon after March 4, 1869, when the Senate would remain in session in order to give its consent to President Grant's new nominations.<sup>7</sup>

On November 1, Yeaman wrote a private, unofficial letter to Seward asking his approval of the plan to send Raasloff to Washington. In the U.S. Minister's mind there was no doubt that Raasloff would be the right man for such a task:

... It has often appeared to me that owing to the General's intimate acquaintance and friendship with many members of both Houses, his perfect knowledge of our language and manners, and his unusual knowledge of American politics, he would, by his presence in Washington, materially assist the present or the incoming administration in securing a favorable consideration of the treaty. I am convinced that personal contact and conversation with one situated just as he is in relation to this matter would have a decided and beneficial influence.<sup>8</sup>

Yeaman explained to Seward that Raasloff had been willing to go all along if it would serve a useful purpose, but Count Frijs had been opposed, fearing that Raasloff's appearance in Washington would be interpreted as a sign of Danish doubt and anxiety about American ratification. But Count Fris had changed his

mind, and now consented to the plan, if Seward would not be opposed to it.<sup>9</sup> On November 17, on learning of the contents of this letter, Seward informed Yeaman by cable that he did not object to Raasloff's going.<sup>10</sup>

On the same day, November 17, Raasloff had made up his mind to go to Washington to promote the treaty. He would obtain leave of absence for health reasons, and sail from Liverpool on December 5.<sup>11</sup>

On November 26 Count Frijs informed Bille that General Raasloff had been authorized by the King to spend a leave of absence of some months' duration in order to work towards the execution of the treaty of October 24, 1867. Raasloff's stay would be of an unofficial nature as he would be travelling as a private citizen with no credentials or authority. Bille's status as the representative of the Danish Government would not be affected, but he was instructed to support Raasloff's efforts in any way possible.<sup>12</sup>

While his Minister of War was en route to Washington to begin his work there, Count Frijs decided to attempt to win Russian diplomatic support for Raasloff's efforts. On December 16, Carl R. E. Vind, Danish Minister to St. Petersburg, was instructed to try to persuade the Russian Cabinet to support the St. Thomas treaty via the Russian Chargé d'affaires in Washington. However, Vind did not succeed in his effort to persuade Prince Gorchakoff, Chancellor of the

Russian Foreign Office. Gorchakoff opposed any attempts by the Russian Chargé d'affaires to support the treaty. He believed that intervention by a third party in a financial matter of this kind could only have negative results. Furthermore, he regarded the Johnson Administration as already being favorably disposed towards the question. When Vind suggested that the wishes of the Russian Cabinet would probably be listened to in Washington because of the extremely friendly relations between Russia and the United States, Gorchakov admitted "that this might be the case, but only to a certain extent and when it agreed with the Americans' interests, e.g. when it was a question of playing a trick on France and England".<sup>13</sup>

Before informing Count Frijs of the poverty of the outcome of his interview with Gorchakoff, in a despatch of January 1, 1869, Vind also discussed the matter with Baron Edouard de Stoeckl, former Russian Minister in Washington. Stoeckl considered Raasloff highly qualified for the task he had undertaken but it would be "an absolute miracle" if he succeeded. Congress would hardly ratify the treaty under the Johnson Administration, and it did not bode well, for the next Administration, that General Grant had been a vehement opponent of the Alaska treaty.<sup>14</sup>

On December 17, Raasloff was able to inform his friend Fox in Boston by cable from New York that he had

just arrived and would be staying at 181 G Street in Washington.<sup>15</sup> Two days later he arrived in the Capital, and in the days to follow before the start of the New Year he had established contacts with such highly-placed and influential people as W. H. Seward, F. W. Seward, Charles Sumner and Admiral Porter, all of whom were important to his work.<sup>16</sup>

After a couple of weeks in Washington, Raasloff realized it would be "up-hill work" and that he had undertaken a most difficult task.<sup>17</sup> In a despatch of January 6 to Count Frijs, Bille communicated Raasloff's along with his own analysis of the state of affairs with regard to the treaty. After the signing of the additional article of October 15, 1868, the prospects of securing ratification had in some respects become a little brighter because the Alaska question and the impeachment trial against President Johnson no longer posed any problems. Some progress had also been made in that leading politicians had become willing to consider the arguments seriously, and there were some signs of a less prejudicial treatment in the press. However, a number of serious problems, which had existed earlier, continued to impinge upon the situation. Thus, the leading Republican politicians were either directly against American territorial expansion in the West Indies, or at least against such expansion at the time. The general consensus that

budgetary restraint was necessary, and the very limited influence of the Johnson Administration before Grant's inauguration, continued to be negative factors.<sup>18</sup> In addition, there was the hostile attitude to Seward in Congress, and the extremely poor relations between Seward and Sumner. In 1880, in a report to Otto Rosenoern-Lehn, Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Raasloff wrote that "between Secretary of State Seward and Senator Sumner, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign relations - i.e. the two main factors when it was a question of their consideration - relations were so tense that they avoided having any personal contact as much as possible".<sup>19</sup>

However, Bille found an element of hope in the fact that the ratification had lain dormant during the previous year. Seward, Sumner, and individual Senators had not wanted to put it on the agenda, and Bille had not attempted to apply any pressure because the political state of affairs obtaining had excluded any chance of success. He was also convinced that during the previous session of Congress, Seward had thought that active pressure would have weakened the case rather than strengthened it. It might work in favor of the treaty that there was now little familiarity with its real history and facts. Maybe the public would be more receptive to an argument that had not been criticized in the public debate, and it was a positive

factor that the leading politicians had not already committed themselves.<sup>20</sup>

When Bille wrote to Count Frijs on January 6, Raasloff had decided how to proceed. He would demand action by the Senate during the Congress currently in session, regardless of the result. Owing to the general opposition to territorial expansion among Republican leaders, he would not primarily base his argument on the material advantages of the treaty to the United States but on Denmark's having entered into the negotiations and having concluded and ratified the treaty in good faith, all along being upheld by the U.S. Government in the belief that there was no doubt about the execution of the treaty. It would thus be a dishonorable act on the part of the United States if the Senate refused to ratify. Bille was aware that this argument would be met by one claiming the constitutional right of the Senate to accept or reject any treaty. That right was more likely to be used in this case after the occurrences in connexion with the passage of the appropriation for the purchase of Alaska in the House of Representatives.<sup>21</sup>

After Raasloff's arrival, Bille was trying to influence other foreign diplomats to support the Danish case in their conversations with American politicians. He received a favorable response from the French Minister, who promised to express his view that he

hoped the treaty would be ratified "because it was a regular way for the United States to obtain what would always be an object of its policy".<sup>22</sup>

During his stay in Washington, Raasloff, in an extensive correspondence, communicated his analysis of the situation, his plans and activities, to his old friend and confidant Fox, in Boston. Because of the intimate nature of the Raasloff-Fox relationship, their correspondence, of which only Raasloff's letters are preserved, is a unique and generally reliable source regarding Raasloff's ideas and actions as well as of the responses his activities caused from American politicians. The letters also reveal that Fox acted as an aide and active participant. There can be no doubt of Raasloff's sincerity when he wrote the following in one of his letters to Fox:- "Pardon me for always coming back to you, but you are really the best and most active friend I have got, and I know you can do a great deal where your convictions are engaged as I believe they are here".<sup>23</sup>

Raasloff soon began seeing people and taking various steps to support his case. He was in early contact with W. H. Seward and F. W. Seward, and on January 8 he thought the Secretary of State would now become more active.<sup>24</sup> Before the New Year, Raasloff had a conversation with Admiral Porter, who supported the treaty and would probably "do something also to set

General Grant right". Raasloff later saw Admiral Farragut, who was also willing to speak for ratification. In Representative Samuel Hooper of Massachusetts, Raasloff found a strong ally in Congress. Of Hooper, Raasloff wrote that "he thinks well of the bargain and advocates it with energy". In January, Fox assisted Raasloff by using his influence to alleviate the effects of a damaging article in the Chicago Tribune and to prevent an attack on his person in the Boston Journal.<sup>25</sup>

In late December or early January, Raasloff made an arrangement with Sidney Andrews, the regular Washington correspondent of the Boston Daily Advertiser, to have the latter write a series of articles to his paper in defense of the St. Thomas treaty.<sup>26</sup> In the following weeks a series of such articles signed Dixon appeared in the Boston Daily Advertiser. Andrews presented an outline history of the treaty which contained so many details from the negotiations that there cannot be the slightest doubt that Raasloff had briefed him carefully and provided him with the essential documents. In the three articles which appeared in January, Denmark was shown to be suffering great injustice, since she had only entered into the negotiations with the greatest reluctance whereas Seward had pushed the matter

vigorously. Denmark had ratified in good faith, without receiving a word of warning from either the Secretary of State or the members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Furthermore, the U.S. Government had been crucially involved in securing a favorable vote in the islands, and had followed a less than fair course in the negotiations over St. Croix.<sup>27</sup> The following characteristic paragraphs illustrate how closely Andrews followed Raasloff's arguments:

... The noticeable thing in it all is that the Danish government never wanted to sell, and that Mr. Seward never relaxed his purpose to buy. If we did a good thing in getting the treaty, we must thank Mr. Seward heartily, for nothing but his persistence through a period of more than two and a half years overcame the Danish objections to parting with the islands.

Do you say that the treaty is a bad thing, and ought to be rejected by the Senate? It is to be remarked that Denmark has been persuaded to ratify it; that the people of the islands have been persuaded to vote for us: - if we reject the treaty, how will it be with Denmark? Will she and the nations of Europe have a right to say our national honor has been violated? This is the question which Mr. Sumner's committee is pondering.<sup>28</sup>

At the very center of Raasloff's activities were his efforts to persuade the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and particularly Charles Sumner, its Chairman, to report favorably on the treaty. Raasloff and Sumner seem to have been on friendly terms at least as far back as 1861.<sup>29</sup> When he arrived in Washington in December of 1868, Raasloff carried a letter to Sumner from Anson Burlingame, their mutual friend, whom Raasloff had visited in London on his way to Liverpool.

The letter stressed the difficult position Raasloff had been placed in as a result of the delay in ratification of the treaty, and asked Sumner to aid Raasloff, if compatible with the interests of State.<sup>30</sup> Raasloff's many letters to Sumner in the following weeks show that they met and exchanged ideas on several occasions, and it is particularly noteworthy that Sumner went to considerable lengths for his old acquaintance.<sup>31</sup>

In January 1868 Seward, at Sumner's request, had submitted to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations a copy of the correspondence on the St. Thomas negotiations covering the period from July 17, 1866 to January 13, 1868. The material was later printed.<sup>32</sup> Soon after his arrival, Raasloff persuaded Sumner to let him write a memorandum for the use of the Committee, covering the negotiations prior to the period mentioned above. This memorandum was submitted to Sumner on January 14, with Seward's approval, for the use of the Senate, and was consequently printed. In the memorandum, Raasloff summarized the content of the discussions between Seward and himself about the proposed cession. Though the document was neutral in character, it nevertheless left the distinct impression that Denmark had only entered into the negotiations reluctantly, though the Frijs Cabinet was more favorably disposed than its predecessor.<sup>33</sup> On January 20 Seward, again at Sumner's request, submitted another

series of documents covering the period from January 29 to March 23, 1868, for the confidential use of the Senate.<sup>34</sup> Thus, through Sumner's cooperation, Raasloff succeeded in providing the Committee with a broader factual basis for its considerations, which he felt confident would strengthen his case.

In a conversation with Raasloff on the night of January 11, Sumner expressed a pessimistic view about ratification. Our sources do not allow us to conclude whether he mainly spoke about the prospects of the treaty in general or was merely expressing his own feelings. However, the wording of the following paragraph from Raasloff's letter to him the next day leaves no doubt that he neither expressed personal support nor courted general optimism:

My dear Mr. Sumner!  
 When you told me last night that you were sorry for me, that I was in a tight place et cet., your words caused me a painful surprise, because I had until then felt convinced, that having the whole case fairly before you, you could not be in any doubt about it, and although I am fully prepared for the worst, that painful impression kept me awake a good portion of the night.<sup>35</sup>

After describing the political consequences for himself and the Danish Cabinet, Raasloff wrote an intense plea for action:-

...; but what I ask and solicit, if necessary, is that you will not keep my poor country - which has suffered humiliation enough already - in the antechambers of Congress any longer. - Let us have a decision, - good or bad -, but a decision which will put an end to the present humiliating state of suspense and uncertainty.<sup>36</sup>

On the following day, January 12, the Committee began its informal consideration of the treaty.

Raasloff and Bille learnt that there was a majority opposing it, but in their judgment the main motives were enmity towards Seward and fundamental opposition to expansion, though a sense of moral obligation did also seem to be present.<sup>37</sup>

In a letter to Sumner of January 17, Raasloff elaborated on his arguments, from one of the previous discussions, about the right to refuse ratification. Drawing on the work of such scholars of international law as G. F. von Martens and Henry Wheaton, Raasloff recognized that there were two "sovereigns" in the United States, i.e. the President and the Senate, who could refuse ratification, and also that the Senate could probably exercise that right more freely than the President. However, the right to refuse ratification was a limited one:-

... It is quite clear to me, however, that in the opinion of the best authorities, none of those two sovereigns can reject a treaty "by alleging mere reasons of convenience" (Martens) but that it always requires strong and solid reasons to justify a refusal of ratification. This stands to reason when we remember that an international treaty is in itself a solemn and important act and that there is a wide difference "between the power given by sovereigns to their ministers to negotiate treaties respecting vast and complicated international concerns, and that given by an individual to his agent and attorney to contact with another in his name, respecting mere private affairs". Besides, it ought not to be overlooked that, in the case before us, the one party acting in good faith regardless of

consequences, has carried its own part of the agreement into effect.<sup>38</sup>

As an object lesson in international law, succeeding in supplementing the notion of the honor of the United States being at stake, Raasloff shifted the focus of the argument onto the course of Danish-American relations. He described how Denmark had exhibited an extraordinary degree of goodwill towards the United States by signing the Convention of 1830 and by adopting a policy of sympathetic neutrality during the Civil War. Raasloff's point was quite clear: the United States now had a chance to return the favor.<sup>39</sup>

Although Raasloff placed a high priority on the moral issue, he had by then realized that there was a need for supplying the Committee with additional information about the military and commercial value of St. Thomas. His plan was to obtain permission to let well-informed and interested persons like Fox, and Admirals Porter and Farragut, testify on the subject before the Committee. He was also quite willing to meet the Committee himself. He therefore requested this favor of Sumner on January 17. After considering this request, the Committee agreed to meet with Raasloff but refused to let anyone else appear.<sup>40</sup>

Raasloff's appearance before the Committee was scheduled to take place on January 26 and 28. Though he knew of only one member, Senator James Harlan, who

had declared himself for the treaty,<sup>41</sup> he thought he might still succeed. He wrote to Fox: "I am rather hopeful as to the probable action of the Senate Committee - but shall neglect nothing calculated to convince them when we meet Tuesday next".<sup>42</sup>

Though no full account of Raasloff's interviews with the Committee is available, the sources do have some information about the event. Raasloff felt that the Committee was well-disposed towards him personally, but overtly hostile to Seward. Raasloff's main argument was that Denmark had committed herself in good faith, being encouraged to do so by Seward. Afterwards Bille thought that this argument had by then been introduced and exploited most effectively. Raasloff was later informed that this point had found favor with the Committee, but he was certain he had not succeeded in convincing the members on the other points discussed.<sup>43</sup>

During the interview on January 28, Senator Fessenden asked Raasloff the following question:-

"Would, in your opinion, the United States have a right to complain if your Rigsdag had refused their consent to the ratification of the St. Thomas treaty?".

Raasloff, to whom this must have been a challenging question, replied that in such a situation the Danish Cabinet would have dissolved the Rigsdag and ordered a new General Election to the Rigsdag. If the newly

elected body still refused ratification, the Cabinet would resign. Even after this kind of satisfaction, Raasloff believed the U.S. Government would have a right "to complain of us for having trifled with you in having neglected to secure beforehand the ratification of a solemn treaty entered into with you, and that your right to complain would of course have been still greater if the treaty had been made at our instigation".<sup>44</sup>

In his letter to Sumner of February 8, Raasloff further elaborated on his affirmative reply to Fessenden's question. Having researched the problem, he had found no instance of a European state ever having refused to ratify a treaty with the United States. But his study of the French Imbrolio and of the ratification of the treaty of 1819 between the United States and Spain had left no doubt in his mind "as to the feelings and temper with which a refusal on the part of a European Government to ratify a treaty with the United States, would be considered in this country". Furthermore, Raasloff found an argument in the circumstances surrounding the ratification of the Alaska Treaty. One of the arguments for the ratification of that treaty had been the necessary consideration of Russian-American friendship, which actually amounted to an "admission that Russia would have a right - and was expected - to complain, if the

Alaska treaty had not been ratified by the United States".<sup>45</sup>

By February 5 it had become evident to Bille and Raasloff that the Committee intended to reject the treaty, though that intention had not yet materialized as a political decision. According to his original plan, Raasloff was to have insisted on action by the Committee, but at this crucial point he adopted another course of action. He now preferred to let the matter pass over to the Grant Administration after March 4.<sup>46</sup> It is quite possible that his original strong request for action regardless of the outcome had to a great extent been tactically motivated, but in deciding on another course of action at this point, he may also have been influenced by information that his intervention had actually delayed a plan to reject the treaty just after the Christmas recess, which had been agreed upon by all members of the Committee.<sup>47</sup> In one of his interviews with the Committee, Raasloff had promised to write a new memorandum summarizing the negotiations of the treaty. Now, he intentionally delayed his work on this, believing that the Committee would not take any undesirable action without it.<sup>47</sup>

In his despatch to Count Frijs on February 5, Bille summed up the new situation:

It will not escape Your Excellency's attention that the position thus seems lost which consisted in demanding the matter acted on and our argument,

whose weight was recognized, refuted by contrary argument. We shall now retire to the position which the Additional Article of October 15, last year, allows us to take, awaiting the action of the Senate and the House of Representatives after March 4.

I fear to express myself too confidently about the expectations that may be attached hereto. However, there is a negative consolation in the fact that nobody is able to guess accurately what the situation will be like after the change of President.<sup>48</sup>

By February 15, Raasloff had planned and begun to carry out his major effort to influence public opinion. With the Marquis de Chambrun, a Washington lawyer who served as his counsel, he employed James Parton as an intermediary.<sup>49</sup> The famous biographer was to be paid \$1,000 for preparing a carefully worded pamphlet on the negotiations and the arguments for ratification.<sup>50</sup> On two occasions Raasloff discussed the project with Parton in Washington and arranged for the necessary documents to be sent to him in New York where he did his writing. Parton soon became enthusiastic about the cause, and Raasloff seems to have been fully satisfied with the finished product. The work came back from the printer's after March 20, and arrangements were made to have copies distributed to prominent politicians.<sup>51</sup> During the same period Raasloff also had Sidney Andrews' articles printed in pamphlet form, the practical arrangements being made by General Christen Thomsen Christensen of New York, a Dane who had served in the Civil War.

The major proportion of Parton's pamphlet consisted of an account of the negotiations after 1865. Not surprisingly, the narrative led to conclusions characteristic of Raasloff's argumentation: The United States had taken the initiative whereas Denmark had only reluctantly entered into the negotiations, which were disapproved of by England and France. In signing the treaty, Denmark accepted a price lower than she had initially considered just. Danish ratification of the treaty, which was a final act of severing her ties to the islands, had been carried out in the firm belief that American public opinion was for the purchase and that there could be no doubt about ratification by the Senate.<sup>52</sup>

In the last part of the pamphlet, Parton discussed the following subjects:- the effect of rejection on Denmark; the progressive tradition of Danish cultural, social and political life; the Senate's right to reject the treaty; precedents in the history of American diplomacy, and the value of the islands.<sup>53</sup> He concluded the discussion with five arguments for the ratification and execution of the treaty:-

... It has been shown, I think-

1. That we cannot repudiate Mr. Seward's bargain without inflicting a very great and irreparable injury upon a respectable nation, our good friend and ally.

2. That, if, after paying for Alaska, we refuse to pay for these Islands, we stand dishonored before mankind, as having one rule for the strong and another for the weak.

3. That, however erroneous may be the system which permits the Executive to commit the country to purchases of land, we have no right to hold Denmark responsible for that system, nor to reform it at her expense.

4. That, when a foreign government has so much as delayed the ratification and execution of a properly concluded treaty with the United States, we have felt ourselves to be grossly wronged, and were willing to seek redress by violence.

5. That these Islands, in the opinion of professional men, have a great and peculiar value, which renders their acquisition highly desirable.<sup>54</sup>

As early as the second week of January, Raasloff broached the idea of having Fox write an authoritative opinion on the value of St. Thomas in the form of a letter to either Sumner or Admiral Farragut, and then have it published. In accepting the idea, Fox suggested the letter should be addressed to Sumner, and Raasloff concurred.<sup>55</sup> Although Fox grew very pessimistic about the whole matter after Raasloff's meetings with the Senate Committee,<sup>56</sup> he did write to Sumner on January 31 to get his views on the idea. The tone of the letter is quite defeatist, Fox telling Sumner that he was only taking this step as a favor to Raasloff:

... I therefore venture to ask you if it comes within the scope of the investigation made by your Committee to send me any documents which are published by the Senate and invite my reply touching the advantages of this acquisition. This course seems to me to be the only one which enables me to satisfy my friend General Raasloff that I have attempted to aid him in the most unpleasant position in which Mr. Seward's diplomacy has placed him. I

can see that there is no possibility of success for him and that the rejection is fatal to his future in his own country. This only imposes upon me a duty<sup>57</sup> to aid him though my motives may be impugned.

It is hardly surprising that Raasloff expressed his disapproval of the pessimistic tone of the letter to Fox after having read it at a meeting with Sumner on February 14. The same day, Sumner told Raasloff that he would request a letter from Fox stating the latter's opinion as to the value of St. Thomas to the United States. Sumner would lay the letter before the Committee, not as a member of the Committee but as a Senator, because the Committee had decided not to make any inquiries.<sup>58</sup> After twice being reminded of this promise by Raasloff, Sumner asked Fox for his written opinion in a letter of February 19. Sumner later consented to having it published as an appendix to Parton's pamphlet.<sup>59</sup>

Since he regarded Fox's letter as an important element in his plan to influence the Committee and public opinion, Raasloff went over the manuscript carefully and suggested improvements. Comparing his letters to Fox with the final published letter leaves no doubt that he left a strong mark on it.<sup>60</sup> Having described the "eminent geographical, strategic and commercial position" of St. Thomas, the letter stressed the advantage to the United States of having St. Thomas as a coaling station. The naval experience of the

Civil War had shown that "in future wars steam power only can be used successfully against an enemy's commerce" and that "the pursuit of hostile steamers cannot be maintained without having coaling stations where neutral restrictions do not exist". St. Thomas would thus be an extremely important asset to the United States in maintaining her commerce and her Atlantic and Pacific communications.<sup>61</sup>

In the weeks following his unsuccessful encounter with the Committee, Raasloff continued to cultivate his relationship with Sumner, inviting him to dinner meetings and asking new favors of him. One such favor was Sumner's asking Fox for an opinion on the value of the islands. Another was Sumner's request for more documents from the State Department to be printed for the use of the Committee. These documents, from the U.S. diplomatic correspondence, November 8, 1867 - January 31, 1868, were subsequently printed, with a few additional documents from the Danish Legation.<sup>62</sup>

Sumner also assisted in distributing Parton's pamphlet to the Committee, and on March 24 he received Raasloff's new memorandum on the St. Thomas question.<sup>63</sup> Thus Sumner continued to go to considerable lengths to satisfy Raasloff. The latter was worried that he might be exerting too much pressure, when he wrote the following to Sumner on February 11: "I will give myself the pleasure of calling upon you in the course of the

evening, but you need not feel uneasy on that account, I shall try hard to be amiable and shall not mention the name of the unfortunate Saints, if you do not wish me to".<sup>64</sup>

On the basis of the Raasloff-Fox correspondence and a few other sources, it must be concluded that Raasloff became convinced that Sumner had modified his position during this period. On February 19 Raasloff wrote the following to Fox:-

I am satisfied that M. Sumner's views are not what you suppose them to be - he is not opposed to St. Thomas - he has only been opposed to action now, and will do what the next adm. desires. He was also opposed to Alaska - but changed position & finally published the speech you know, and in fact advocated the matter strongly. I have every reason to believe, that he will follow the same course in regard to St. Thos. - after 4th of March. I have even been told that he is positively committed for St. Thomas, but my source although very good generally, may not be entirely reliable.<sup>65</sup>

During the following week Raasloff became definitely convinced that Sumner had adopted a new stance. On February 24 he informed Fox that he had "every reason to believe that M. Sumner is in favor of ratifying the St. Thomas convention",<sup>66</sup> and two days later a similar letter contained an even more positive statement:-

You know our excellent friend Sumner is weak and timid and wants propping up. When he meets a strong conviction he yields to it. At this hour I feel no hesitation in asserting positively, that he is in favor of ratifying the treaty - I know it - but even if I did not, the mere fact of his having asked you for an expression shows his favorable disposition. - Pray prop him up! - We are daily gaining ground - everybody here feels it and tells me.<sup>67</sup>

This belief in a change in Sumner's views can also be read in two despatches from Bille to Count Frijs in April 1869, though Bille did not express himself with quite as much certainty as Raasloff had done.<sup>68</sup>

Raasloff's letters to Fox show that some of the information about Sumner's position was provided by a third party whose identity is not revealed. It is however interesting that Raasloff's report in 1880 to the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, included the following statement: "When this result was evident and when Sumner had even tacitly admitted to me that he would not be able to report against the St. Thomas convention, I thought I dared hope for a final good outcome of the matter during General Grant's administration".<sup>69</sup> It is highly significant that Raasloff and Bille thought the Chairman had been moved to a point where he would no longer oppose ratification but would, rather, favor it. There can be no doubt that this had a considerable impact on the Danish Government's continued hope and efforts in the ensuing months. But whatever Sumner may have expressed, explicitly or implicitly, the sources only allow us to conclude that he at no time ever promised to support the treaty actively.

The plan to allow the issue of ratification to pass over to the Grant Administration meant that

Grant's position became of vital interest to Raasloff and Bille. Right back in January, Raasloff believed himself to be "credibly" informed that the President-elect was not opposed to ratification.<sup>70</sup> This belief was strengthened in the ensuing weeks, and Raasloff continued to be optimistic about early and positive action by the new Cabinet, until his meeting with Hamilton Fish, the new Secretary of State.<sup>71</sup> On March 16, Bille also reported to Count Frijs on Grant's supposedly positive attitude:-

PS. This moment I am informed by a good source of a confidential statement by General Grant which gives good reason to believe that he has formed the view that the treaty ought to be ratified and executed. I need not add anything to call attention<sup>72</sup> to the importance I attach to this circumstance.

The sources of this information about Grant's views are unknown to us today, but Raasloff and Bille's subsequent interviews with Fish were to prove it unreliable.

When President Grant's Cabinet was formed, Raasloff needed to solicit its support. There are no signs that anything significant occurred in the matter during Elihu B. Washburne's short period as Secretary of State.<sup>73</sup> Raasloff and Bille learnt about the new Cabinet's position in their interviews with Hamilton Fish in the latter part of March. In some of the literature on the subject there are references to an interview between Raasloff and President Grant, but

there is no credible evidence that this ever occurred.<sup>74</sup>

On March 17, Raasloff sent two letters to Fish asking for an opportunity to discuss the St. Thomas treaty with him. Raasloff wrote that he was "a mere traveller for health, though a member of the Danish cabinet", but he still solicited the favor of being allowed to explain "the position in which Denmark is placed in consequence of the Convention of October 24th for the cession of St. Thomas and St. John to the United States".<sup>75</sup>

In an interview with Fish on the following day, Bille gave a summary of the history of the case and expressed the hope that the new Cabinet would acknowledge the expressed obligation of the previous Administration to support ratification. He asked to be informed of the position of the new Administration, but Fish was as yet unwilling to make any statement.<sup>76</sup> Raasloff had an interview with Fish on March 23. He asked that the St. Thomas treaty be "advocated by the President as an Administration measure". Fish gave him no encouragement, but did promise to consult the President on the matter.<sup>77</sup> On the same day Bille, in a despatch to Count Frijs, expressed the belief that the new Cabinet was on the whole well-disposed and that it was in their power to play a crucial role in securing ratification by the Senate.<sup>78</sup>

Also on March 23, Raasloff's request was discussed at a Cabinet meeting. According to Fish's Diary, the President was frank about his negative attitude:

"--Presd. seemed wholly averse = did not like these purchases --".<sup>79</sup>

Voices more favorable to the treaty were however heard. John A. Rawlins, Secretary of War, for example, tended to favor the treaty, and Jacob D. Cox, Secretary of the Interior, mentioned the difficult situation in which the treaty had placed Denmark. The comments of the Attorney General, Ebenezer R. Hoar, were also favorable to Denmark, as he "referred to the popular vote, as embarrassing the question & as having been insisted upon by this government". Needless to say, Fish immediately corrected Hoar on the factual error of this statement. Fish himself found only one argument in favor of the treaty. The islands had voted to give up their allegiance to Denmark and, being a poor country, Denmark might be induced to cede the islands to a power whose possession would not be in the interest of the United States. In such a situation it would be difficult for the United States to remonstrate. Grant was, however, not moved to follow the Danish request by the relatively positive opinions thus expressed by various members. According to Fish's Diary, "the President decided not to urge the

ratification, but leave it to the Senate, to whom the Treaty had been regularly submitted, & let them exercise their power, without interference from the Administration".<sup>80</sup>

In an interview on the following day, Fish informed Raasloff that the President "was not in favor of the principle of the Treaty" and "would not interfere to induce its ratification". He also stated that the United States would probably not ask for an extension of the time limit for ratification, and he would not promise to agree to such an extension if requested by the Danish Government. Raasloff said he wanted no action to be taken on the Treaty at the time without the active support of the Grant Administration, as it would certainly mean rejection. The two men agreed that Raasloff was to convey his wish to Sumner. A few days later Fish also communicated it to the Chairman.<sup>81</sup>

When Bille called on him next day (March 25), Fish said essentially the same thing that he had told Raasloff. He did however accept Bille's formulation of the situation as "a continuation of status quo, in which the treaty was submitted to the Senate with the recommendation of the Executive to obtain the consent of the Senate to ratification". This was as far as the Secretary would go, since he was unwilling to assure Bille that the Administration would take any new

initiatives to further the matter. Later that day, Bille wrote a despatch to Count Frijs in which he attempted to explain why his hopes for a positive commitment by the new Administration had not materialized. The Danish Minister thought that from the beginning, Grant had shared the negative views of the opposition towards territorial expansion and Seward's methods. However, he, as well as the members of his Cabinet, seemed to have been influenced by the argument that the honor of the United States was involved. Bille thought that despite this the Administration had probably not committed itself, owing to its conflict with Congress over the tenure-of-office issue. Having challenged the Senate on one point, Grant had probably found it unwise to do so on another.<sup>82</sup> It would have been politically unwise - and probably almost impossible - for Grant to support the treaty, because he was the central figure for Johnson's opponents. Furthermore he was already being criticized for unwise Cabinet appointments.

Raasloff's mission concluded on April 3, when he departed from New York aboard the "Cuba".<sup>83</sup>

In December he had gone to Washington to persuade the Senate Committee to take quick and favorable action on the St. Thomas treaty. When faced with the prospect of a negative report by the Committee, he had retreated to the position of delaying until after March 4 and

then requesting the Grant Administration to commit itself to prompt, positive action. With Seward out of the picture, Raasloff had hoped that this might tip the balance. However, this effort had also failed, and he had taken the humiliating step of once more requesting that no action be taken, as such action would obviously result in rejection of the treaty by the Committee and the Senate.

The question naturally arises why the Danish Government did not abandon the matter in consequence of these developments.

Several reasons are possible.

Failure would have serious consequences for the Frijs Cabinet and could easily have been followed by unrest in the Danish West Indies. However, these problems would scarcely be lessened by mere delay. What really decided the Danish course of action was that Raasloff and Bille continued to think the treaty might still be ratified by the Senate. Their hopes were based on their perception of Sumner's change of mind and of the dominant attitude of Grant's Cabinet, together with their belief in the contribution of the impact that Parton's pamphlet had had, and was still having, on American public opinion.<sup>84</sup>

Some time after his return to Copenhagen, Raasloff used his address to a public banquet held on May 13, on the occasion of the founding of the Great

Northern Telegraph Company, to inform the public of his impressions of his recent visit to the American capital. The question of ratification was of such a nature that he would resign if it were to fail. Now, however, he felt confident that positive action would be taken after the disappearance of the conflict between the Johnson Administration and Congress:

Nowhere in the United States did I find a lack of friendship for Denmark and many were the expressions of sincere regret at the delay in the ratification of the treaty that I received from calm and dispassionate people. It must, however, not be forgotten that the treaty has not been rejected; its ratification has only been postponed, and that this is so is owing to the stand taken by some few statesmen, foremost among whom is my friend the Honorable Charles Sumner, one of the most prominent and experienced statesmen of the age, for many years the leader of the Senate in regard to foreign relations and a man who never loses sight of the regard and consideration due from one friendly power to another. Besides, a decided change for the better has of late taken place in the condition of public affairs in the United States. The passions so long prevailing are now gradually subsiding, and the public have become acquainted with the facts connected with the negotiations preceding the treaty, the chief hindrance for the ratification - which all along has consisted of the total ignorance of the public as to the facts - may now be looked upon as being satisfactorily removed.<sup>85</sup>

There may be some truth in the remarks made at a much later date by the Marquis de Chambrun to E. L. Pierce that Raasloff, in commenting positively on Sumner's role, wanted to place the latter "in the position where he should be obliged to act".<sup>86</sup> The view expressed by Raasloff was probably very close to

his real conviction although - possibly intentionally - expressed in over-optimistic terms.

A few days later Raasloff felt called upon to explain to Sumner what he had said about the latter's role:

... I felt very much tempted to say more about you than I did, but I know you shrink from ovations and public compliment all of which however you cannot escape. I did not say as the telegraph (I am told) has it that you were in favor of ratifying the St. Thomas treaty - but I said you had done more than anybody else to save the treaty from an untimely death.<sup>87</sup>

The content of this communication seems to support the interpretation that Sumner had indeed given Raasloff the impression that he would not work against the treaty, but also that Raasloff expected that Sumner would not identify with it in any positive way - at least, not publicly.

Back on April 24, Dagbladet had commented at length on the situation regarding the treaty after Raasloff's visit to America: "It appears to us to be high time the American people knew what public opinion in Denmark has to say on the subject".<sup>88</sup>

The article summarizes the negotiation of the treaty and the ensuing events, emphasizing the reluctance of the Danish Government to cede the islands; the Danish fulfilment of the obligations as to ratification; the non-action by the U.S. Senate, and Seward's and Fish's lack of effort on behalf of the

treaty. While recognizing the intervention of difficult domestic issues into the question in the United States, it expressed the view that any American administration represents the Nation in foreign affairs, and that there must be continuity from one administration to the next. It would have been "formally warranted, even though it had not been in accordance with international courtesy" if the Senate had rejected the treaty before the expiration of the first period stipulated for its ratification. But it was "an insult to which no true Danish subject could be insensible" that the treaty was simply not acted on at all. It is evident that the author of the article was not aware of the fact that, after Raasloff's encounter with the political realities of the case in Washington, it was the Danish Government that had requested non-action. The Danish general public and the Frijs Cabinet undoubtedly shared the view expressed in the article: that the only honorable course of action for the United States was to rectify the injustice being done to a small, friendly nation:

Was there ever an international question of which it could be affirmed that one of the parties was bound by honor, that sentence is applicable to the United States with respect to their position to Denmark in the case of the West Indian Islands. We will not - nor can not - relinquish our expectations that this debt of honor will be paid.

As matters now stand we may truly affirm it is not of money that there is now a question; and could we, with all the experience we have acquired, go back to the summer of 1867, no temptation, no golden

offers could lure us more to enter on such a convention. But unfortunately there it is and has led to the vote of the Danish subjects in the West Indian Islands and to an act of Rigsdag in Copenhagen rendering a return to the previous state of things almost impracticable. And with all this the majesty of the crown, the dignity of the country and the position of the ministry are compromised. It is not the imprudence of Denmark but the want of regard on the part of the United States to Denmark's right that has brought things to this pass.

We expect that the consciousness of this will from the few spread to the many among the people of the United States and that then there will be conceded to Denmark that satisfaction which it is in the power of the United States to give. We expect that the Senate when it next assembles, will give the consent that it has hitherto withheld.<sup>89</sup>

Raasloff's mission to Washington in the winter of 1868-69 is a special and remarkable chapter in the history of the St. Thomas treaty. The mission failed fundamentally because Seward's and Johnson's expansionist policy had no possibility of winning support in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, despite Raasloff's intense labor and good connections. In addition, Fish and Grant turned out to be far from ready to sponsor Seward's unpopular treaty, though there was some support for the measure in the new Cabinet.

---

<sup>1</sup>Raasloff to Fox, September 14, 1868, private and confidential, G.V. Fox Papers

<sup>2</sup>Raasloff to Fox, November 17, 1868, private and confidential, ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Raasloff to Fox, May 24, 1868, ibid., Yeaman to Seward, November 1, 1868, NA M41 R12

- <sup>4</sup> Raasloff to Fox, September 14, 1868, private and confidential, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Yeaman to Seward, November 1, 1868, private and unofficial, NA M41 R12
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Seward to Yeaman, November 17 and 28, 1868, private, NA M77 R50
- <sup>11</sup> Raasloff to Fox, November 17, private and confidential, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>12</sup> Frijs to Bille, November 26, 1868, MS, UM
- <sup>13</sup> Vind to Frijs, January 2, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Raasloff to Fox, December 17, 1868, telegram, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>16</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 3 & 6, 1869, ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Bille to Frijs, January 6, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>19</sup> Raasloff to Rosenoern-Lehn, September 29, 1880, MS, UM; for evidence of the poor relationship between Seward and Sumner, cf. Raasloff to F. W. Seward, January 13, 1869, private, W.H. Seward Papers
- <sup>20</sup> Bille to Frijs, January 6, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>21</sup> Bille to Frijs, January 6, 1869, MS, UM; Raasloff to Fox, January 3 & 6, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>22</sup> Bille to Frijs, January 6, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>23</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 15, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>24</sup> Raasloff to F. W. Seward, December 19, 1868 and January 3, 5 & 13, W.H. Seward Papers; Raasloff to Fox, January 8, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers

<sup>25</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 3, 12 & 21, 1869,  
ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Raasloff's comments to Fox about the Dixon letters leave no doubt that such an arrangement was made, cf. Raasloff to Fox, February 14 & 16, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers

<sup>27</sup> The Boston Daily Advertiser 11, 13 & 18 January 1869

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 11 January 1869

<sup>29</sup> Raasloff to Sumner, October 24, 1869, C. Sumner Papers

<sup>30</sup> Raasloff to Sumner, December 27, 1868;  
Burlingame to Sumner, December 4, 1868, ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. C. Sumner Papers

<sup>32</sup> Senate Document No. 231, vol VIII, 160-221

<sup>33</sup> Bille to Frijs, January 6 & 14, 1869, MS, UM;  
Raasloff to F. W. Seward, January 5 & 13, 1869, W.H. Seward Papers; Senate, 40th Congress, 3d Session, Executive, Confidential, Papers Relative to the Negotiations With Denmark For the Purchase of St. Thomas and St. John. January 19, 1869. - Submitted by Mr. Sumner ... to be printed in confidence for the use of the Senate

<sup>34</sup> Senate, 40th Congress, 3d Session, Executive, Confidential, Additional Papers relating to the Negotiations With Denmark For the Purchase of St. Thomas and St. John. January 20. - Submitted by Mr. Sumner ... and ordered to be printed in confidence for the use of the Senate

<sup>35</sup> Raasloff to Sumner, January 12, 1869, C. Sumner Papers

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 12 & 14, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers; Bille to Frijs, January 14, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>38</sup> Raasloff to Sumner, January 17, 1869, confidential, C. Sumner Papers

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.; Raasloff to Fox, January 14, 17 & 21, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers

- <sup>41</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 21, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>42</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 24, 1869, ibid.
- <sup>43</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 29 and February 5, 1869, ibid.; Bille to Frijs, January 28, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>44</sup> Raasloff to Sumner, February 8, 1869, confidential, C. Sumner Papers
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup> Raasloff to Fox, February 5, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers; Bille to Frijs, February 5, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>47</sup> Raasloff to Doolittle, February 5, 1869, J.D. Doolittle Papers; Raasloff to Fox, February 5, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>48</sup> Raasloff to Fox, February 5, 1869, ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> Telegram from Raasloff to the Marquis de Chambrun, February 15, 1869, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Raasloff to Fox, February 2, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>50</sup> Raasloff to Parton, February 19, 20, 21 & 24 and March 1, 4, 5, 14, 16, 17 & 24, 1869, J. Parton Papers; Raasloff to Fox, February 2, 19 & 24 and March 8, 12 & 21, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>51</sup> Raasloff to Fox, February 14 & 19 and March 2, 1869, ibid.; cf. S. Andrews, The St. Thomas Treaty. A Series of letters to the Boston Daily Advertiser (New York: Sutton, Bowne & Co., 1869)
- <sup>52</sup> James Parton, The Danish Islands: Are We Bound In Honor To Pay For Them? (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1869) 3-43
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 43-66
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., 66-67
- <sup>55</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 12 & 17, 1869, G. V. Fox Papers
- <sup>56</sup> Raasloff to Fox, January 29, 1869, ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> Fox to Sumner, January 31, 1869, C. Sumner Papers

<sup>58</sup>Raasloff to Fox, February 14, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers

<sup>59</sup>Sumner to Fox, February 19, 1869, *ibid.*; Raasloff to Fox, March 2 & 12, 1869, *ibid.*; Raasloff to Sumner, February 16 & 19, 1869, private, C. Sumner Papers

<sup>60</sup>Raasloff to Fox, February 24, 26 & 27 and March 4, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers

<sup>61</sup>J. Parton, The Danish Islands, 71-76

<sup>62</sup>Raasloff to Sumner, February 1, 16 & 19, 1869, C. Sumner Papers; 40th Congress, 3d Session, Executive, Confidential, Additional Papers Relating to the treaty between the United States and Denmark for the cession of the islands of St. Thomas and St. John. February 17, 1869 - Presented to Mr. Sumner and ordered to be printed in confidence for the use of the Senate

<sup>63</sup>Raasloff to Sumner, March 22 & 24, 1869, C. Sumner Papers

<sup>64</sup>Raasloff to Sumner, February 11, 1869, *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>Raasloff to Fox, February 19, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers

<sup>66</sup>Raasloff to Fox, February 24, 1869, *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup>Raasloff to Fox, February 26, 1869, *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup>Bille to Frijs, April 13 & 16, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>69</sup>Raasloff to Rosenoern-Lehn, September 29, 1880, *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup>Raasloff to Fox, January 8 & 21, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers

<sup>71</sup>Raasloff to Fox. February 14 and March 8 & 21, 1869, *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>Bille to Frijs, March 16, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>73</sup>This conclusion is based on an examination of the Elihu B. Washburne Papers

<sup>74</sup>Cf. C. C. Tansill, The Purchase of the Danish West Indies, 130, and Jules Hansen, Les Coullisses de la Diplomatie (Paris, 1880), 167

- <sup>75</sup>Two letters from Raasloff to Fish, March 17, 1869, H. Fish Papers
- <sup>76</sup>Bille to Frijs, March 23, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>77</sup>H. Fish's Diary, March 23, 1869, H. Fish Papers
- <sup>78</sup>Bille to Frijs, March 23, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>79</sup>H. Fish's Diary, March 23, 1869, H. Fish Papers
- <sup>80</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., March 24, 1869; Fish to Sumner, March 28, 1869, C. Sumner Papers
- <sup>82</sup>Bille to Frijs, March 25, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>83</sup>Doelner to Frijs, April 3, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>84</sup>Raasloff to Fox, May 26, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers; Bille to Frijs, March 25 and April 23, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>85</sup>The English translation of the speech, from which this extract is taken, was enclosed with Yeaman's despatch to Fish, May 19, 1869, NA M41 R12
- <sup>86</sup>Marquis de Chambrun to Pierce, January 20, 1888, E.L. Pierce Papers
- <sup>87</sup>Raasloff to Sumner, May 19, 1869, C. Sumner Papers
- <sup>88</sup>Dagbladet, 24 April 1869; the excerpts cited are taken from the article enclosed in Yeaman's despatch to Fish, May 12, 1869, NA M41 R12
- <sup>89</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## DANISH PERSISTENCE - AND FAILURE

In April 1869, Yeaman was able to report to Washington about a rumor in the Danish press that if the U.S. Senate in session did not ratify the St. Thomas Treaty, Count Frijs would resign. According to another rumor, Frijs intended to step down in any case but that the King had opposed it. Raasloff was even being mentioned as a possible head of a new Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> The factual basis for these rumors was that on February 24, on receiving a pessimistic report from Raasloff, Frijs told the King that he would dissolve his Cabinet on Raasloff's return. Two weeks later, the news from Bille that Grant and Fish would not support the Treaty actively strengthened Frijs' resolve to resign. Then a somewhat more optimistic report arrived from Raasloff, and on his return to Copenhagen from America on April 18, he described the prospects of a Treaty rather optimistically and decided not to resign. Raasloff's attitude probably explains why, instead of resigning, Frijs went on a three weeks' leave of absence.<sup>2</sup> By May 12, Yeaman had concluded that a change of cabinet was unlikely to occur in the near future. Only the failure of the next session of the Senate to ratify the Treaty could lead to the resignation of Frijs and Raasloff, and possibly of the whole Cabinet.<sup>3</sup>

In early April, when, on Raasloff's departure, Bille analyzed the position of the St. Thomas question in Washington, he found little evidence of change. He informed Frijs that Fish still refused to promise Administration support. The solution of the tenure-of-office issue seemed to have changed nothing in that regard. Furthermore, Sumner had told Bille that the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations had voted not to raise the issue of ratification before the Senate for the time being. Believing this to be an advantage to Denmark in the prevailing circumstances, Bille had raised no further questions regarding this point. He actually thought the real motive for Sumner's hesitation was that he intended to carry the ratification through in the next session. Sumner, he wrote, could almost be regarded as favoring ratification. The Chairman's position was so strong that he would probably win Senate approval of the next major cause he would advocate with all his authority. Bille also hoped that the political developments in the West Indies after the Cuban rebellion against Spain, in addition to more favorable American public opinion, would improve the general position of the Treaty before the next session of the Senate.<sup>4</sup>

The Cuban insurrection against Spanish colonial rule had begun in October, 1868, and was to continue for ten years. The Cuban revolutionaries received wide

popular and political support in the United States. Grant was originally in favor of recognizing Cuban belligerence, but Fish vehemently and successfully opposed such a step. The Secretary of State maintained a traditional policy of accepting Spanish sovereignty, possibly to await conditions in the future when it would be natural for the United States to secure control of the islands. Thus no immediate action to annex Cuba was seriously considered, though it was advocated by some Cubans and by certain circles in the United States.<sup>5</sup> In the ensuing months, Bille would study the Cuban situation carefully for any impact it might have on Danish interests.

In his instructions to Bille in April and May, Frijs expressed disappointment over Fish's position while approving Bille's handling of matters. Frijs understood the position of the Administration to be that it would not work against the Treaty, but neither would it take any initiative to promote it. Bille was instructed not to force the issue while at the same time insisting that the Administration did not weaken its position. Bille was also to seek Sumner's assistance. Before instructing Bille on May 17, Frijs had already contacted the Russian Cabinet through its Minister in Copenhagen, to ask for Russian diplomatic support in Washington in an effort to persuade Sumner.<sup>6</sup>

The term of ratification of the Treaty, as determined by the additional article of October 15, 1868, would expire on October 15, 1869. Bille considered it as part of his instructions to attempt to move Fish to extend the term. An initiative to this end by the Administration was highly desirable because the Senate would regard it as a sign that the Administration was asking the Senate to ratify the Treaty, and this might secure the necessary majority. Bille thought that even if Fish remained passive, Grant's Cabinet would support such a move by the Executive.<sup>7</sup> Frijs shared Bille's views and expected Grant and Fish to accept the idea of an American initiative.<sup>8</sup>

In the latter half of May, Bille perceived that the American press had begun recognizing, to a greater extent than earlier, the arguments for ratifying the Treaty. C. T. Christensen, who had been appointed Danish consul in New York, had seen to it that copies of the translation of the leading article which had appeared in Dagbladet on April 24 were distributed to a great many influential papers and periodicals such as the New York Times, the Commercial Advertiser, the Philadelphia Press, Harper's Weekly, the Nation, and the North American Review. All these publications carried it, and most of them commented favorably on it. Bille considered "a widespread and respectable opinion

to be won for the ratification of the Treaty" though the New York Tribune continued to oppose it vehemently.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these perceived signs of progress in American public opinion, Bille made no headway in his efforts of late May and June to impress the Secretary of State. Increasingly he came to regard Fish as a serious obstacle to success. In an interview on May 27, Fish refused to attribute any significance to the positive comments in the press, or to accept the idea of any sort of solidarity between the Johnson and Grant Administrations regarding the Treaty. When Bille made it clear that Denmark was interested in an extension of the term of ratification upon an initiative by the U.S. Minister in Copenhagen, the Secretary remained silent, though, according to Bille, he did say that he considered an extension necessary.<sup>10</sup>

In a conversation with the French Chargé d'affaires on June 26, Fish commented on the position of the St. Thomas Treaty in some detail. He said that neither he nor the President approved of the Treaty. He had never expected the Senate to ratify it, and as Secretary of State he had decided to remain absolutely passive in this regard. Although he recognized that an extension was important to Denmark, he would not initiate such a step through the U.S. Minister in

Copenhagen. If Denmark took the first step, he was not sure what the outcome would be.<sup>11</sup>

On learning this, Bille, too, had an interview that same day with Fish, who reiterated much the same view. Believing it was Fish's intention to reduce Danish expectations to a minimum, Bille carefully avoided provoking any negative statements, stressing instead the importance of Seward's initiative to renew the Treaty as well as his note of October 15, 1868. Though Bille did not believe that Fish's attitude was caused by the political situation in Cuba, he thought that events in that region might turn out to impact on the matter, for while the Administration still seemed to be following a policy of neutrality, the movement in favor of the Cuban revolution was gaining ground.<sup>12</sup>

In the first week of June, Bille asked the Secretary of War, General Rawlins, for an interview, in order to obtain a more reliable basis for judging the attitude of the Cabinet. During this interview, Rawlins stated that he had always believed, and continued to believe, that the Administration would decide to support the Treaty. Congress would find the federal debt to be less of a problem, and the "American feeling" of the Administration would dictate a certain policy of expansion. As to the expiration of the time stipulated for ratification, Rawlins said, "Your purpose is now, I suppose, to have the term of

ratification extended, and I think you ought to have it". Considering Rawlins to be the most prominent member of the Cabinet, and expecting his views to be much in line with those of the President, Bille naturally took encouragement from these words.<sup>13</sup>

In a despatch of July 17, Bille informed Frijs that Rawlins was personally in favor of the Treaty and that Secretary of the Treasury George S. Boutwell was no longer considered an opponent. Bille further referred to an interview with Geo. M. Robeson, the newly appointed Secretary of the Navy, who said confidentially that if he were a Senator he would vote for ratification, and that as Secretary of the Navy he was convinced that the United States ought to have a military base and a coaling station in the West Indies.<sup>14</sup>

Bille intended to learn as much as possible about the President's attitude and then, when the question came up for discussion in Cabinet, to encourage members other than Fish to support the Treaty. Only then might the positive voices be able to outweigh Fish's negative influence. Bille also found encouragement in the first-hand information from an unnamed Senator that Grant was inclined to favor extension as well as ratification. Between July 15 and 18, this same Senator discussed the matter with Fish, who stated he had not yet taken a final position on St. Thomas. On

learning this significant piece of information, Bille immediately informed Frijs.<sup>15</sup>

In August, Frijs had a document prepared authorizing Bille to initiate an extension of the term of ratification beyond October 15, 1869. The document set out the following arguments for a Danish initiative: the U.S. Secretary of State was unlikely to initiate such an action, and it would be an advantage for Denmark to have the Treaty before the Senate. Should this not happen, her enemies could easily exploit the situation. An initiative on the part of Denmark would mean that Grant's Cabinet would be forced to consider the matter. However, on consideration in the Danish Cabinet, it was decided not to ask for the King's signature to the document, and thus, rather than having Bille take the first step, to let October 15, 1869 pass without an extension.<sup>16</sup> According to Andreas F. Krieger, a well-informed contemporary observer, it was Raasloff who convinced Frijs that it would be a mistake to take the initiative. Krieger, who was quite critical of Raasloff, later concluded that Raasloff opposed the move because his interview with Fish had convinced him that the Secretary would not agree to an extension.<sup>17</sup>

In August, Bille found signs of a more active American policy in the West Indies, the United States being involved in talks with Spain on the Cuban

situation; General Orville E. Babcock had been sent to Santo Domingo as Grant's agent. In Bille's view, a new policy of this nature would have a positive effect, as well as a negative one, on St. Thomas. If the idea of U.S. annexation of Cuba started attracting increasing interest, it would render the possession of St. Thomas less attractive, but on the other hand a more assertive American policy might also lead to recognition of the purchase of St. Thomas being a means to attaining a more active role in the region.<sup>18</sup>

When Bille met Sumner in Boston some time between August 14 and 22, no new light was shed on the latter's position, nor on Fish's.<sup>19</sup> General Rawlins died on September 5, and Bille felt this to be a most severe loss. The St. Thomas question was just approaching a stage when Bille had been expecting it to benefit from Rawlins' unreserved support. The Danish Minister could not help venting his gloomy state of mind upon Count Frijs: "It is as if there were no end to the whole series of unfortunate circumstances that are imaginable in relation to this story."<sup>20</sup>

After having been granted an interview with the Secretary of State on September 16, Bille told Frijs that Fish had refused to take the initiative to extend the term of ratification. He considered such a step tantamount to proposing a new Treaty and he mentioned that in the previous prolongation proposed by Seward,

the Danish Government had found strong leverage for putting pressure on the Administration. However, Bille succeeded in getting Fish to state that he personally also preferred an extension. He would discuss the matter with the President, and he asked Bille to find a way that would avoid the difficulties attendant upon the sensitive problem of who was to take the initiative.<sup>21</sup> Fish actually asked Bille to write him a note on the matter, promising to give it due consideration. Bille responded by asking whether the extension would be granted if he addressed Fish "officieusement" in the note. For himself, Fish was "willing to let the Treaty go again before the Senate, if in so doing there be no implication of any further obligation to ratify it", but he would first need to consult Grant.<sup>22</sup>

Bille explained to Frijs that he regarded it as his most important task to secure ratification and, furthermore, he thought it mattered even less how it was obtained. He therefore intended to take the initiative, without speaking on behalf of the Danish Government. He found it crucial that the Treaty should not be allowed to expire because of a passive stance on the question of extension and that the Grant Administration would not be provoked into making any statement saying it did not expect ratification to succeed.<sup>23</sup>

In an interview between Bille and Fish on September 23, it became evident that Fish could not be persuaded to take the initiative even though Bille kept insisting that it rightfully belonged to the United States to do so. Instead, Fish once more asked Bille to put a request for extension in writing.<sup>24</sup> After the interview, Bille informed Frijs, in a despatch, that he had accepted alleviating the problem of the initiative by writing such a request, provided he was assured that the Treaty would still be pending before the Senate as it had been under the previous Administration. He therefore requested a telegram granting him temporary full proxy, or stating unequivocally that full proxy would be granted him.<sup>25</sup>

In a subsequent interview, on September 25, Fish agreed to an extension on receipt of a written request from Bille. That same day the two parties exchanged letters on the matter, and Bille then sent a telegram to Count Frijs saying:

"I shall obtain prolongation if provided with full powers before expiration".<sup>26</sup>

Bille carefully formulated the letter to Fish in such a way that "it was not the Royal Government which thereby took an initiative really belonging to the United States but that, following this case attentively, he found himself called upon to remind the Secretary of State of the expiring term of

ratification". Regarding it as likely that the letter would be presented to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bille also stated the Danish expectation that ratification would take place.<sup>27</sup> The following excerpt from Bille's letter illustrates these points:-

Thus, on the part of the Danish Govmt. no extension of the stipulated term of ratification was ever needed. But circumstances independant of that Govmt., have hitherto delayed the Treaty of Oct. 24th from being constitutionally considered and acted upon by the United States Senate. There is however no reason to believe, that the said Treaty, ratified by the danish Rigsdag and signed by H.M. the King should not, at the earliest opportunity, receive its due consideration on the part of the Senate and be finally carried into effect, unless strong and solid reasons prevent its ratification; but for this purpose it would seem convenient, that an arrangement be agreed upon between the two Governments, in order that the Treaty may be found technically faultless, leaving sufficient time for the Senate's action before the expiration of the stipulated term. Although I find myself without special instructions pointing to such an agreement, I have felt called upon to draw your attention to the fact mentioned in the beginning of this letter, convinced as I am, that my Government will form no objection to the opportunity of the measure I have suggested, ...<sup>28</sup>

Fish objected to the passage in Bille's letter which read:-

"There is however no reason to believe, that the said Treaty, ... should not, at the earliest possible opportunity, receive its due consideration on the part of the Senate and be finally carried into effect, unless strong and solid reasons prevent its ratification".

But Bille was not willing to omit the passage in return for a less explicit formulation of Fish's view in the letter of reply.<sup>29</sup> The Secretary's answer was

very formal, in no way committing the Administration beyond signing an additional article:-

...  
 You say that there is no reason to believe that the Treaty ratified by the danish "Rigsdag" and signed by the King should not receive consideration on the part of the Senate of the United States, and suggest that "an arrangement be agreed upon between the two Governments in order that the Treaty may be found technically faultless leaving sufficient time for the Senate's action before expiration of the term". Understanding it to be the object of your note (and especially of that portion of it suggesting that an agreement be entered into between the two Govmts.) to prevent a lapse of the Treaty by reason of the expiration of the time limited for the exchange of the ratifications before the convening of the Senate of the United States whose action thereon is required by the Constitution to give effect to the Treaty and thereby to afford an opportunity to that Body to take such action thereon as shall seem proper, I shall be ready at any time before the 15th of October next when you may be in possession of full powers on the part of your Govmt., to sign an additional article extending the time for the exchange of ratifications for a period sufficient to enable the Senate to consider and act upon the Treaty.  
 30

...

On the following day, September 26, Count Frijs sent Bille a telegram stating that full proxy would be granted to him as soon as possible.<sup>31</sup> However, in a directive dated the next day, Frijs also wrote that he would prefer to let the Treaty expire rather than allow Bille to take the initiative.<sup>32</sup> Upon receiving Bille's despatch of September 23, Frijs altered his firm position on the initiative and approved Bille's conduct of affairs.<sup>33</sup>

On October 14, after exchanging full powers, Fish and Bille proceeded to sign the additional article of

October 14, 1869 to the Convention of the 24th of October 1867, thus extending the time for the exchange of ratifications by six months. Bille considered that the Treaty was then in the best strategic position under the circumstances. There continued to be general opposition to the Treaty, but there also seemed to be growing recognition of the obligation to ratify it, which could only be reinforced by Grant's Cabinet having signed the additional article. Bille was pleased to be able to inform Count Frijs that the Russian Minister had been instructed to support the Danish cause; that he had already discussed the matter with Fish, and that he would probably try to influence Sumner as well.<sup>34</sup>

Count Frijs was satisfied that the additional article had been signed, though he would have much preferred the United States to have initiated it. He had only accepted a Danish initiative because Bille's despatches had convinced him that the only alternatives that remained were no extension at all, or some kind of Danish initiative. After the event, Frijs praised Bille for his good judgment.<sup>35</sup>

In early December, Bille wrote to Frijs for instructions regarding a rumor that the Administration was considering a plan of offering Denmark damages for the Treaty of October 24, 1867 and then letting the islands remain in Denmark's possession. Supposedly,

damages of \$300,000 to \$1,000,000 were being considered. Though this was secondhand information, Bille found some basis for believing it in certain statements made by Fish and the Attorney General, Hoar. Bille was inclined to regard an offer of this nature as an acceptable settlement of the affair, because the United States would then recognize the obligation that had been at the center of the Danish argument. Only, Denmark should demand that the matter be submitted to arbitration by a third, friendly nation.<sup>36</sup>

When Frijs received the news of this rumor, he immediately replied by telegraph that any such settlement involving payment of damages was out of the question.<sup>37</sup>

No offer to pay damages was ever made by the U.S. Government, but it seems probable that it was actually being contemplated at this stage, as the Treaty with Denmark had the potential of interfering with Grant's plan of annexing Santo Domingo.

After the signing of the additional article, Bille tried to convince Fish that the President ought to refer to the ratification of the Treaty in his Annual Message to Congress, on December 6. In an interview on November 25, Fish stated that he still thought that the Executive should avoid influencing the Senate in any way regarding the matter. When Bille persisted in insisting on the inclusion of some kind of

reference to St. Thomas, Fish finally promised to discuss the problem with Grant.<sup>38</sup>

Though Grant did not mention St. Thomas directly in his Message, Bille found grounds for optimism when reporting to Count Frijs on December 8 on the contents of the speech. Bille quoted the following passage of the Message to show that Grant attached importance to the role of the United States in the West Indies and the Mexican Gulf:-

I have always felt that the most intimate relations should be cultivated between the republic of the United States and all independent nations on this continent. It may be well worth considering whether new treaties between us and them not be profitably entered into to secure more intimate relations, friendly commercial or otherwise.<sup>39</sup>

Bille had conversations about the St. Thomas Treaty with all members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations at the beginning of December. Individually, the Senators willingly expressed regret about the way the matter had been handled. In particular, Bille noted that Sumner seemed less negative about expansion in the West Indies than on earlier occasions. But at an informal discussion in the Committee on December 17, the attitude was still generally negative, and Sumner later told Bille that he had terminated the debate because he wanted to await further developments before Congress re-convened in January.<sup>40</sup>

By the middle of December, Bille had information from so many reliable sources that Grant was inclined in favor of ratification that he was convinced that if Presidential support failed, it could only be for reasons of domestic politics.<sup>41</sup> This conviction proved to be well-founded. Already on December 7, Grant had decided to support ratification of the Treaty of October 24, 1867, and had directed Fish to communicate this to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. There can be little doubt that Grant changed his position on the matter because of the development in the negotiations with the Republic of Santo Domingo, conducted by Babcock. These negotiations early resulted in a preliminary agreement about annexation of Santo Domingo and the sale of Samana Bay. In December 1869, Babcock signed two treaties providing for the lease of Samana Bay and for the annexation of the republic. When Grant began working vigorously for the ratification of the treaties, it would have meant great loss of prestige and embarrassment internationally if he had not supported the St. Thomas Treaty as well.<sup>42</sup>

Bille first learnt about this crucial turn of events in a conversation with Sumner on December 23. A few days earlier, Grant had told Sumner that he now wanted the St. Thomas Treaty to be ratified although he had previously opposed it both privately and before the Cabinet. Later that day, Bille received the same

information from Fish.<sup>43</sup> Part of the relevant entry in Fish's Diary about the conversation with Bille reads:-

I tell him that while he knows that President's views with regard to the St. Thomas Treaty as unwise in its negotiations he had told Mr. Sumner and other Senators, that being negotiated, he thought it should be ratified. - He (44) is gratified, says Senators in the Committee of Foreign Affairs have said to him that they wish to have what the President desire with respect to the Treaty.<sup>44</sup>

Bille immediately sent Count Frijs a telegram informing him of the significant change in Grant's policy.<sup>45</sup>

Though Bille had long been trying to win Grant's open support, he was not blind to the element of uncertainty in the "strange coincidence" with the news of a Treaty between the Republic of Santo Domingo and the United States for the lease of the Bay of Samana. Such a Treaty seemed out of keeping with Fish's criticism of Seward's expansionism, but Bille saw Grant's personal influence behind it. If this change of policy were the result of Grant's recognition of the general advantages of a practical policy of expansion in the Gulf of Mexico, St. Thomas and the Bay of Samana might not have to compete. Still, it was impossible to predict how the Senate and the general public would receive such a policy.<sup>46</sup>

When it became publicly known that a Treaty had been concluded for the lease of the Bay of Samana, a newspaper debate about territorial expansion began,

which was damaging to the St. Thomas Treaty in many ways. The New York Tribune contributed with a vehement attack, which concluded:-

- "But hadn't we better ignore this fact, and perfect the bargain, in deference to Denmark's feelings?"

No, no, no! We must somehow give foreign governments to understand that no functionary is authorized to make ducks and drakes of our money. If we pay this, we shall never be done with paying. The next enterprising, liberal-minded genius that gets possession of the State Department will stick us One Hundred Millions for Pentagonia, and insist that we can't back out - that the St. Thomas precedent settles the question. We must give the Diplomatic world due notice that no Treaty binds us till our Senate has ratified it; and here is our chance. We must not let it slip, but write over our Treasury door, "To be unlocked only upon the order of Congress. No foreign Diplomats need apply".<sup>47</sup>

The hostility of the New York Tribune was to be expected, but on December 23, the New York Times put forth an article describing the St. Thomas Treaty as an unsuccessful attempt that was being replaced by the less expensive Treaty with Santo Domingo. The article left the impression that the two treaties were in competition.<sup>48</sup>

Under the nom de plume of "Dane", Bille wrote a letter to the N. Y. Times arguing that the two treaties could in no way be regarded as competing, because the initiative for the St. Thomas Treaty went back to 1865 and had Lincoln's support. Mr. Christensen, the Danish Consul, went and saw the editor of the N. Y. Times about the matter. The paper agreed to publish Bille's letter and an accompanying article on December 28. The

editor further promised Mr. Christensen that the paper would continue printing material that Denmark wished to have introduced into the public debate.<sup>49</sup> The article that accompanied Bille's letter totally supported Denmark's cause:-

#### The St. Thomas Negotiations

The point raised by a correspondent who maintains, in another column, that the priority of the negotiations between Denmark and the United States regarding the former's West India possessions, forbids her from now being put on a par with the Dominican Republic, as a "rival bidder", is well taken.

...  
In one view, as we said the other day, our Government was inquiring at the same moment, with a view to purchase, about Samana and St. Thomas, i.e., early in 1867. However, we were dealing diplomatically with but one nation, and, therefore, whether the Bay of Samana be or not be acquired, or hired, the negotiations with Denmark are on an entirely different footing.<sup>50</sup>

In the ensuing months, the N. Y. Times continued to print articles in strong support of the Danish position.<sup>51</sup>

When Congress convened on January 10, 1870, Bille realized that the Samana Treaty was merely a cover for the Santo Domingo Treaty, which provided for U. S. annexation of the entire Republic of Santo Domingo. The two treaties with Santo Domingo were before the Senate together with the St. Thomas Treaty, and it would be impossible to convince the Senate that the acquisition of St. Thomas would be the more advantageous purchase. Ratification could thus only be

obtained if two-thirds of the Senators recognized the OBLIGATION to ratify. Bille therefore continued telling the Senators, and Sumner in particular, that in the current situation, Denmark would be less than ever able to understand a rejection by the Senate. Bille decided not to make any further attempts to influence the Administration in the ensuing weeks, as he thought this might well turn out to be counterproductive to Danish interests.<sup>52</sup>

From numerous conversations with Congressmen, Bille got the impression that Congress had formed no definite opinion on the treaties. In particular, it seemed that the decision by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations would determine the fate of the St. Thomas Treaty.<sup>53</sup>

Through the sources available to him, Bille followed the discussions of the Senate Committee in January and February as closely as he could. It soon transpired that the Committee took a dim view of the Santo Domingo Treaty, and by February 16 Bille expected it not to succeed. The St. Thomas Treaty seemed to be faring better, and Bille considered its position had not really been weakened by its competition with the Santo Domingo Treaty.<sup>54</sup>

On February 1, Bille had conversations with both Fish and Sumner. Fish stressed his efforts for both St. Thomas and Santo Domingo, but he was far from

certain of success. In his opinion, the St. Thomas Treaty could only succeed together with the Santo Domingo Treaty. Sumner told Bille that Grant was applying strong personal pressure to secure the Santo Domingo Treaty, even at the expense of the St. Thomas Treaty, if the removal of the latter would strengthen the former. At this point Bille regarded Sumner as a defender of the St. Thomas purchase, regardless of the fate of the Santo Domingo question.<sup>55</sup>

On March 15 the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations voted for rejection of the Santo Domingo Treaty by a 5-to-2 majority, and Bille did not expect there would be a sufficient majority to ratify it in the Senate. He sought an interview with Fish to learn the attitude of the Cabinet to the St. Thomas Treaty in this new situation. On March 17, Fish informed Bille that when seeing Sumner about the St. Thomas Treaty the night before, he had insisted on quick action by the Senate Committee. Fish doubted however that he himself would be able to influence the Senate's decision. While still supporting the treaty, the Administration did not intend to take any further action on its behalf.<sup>56</sup>

On March 22, the Senate Committee unanimously decided to report against ratification of the Treaty of October 14, 1867, and against the Samana Convention. That same day, Bille informed Frijs of this event by

cable: "Comité rapporte contrairement aux traités danois et dominicains. Discussion au Sénat commence demain. Bille."<sup>57</sup>

On learning of the negative decision of the Senate Committee, Bille at once called on Sumner, who confirmed the information. Sumner regarded the Committee's unanimous decision as correctly reflecting the mood of the Senate, and thus saw no hope for the treaty. Bille was surprised to learn that it had been an unanimous decision, since he knew that James Harlan, who had been a member of Lincoln's cabinet, felt personally obligated to vote for ratification.<sup>58</sup>

In an interview with Fish that day or the day after, Bille maintained that the treaty might still succeed in the Senate if the Administration continued supporting it, but Fish refused to take any special action.<sup>59</sup>

While a heated debate on the Santo Domingo treaty (which ended with the expiry of its term of ratification at the end of the month) was taking place in the Senate, Bille became convinced that the St. Thomas Treaty would also fail. It had been rejected by the Senate Committee, and the Administration would take no steps to save it. The political situation was such that there was no chance of a compromise: "There are two camps, of which one is against us because it is against Santo Domingo; the other is against us because

it is for Santo Domingo, and everyone will have to join one of these two sides".<sup>60</sup> Sumner probably intended to let the term of ratification expire without further action, but Fish insisted that the treaty be presented to the Senate in a regular way. On April 6, Sumner presented the Committee's negative report to the Senate. Without any real debate, however, the Senate passed a motion to adjourn, which was understood to mean that there would be no further action on the Treaty before it expired on April 14. The St. Thomas Treaty was to share the fate of the Santo Domingo Treaty.<sup>61</sup>

In a note of April 12 to Fish, Bille announced his readiness to proceed to the exchange of ratifications. When Bille called on Fish two days later, on the day the treaty was due to expire, Fish had not answered the note, but he said he "had waited until today" to reply. On giving an "informal" account of what had taken place with regard to the treaty in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and in the Senate, the Secretary said that Bille could set about informing his Government that no further action would be taken on the treaty.<sup>62</sup>

On April 16 Bille sent Frijs a copy of Fish's official note about the failure of the treaty.<sup>63</sup> It reads as follows:-

Department of State,

Washington, April 14, 1870

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 12th inst., in which you refer to the stipulations for the treaty of October 24, 1867 between the United States and Denmark, and more particularly to the Additional Article, signed on the 14th day of October last, whereby the ratifications of the treaty were to be exchanged in Washington on or before this date. You inform me in this note that you are prepared to proceed to that exchange so soon as you shall be informed that it can be done.

The term limited for the exchange expires this day. The Senate of the United States has not given its advice and consent to the treaty, and I am not authorized to proceed further with reference thereto. In communicating this result of the withholding by the Senate of the United States of its advice and consent from the treaty referred to, I take leave to call your attention to the fact that in the note which my predecessor, Mr. Seward, addressed to His Excellency General Raasloff under date July 17 1866, Mr. Seward expressly indicated to General Raasloff that any treaty resulting from the negotiations inaugurated and begun by that note, would require the constitutional action thereupon by the Senate of the United States.

I avail myself of this occasion to offer to you renewed assurances of my very high consideration.

(Signed) Hamilton Fish.<sup>64</sup>

In November 1887, Edward L. Pierce, Sumner's biographer, wrote letters to Senators who, along with Sumner, had been members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to learn details of why the Committee had rejected the treaty. Carl Schurz, James W. Patterson, Simon Cameron, Justin Morrill and James Harlan responded to the inquiry. Schurz, Cameron and Morrill answered rather briefly, mainly pointing to the general political opposition to territorial expansion

at that time.<sup>65</sup> Patterson described the Senate's hostile attitude in much more detail. The treaty was generally opposed because it was regarded as "one of Seward's schemes". Some saw it as unconstitutional, and most "rejected the policy of entering upon a system of annexing non-contiguous territory and outlying islands to the United States". The population of the islands would have been a burden. In peacetime, the islands might have been an asset as a coaling station, but this was far outweighed by their unreasonable price and the risk of undesirable military involvement which might result from possession. Thus, according to Patterson, there were hardly any favorable arguments for the purchase, and action on the treaty was only postponed because of "a desire, if possible, to save the liberal ministry of Denmark which had been drawn into this measure, against the natural effects of its rejection".<sup>66</sup> J. Harlan's letter of reply to Pierce gave almost the same reasons as Patterson's, but without the latter's clearly negative language about the treaty, and it should be noted in this context that Raasloff and Bille expected Harlan to vote for the treaty.<sup>67</sup>

Though 17 years had passed since the treaty had failed, these statements by persons actively involved in the Committee's deliberations leave no doubt that the Committee rejected the treaty as a result of the

general opposition to territorial expansion, and because they did not consider the purchase of St. Thomas and St. John advantageous either strategically or financially. General hostility to Seward, as well as to Grant's Santo Domingo Treaty, may well be added as contributory factors. However, these statements, made in 1887 and 1888, do not even mention the main Danish argument after Raasloff's visit to Washington: the obligation on the United States to ratify the treaty. The fact that the letters are silent on this point may be due to this embarrassing aspect of the matter not having been handled satisfactorily by the Committee. There is evidence that Sumner was not wholly untouched by the Danish argument.

Since Raasloff's visit to Washington, it had been clear that Sumner, as Chairman of the Senate Committee, would play a key role in determining the fate of the treaty. Raasloff's and Bille's perception of Sumner's attitude was no doubt a significant factor in keeping the Danish Government's hope of ultimate success alive. As we have seen, the two key Danish diplomats continued to believe that Sumner was at least willing to give the treaty a chance, and they were actually inclined to think he would have preferred to see the treaty ratified, even though he would not speak openly for its ratification.

Though former interpretations have not accepted this view of Sumner's position, it may have been what he was aiming at. In his conversations with Bille on March 22, 1870, Sumner expressed his personal regret at the Senate Committee's veto and recognized that consideration for the Danish Government had been a weighty argument in favor of ratification. According to Bille, he also stated "that he had lent his assistance to the long delay of the St. Thomas Treaty, in an uncertain presentiment that, despite the unfortunate circumstances under which it had appeared, a time might come when it could be executed".<sup>68</sup> This was tantamount to saying he would have preferred the treaty to have succeeded if the political situation had permitted it.

In a conversation with Bille on March 23, Fish also interpreted Sumner's motives in a way compatible with the above. Fish presumed that Sumner was to some extent sympathetic to the treaty, because only such motives could explain the long and regrettable delay in action.<sup>69</sup> It must still be remembered that Sumner never promoted the treaty actively. When the St. Thomas Treaty became linked with the Santo Domingo Treaty and the general issue of annexation in the West Indies, Sumner subordinated it to the political battle over Grant's policies. Bille's summary of Sumner's statements on March 22 shows that Sumner was convinced

that Grant's policy of expansion in the West Indies must be defeated:-

It was "une bataille rangée" between the Senate and the President, and the latter had never attacked General Lee more eagerly than he was now fighting for his cause in the Senate; but to Senator Sumner there was no doubt about the correct policy in this case: in the proposed acquisitions he saw a step that would irresistibly lead the United States to Haiti - Cuba - Puerto Rico - Jamaica - and he would not share the responsibility for all the various complications that could arise from this.

Against this background, the concluding passage of James Harlan's answer to Pierce's inquiry of November 1887 is a thought-provoking commentary on Sumner's course of action:-

You ask,

Thirdly, Whether Mr. Sumner (the Chairman of the Committee) did not act fairly?

No one who ever knew Mr. Sumner could have any doubt on that point. He was the soul of candor and frankness. But if he had been disposed to act otherwise, in the case referred to, he could not have trifled with the Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs as then constituted.

Though Grant and his Secretary of State had long remained very passive and rather negative about the treaty, the Danish Government continued to hope that they would change their minds. This hope was nourished by the positive views expressed by several Cabinet members as well as by the signing of the additional article on October 14, 1869. When Grant announced his support of the treaty in December 1869, Bille regarded it as most significant, though he was aware of the connection with the Santo Domingo question.

Grant and Fish did support the St. Thomas treaty after December 1869, but did not give it first priority. Sumner was convinced that Grant was only supporting its ratification as part of his program of large-scale annexation in the West Indies. When it became clear that the Santo Domingo treaty would face considerable opposition, Grant lessened his support for St. Thomas. In the Senate Committee, Senator Oliver P. Morton, who, according to Sumner, was "an exponent of the President's policy", had even wished to reject the St. Thomas treaty at once in order to secure the passage of the Santo Domingo treaty.<sup>72</sup> Writing privately to Frijs on March 30, 1870, Bille concluded much the same as Sumner:-

... The President has supported the ratification of the St. Thomas treaty with a certain emphasis as part of his West Indian policy, maybe as a sort of "poste perdue", a prominent position, from which he could bear to be thrown back, but supported it "au bout des levres" as a matter of honor for the United States, whereas it was exactly on this point the Administration could have exerted the greatest influence and could have assisted our case best.<sup>73</sup>

The Grant Administration's support of the St. Thomas treaty must be considered a step it deemed necessary to preserve its credibility when launching its program of West Indian expansion. If it had not supported St. Thomas in this situation, it would have exposed itself to severe domestic and international criticism. It is thus natural to regard Fish's modified attitude towards extension, discernible from

July 1869 on, as well as the information Bille received at the same time about Grant's more positive position on St. Thomas, as a direct result of the preparations for the Dominican annexation policy. Fish went along with these plans in return for a free hand in his Cuban policy.<sup>74</sup> Fish's account of the Administration's support of the treaty in his conversation with Bille on March 24, 1870 is compatible with this conclusion, though the Secretary doubtless exaggerated the degree of support given to Denmark.<sup>75</sup> The idea that Grant's support of St. Thomas was adopted as a necessary measure is further reinforced by the fact that he totally dropped the St. Thomas treaty after April 1870, whereas he would continue fighting a heated, though unsuccessful, political battle for the annexation of Santo Domingo.

On May 2, 1870, Yeaman wrote an unofficial letter for Fish about how the news of the rejection of the treaty had been received in Copenhagen. Since the fall of 1869, Yeaman had believed that the Danish Government was being too optimistic about ratification. Consequently the failure came as a shock to Copenhagen, and Europe was left baffled as well. The outcome was bound to create animosity towards the United States:

... it is very clear to my mind that the Government of the United States and Count Bismarck will stand about on a par in the affections of the good people for some years to come.<sup>76</sup>

On May 11, 1870 Yeaman asked permission to resign his post, and Fish granted his request, to take effect on September 30, 1870. Yeaman had much regretted the way the United States had conducted the St. Thomas affair,<sup>77</sup> but though it is tempting to see a connexion between this fact and his resignation, his wife's poor health may have been the decisive factor.<sup>78</sup>

In an instruction of May 20, 1870, Count Frijs instructed Bille how he was to conduct himself towards the U.S. Government in the wake of the rejection of the treaty. The Danish Cabinet felt deeply offended and humiliated, but Frijs thought it would be unwise to embark on overt recriminations against the United States. It would certainly be aware that it had lost considerable diplomatic prestige in Europe as a result of the affair.

Bille was to remain politely detached towards the United States. Believing that the Danes' silence would have a greater effect than any action that could be taken, Frijs would not answer Fish's note of April 14. Frijs realized, however, that the affair was bound to have an impact on Danish-American relations for some time to come. It was not advisable to recall Bille from his post in a formal way, but he would be granted leave of absence so that there would not be any talks with the Secretary of State until late in the year. In

addition, Frijs intended to show reluctance to promote the discussion of matters brought up by the U.S.<sup>79</sup>

The Danish diplomatic response was thus intended clearly to demonstrate Danish umbrage without damaging long-term relations with the United States.

On April 20, 1870, the Landsting, and on April 26, the Folkething were informed by Frijs that he had received a telegram from Bille stating that the term of ratification of the treaty had expired without any ratification having been carried out by the United States. On the same occasions, the Rigsdag received the news that Raasloff had resigned from the Cabinet on April 19 and that Frijs would take over his former offices ad interim.<sup>80</sup>

Upon receiving the notes that Bille and Fish had exchanged regarding the expiration of the term of ratification, Frijs read these to the two Houses of the Rigsdag on May 3 and promised to provide Members with an opportunity of reading all the essential documents relevant to the history of the Treaty. Frijs said that the documents would show how eagerly and persistently the United States had striven to conclude the treaty. He also promised that the Danish Government would now give special attention to the problems of the colonies in the West Indies.<sup>81</sup>

In a speech on May 5, 1870, Raasloff explained to the Folkething why he had resigned from the Cabinet.

His feelings of good will towards the United States and his high opinion of its people had led him vehemently to propose a conclusion to the treaty and vouch personally for the sincerity of the United States' intention to carry out any obligation which it had in accordance with the treaty. The failure of the treaty had placed him in a position where he lacked the confidence and strength necessary to be a member of the Cabinet. Ever since his journey to Washington in the winter of 1868-69, he had been determined to take this step if the United States Senate should refuse to ratify.<sup>82</sup> His speech ended on a very personal note:

I will not here undertake to justify my course of action, nor that of the Government, in regard to the negotiations for the cession of the Danish West Indian Islands; - such a justification would require my speaking out freely, and in so doing, I might damage the interests of our country. Besides, the whole subject will eventually be viewed in the light of an historical event of general interest; - it will fill a page in diplomatic history and will be taken up and judged elsewhere, thus relieving me, or anyone else here, from the duty of reviewing it. I hope and trust that my participation in this negotiation will not have deprived me of the esteem and confidence of my fellow-citizens, but what I feel at this moment is, that the issue of this unfortunate affair has - at least for the present - deprived me of the courage and confidence in myself without which I could not, and ought not, to continue to fill<sup>83</sup> the responsible offices hitherto entrusted to me.

Raasloff continued as an ordinary Member of the Folkething until 1871, when he moved abroad, first to Dresden and later to Baden-Baden and Paris. He occasionally continued to play a role in Danish public

affairs, such as when he offered Danish support to Napoleon III on the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. He was justly censured for this, having acted as a sort of unofficial Danish envoy without the consent of the Danish Government. On more than one occasion he was also mentioned as a possible candidate for the governorship of the Danish West Indies. In 1874-76 he was sent on a government mission to China and Japan to negotiate the rights of the Great Northern Telegraph Company in those countries. On returning from this mission, Raasloff retired to private life. He died in 1883 and was buried at Plessy near Paris.<sup>84</sup>

Most Danish newspapers agreed that Raasloff's resignation was regrettable, owing to his resourcefulness as Minister of War. Only Dagbladet found it necessary, for the sake of his dignity and honor under the circumstances. This paper also expected the entire Cabinet to resign before long. All papers condemned the unjust actions of the United States towards a small and friendly nation.<sup>85</sup> The leading article in Faedrelandet on April 20 provides a short but characteristic example of the attitude taken by the Danish press:-

... It is perfectly true that the great Yankee state's total lack of consideration towards little Denmark, whose friendship is of no importance to it, and - let us add the reason for this - the American statesman's total lack of a sense of honor - have disappointed us all, insulted our country, and exposed our present Government in a way most

unpleasant to it; and the person who must particularly take the disappointment, the insult and the personal unpleasantness to heart was Mr. Raasloff who from the beginning, owing to his American connexions and his diplomatic skills, had undertaken the direction of this matter and last year personally had attempted to get it settled in Washington.<sup>86</sup>

Prior to leaving the Cabinet, Raasloff attempted to persuade the entire Cabinet to resign as a consequence of the West Indian failure. Frijs and two other ministers were inclined to follow Raasloff's advice, but Vedel among others succeeded in dissuading Frijs from sharing Raasloff's fate.<sup>87</sup>

On May 19, however, the entire Frijs Cabinet tendered their resignation to the King, who let it take effect the next day. They continued as a caretaker government until the formation of a new Cabinet of National Liberals and Conservatives on May 28, to be headed by Count Ludvig Henrik Carl Herman Holstein - Holsteinborg.<sup>88</sup>

The direct cause of Frijs' resignation was the defeat in the Rigsdag of a comparatively insignificant proposal concerning the reorganization of the Army and an appropriation of 50,000 Rigsdalers for the implementation of part of the plan. There can be no doubt that the development of the St. Thomas question from January 1868 onwards had weakened the Cabinet considerably, and though Yeaman may be correct that it was owing to the failure of the treaty that the afore-

mentioned measure became a cabinet question, the Frijs Cabinet had been generally expected to resign in the near future. Frijs had wished to step down for a long time, and when he suffered a major setback over the question of compulsory commutation of copyhold land tenure in early May, the parliamentary basis for his Cabinet, i.e. the cooperation between small farmers and great landowners, crumbled.<sup>89</sup>

Thus the failure of the St. Thomas treaty did not in itself bring about the fall of the Cabinet, yet it may be considered a contributory factor. It is interesting to note that many years later, in 1896, Frijs told Vedel in a private and confidential letter that if the sale of the islands had succeeded in 1870, he would have been willing to remain in office as Prime Minister to prevent the money from the sale being spent on Danish involvement in the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>90</sup>

In early May, Frijs had an open letter prepared and authorized by the King: a Royal Proclamation to the Inhabitants of St. Thomas and St. Johns.<sup>91</sup> Its purpose was to explain officially why the islands were to continue under Danish sovereignty, and to do this in such a manner as to cause as little friction as possible between the islands and the Danish Government. It read as follows:-

We Christian the Ninth,  
 by the Grace of God King of Denmark, the Vandals and  
 the Goths, Duke of Sleswick, Holsteen, Stormarn,  
 Ditmarsch, Lauenborg and Oldenborg, to our beloved  
 and faithful Subjects in the Islands of St. Thomas  
 and St. Johns Our Royal Greeting!

You are aware of the motives that actuated Us at  
 the time to give ear to the repeated and urgent  
 requests of the North American Government for the  
 cession of St. Thomas and St. Johns to the United  
 States. We expected that We in that manner should  
 have been able to lighten Our Realm of the heavy  
 burthens incurred by the then recently terminated  
 war, and We hoped that the annexation to the United  
 States would have afforded the Islands advantages so  
 important that they could have contributed to soothe  
 the pain, which a separation necessarily must cause  
 in the Colonies no less than in the Mother-country.  
 You for your part, and the Danish Diet on the part  
 of the Kingdom have concurred in these views, and we  
 All met in the mutual readiness to accommodate  
 ourselves to what appeared to us All to be  
 recommended by the circumstances.

Unexpected obstacles have arisen to the  
 realisation of this idea and released Us from Our  
 pledged word. The American Senate has not shown  
 itself willing to maintain the Treaty made, although  
 the initiative for it exclusively proceeded from the  
 United States themselves. Ready as We were to  
 subdue the feelings of Our heart where We thought  
 that duty bade Us so to do, yet We cannot otherwise  
 than feel a satisfaction that circumstances have  
 relieved Us from making a sacrifice, which,  
 notwithstanding the advantages it held out, would  
 always have been very painful to Us. We are  
 convinced that You share these sentiments, and that  
 it is with a lightened heart You are released from  
 the consent, which only at Our request You gave to a  
 separation of the Islands from the Danish Crown.

In therefore making known to You that the  
 Convention made on the 24th of October 1867 for the  
 cession of the Islands of St. Thomas and St. Johns  
 to the United States of America has become void, We  
 entertain the firm belief that Our Government,  
 supported by Your own active endeavours, will  
 succeed in promoting the interests of the Islands  
 and by degrees efface all remembrances of the  
 Misfortunes which of late years have so sadly  
 befallen the Islands. To this end We pray Almighty  
 God to give Us strength and wisdom!

Commending You to God!  
 Given at Our Palace of Amalienborg the 7th May 1870.  
 Under Our Royal Hand and Seal  
 Christian R.

The Proclamation could not prevent the news of the failure of the treaty being met with disappointment and bitterness, but also with renewed self-confidence, in St. Thomas.<sup>93</sup> In July 1870, about half the adult male inhabitants of the Island signed a Petition to the King asking for drastic changes in the government and administration of St. Thomas and St. John. The document explained why the islanders had voted for cession to the United States:-

... In this we were acted upon, not only by a desire to further Your Majesty's behest, but also were we led thereunto by the prospects of being once and forever free from the enervating system of administration to which we were subject; and further were we incited by the hope set before us by Your Majesty "that a mighty impulse, both moral and material, would be given to the happy development of these Islands under the new Sovereignty," - an impulse which we felt assured we could not expect to see realized under the depressing influence of our rigid form of administration, but which we fondly hoped might be assured under the free institutions of the United States of America, in whose principles of self government we expected to share.<sup>94</sup>

The petition went on to ask for full citizen rights and representative government:-

We consider that we, Your Majesty's most faithful and loyal subjects, are entitled to all the rights and liberties, and immunities of free and native born subjects within the Kingdom of Denmark, and are entitled to the exercise and enjoyment of all such of them as local or other circumstances enable us to exercise and enjoy:-

That the foundation of all liberty and of all free government, is based on the right of the people to participate in their legislative assemblies, and

to have a voice in framing the laws by which they are to be governed:-<sup>95</sup>

The petitioners specifically asked for complete administrative separation of St. Thomas and St. John from St. Croix ("as the interests of St. Thomas are entirely different from those of the sister colony of St. Croix") with the Governor residing in St. Thomas. The Colonial Council of St. Thomas and St. John was to be changed into a Colonial Legislature with full legislative powers "subject only to the negative power of the Superior Authority, and to such measures of Legislative Power of the Kingdom as regards the regulation of this district as forming part of the Kingdom". The Colonial Legislature was to possess the exclusive power of taxing and raising revenue, and the Colonial Treasury was to be headed by a Colonial Treasurer personally responsible to the Legislature.<sup>96</sup>

Both colonial councils also demanded considerable financial and administrative concessions from the Mother Country. They asked for cuts in military and administrative expenditure, which consumed above 60 per cent of their income. In particular, St. Thomas demanded the abolition of the annual contribution of \$28,000 to the Danish Treasury.<sup>97</sup>

In February 1871, the Danish Government showed its good will towards St. Thomas by moving the Governor's Residence there from St. Croix. However, in

June of 1871, continuing unrest in St. Thomas led the Government to appoint F. E. Bille, Danish Minister Resident in Washington, as Commissioner Extraordinary and Governor ad interim of the Islands. Bille reduced the size of the Army and instituted a series of reforms, but on his departure from the Islands on July 1, 1872 he had not succeeded in solving the constitutional problems.

The Danish Government was ready to accept a process involving liberal changes in the Colonial Law of 1863, but the constitutional demands of St. Thomas took a radical turn. In 1873, advocates of Home Rule won control of the Colonial Council of St. Thomas and St. John as well as of a committee working toward a revision of the Colonial Law. The Home Rule Party demanded that the colonial status of St. Thomas and St. John be changed to dependency status, with full sovereignty in internal affairs. The agitation had reached such heights by the fall of 1874 that in January 1875 the Governor, Janus A. Garde, temporarily suspended the Colonial Council. The situation calmed down, and the constitutional issue was postponed.

In April 1874, the Rigsdag met the demands of St. Thomas for repeal of the law stipulating the annual contribution to the Danish Treasury. By degrees, the people of St. Thomas came to realize - as had those of St. Croix all along - that they needed the protection

of a larger nation, particularly in times of economic slump.<sup>98</sup>

The St. Thomas affair featured in the public debate in the U.S. on several occasions in the decades following 1870. One of the issues was Sumner's role in it. In 1887, Olive Risley Seward, W. E. Seward's adopted daughter, published her famous article: "A Diplomatic Episode".<sup>99</sup> Describing the St. Thomas Treaty as wise, and far-sighted in its conclusions, she laid much of the blame for its failure on Sumner. His advocacy of the Alaska Treaty

"relieved the Administration of any apprehension of a rejection of their extension policy as it did the Danish government of any further reluctance to treat with the United States".<sup>100</sup>

Sumner also neglected to warn Commissioner Carstensen of any possible complications during his visit to Washington prior to the vote in the Islands. Owing to the animosity to the Johnson Administration, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations adopted a dishonorable course of delay and silence in the matter, and in 1869, Sumner deceived Raasloff about his position. Before Raasloff left Washington for his mission there, Sumner gave him a portrait of Bertel Thorvaldsen, the Danish sculptor, by Rembrandt Peale. Olive Seward claimed that in 1866, Sumner had promised Raasloff this portrait when the United States had annexed the Danish islands. Raasloff was thus led to

believe that Sumner would support ratification. The article was very biased in its presentation, distorting the course of events in many ways. It was such an attack on Sumner's integrity that it provoked Edward L. Pierce, his biographer, into writing a reply exonerating the Chairman of all accusations.<sup>101</sup>

According to Pierce, the Senate had acted within the proper limits of its powers in refusing to ratify a worthless treaty. The argument that the honor of the United States was at stake was only relevant insofar as Seward had given Denmark "unauthorized assurances". Not only was Sumner opposed to the purchase: the entire Committee was. It could in no way be concluded from Sumner's advocacy of the Alaskan treaty that he was also obligated to support the St. Thomas Treaty. He had carefully stressed that the Alaska Treaty should not be a precedent "for a system of indiscriminate and and costly annexation". Not the Committee, but Seward and the Danish Government had delayed the treaty. The Committee had acted, by laying its cards on the table on March 30, 1869, which was interpreted as rejection.<sup>102</sup>

Pierce succeeded in pointing out that the argument of dishonorable conduct might just as well be levelled at Seward as at Sumner, and in showing that Olive Seward's use of the story about the Thorvaldsen portrait was unfounded.<sup>103</sup> Though it is correct that

Raasloff asked for a postponement in March of 1869, Pierce's article failed to explain satisfactorily why Sumner did not bring about any action on the treaty before March 1870, if it was so obvious it would not succeed. It seems too weak an argument that the Committee held back its report after March 1869 just for Raasloff's sake. It is also worth noting that, although Pierce wrote that Sumner "was never converted to the treaty", he still kept an open mind concerning it, and as far as possible held his judgment in suspense".<sup>104</sup> Pierce presented no evidence which could exclude an interpretation along the lines of this study, suggesting that Sumner may personally have been rather more sympathetic to the arguments in favor of ratification than has been generally supposed.

On January 25, 1902, the New York Times published an article blaming Sumner for the failure of the treaty. The relevant passage reads:-

It fell through simply because CHARLES SUMNER, then Chairman of the Foreign Committee of the Senate, happened to be engaged in a personal quarrel with the President, whom the treaty offered him a chance of annoying. Accordingly he pigeonholed the treaty for months, the Government had to ask Denmark to prolong the time set for ratification, and, when the treaty was finally brought up in the Senate, it was rejected.<sup>105</sup>

The article is certainly confusing and inaccurate as to chronology and facts, and Morefield Storey, who had been Sumner's secretary at the time, wrote a letter to the Times refuting it. He pointed out that the

treaty was never popular; that Grant opposed it shortly after his inauguration, and that the Senate Committee had laid it on the table as far back as March 30, 1869. Thus, the negative position of the Committee was apparent before any differences occurred between Sumner and Grant.<sup>106</sup> Storey's reply was an appropriate corrective to this misleading article, but it contained no additional information which could have thrown new light on Sumner's views in a wider context.

Another issue in the debate was the part played by the Senate in the affair. Thus, in his Congressional Government (1885), Woodrow Wilson blamed the Senate for the non-ratification of the treaty. It illustrated the Senate's encroachment on the Executive's leading role in the conduct of foreign policy:<sup>107</sup>

... and in no event would the control of the patronage by the Senate have unbalanced the federal system more seriously than it may some day be unbalanced by an irresponsible exertion of that body's semi-executive powers in regard to the foreign policy of the government. More than one passage in the history of our foreign relations illustrates the danger. During the simple congressional session of 1868-9, for example, the treaty-marring power of the Senate was exerted in a way that made the comparative weakness of the executive very conspicuous, and was ominous of very serious results. It showed the executive in the right, but feeble and irresolute; the Senate masterful, though in the wrong. Denmark had been asked to part with the island of St. Thomas to the United States ...<sup>108</sup>

In 1913, A. M. Stickles likewise concluded that the Senate ought to have ratified the treaty. Seward was wrong in negotiating secretly with Denmark without

consulting the Senate, which acted within its constitutional rights when rejecting it. Still, circumstances in connection with the purchase of Florida from Spain, and the treaty with France securing indemnity to U.S. citizens for injuries during Napoleon's reign, suggested that, in a situation similar to that of Denmark's, the United States would also have felt to be suffering from a breach of good faith. Sumner's arguments for ratification of the Alaska Treaty - the American initiative and the United States' honor and diplomatic prestige being at stake - were equally applicable to the treaty with Denmark.<sup>109</sup>

... The fact remains plainly evident that the Senate had had many other chances to show its independence and had done so frequently; it was not now necessary to violate the plighted faith of a friendly nation. When all facts are carefully weighed and the political conditions of the times are considered, the guarding of the Senate's prerogative as a primary motive in the rejection of the treaty can not be accepted as a valid reason for the violation of a serious compact made by our government at its own initiative.<sup>110</sup>

In his Purchase of the Danish West Indies (1932), C. C. Tansill did not share this negative view of the part played by the Senate. He emphasized the fact that its rejection correctly expressed the Senate's hostility to the Treaty, which was shared by Grant and Fish. In a wider sense, it was a democratic decision against the background of "the evident disinclination of the American public to follow Seward in his schemes for colonial domination".<sup>111</sup>

The Danish Government did not give up the St. Thomas Treaty after Raasloff's mission to Washington because it would be a serious loss of prestige for Danish foreign policy and because Raasloff and Bille continued to think it had a chance. However, when Grant and Fish supported the Treaty for a period after December 1869, it was only because it was impossible to neglect St. Thomas while entering on a policy of Caribbean expansion. When the Santo Domingo Treaty was rejected by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Grant immediately stopped supporting St. Thomas, which then had no chance of success. Sumner would probably have greeted the ratification of the Treaty with satisfaction, but the generally hostile attitude towards territorial expansion and Seward's policies in the Committee and in the Senate made it impossible for him to support it openly.

-----

<sup>1</sup>Yeaman to Fish, Apr. 22, 1869, NA M41 R12

<sup>2</sup>A. F. Kriegers Dagbøger 1848-1880. Udgivet af E. Koppel, Aa. Friis, P. Munch, Bd. IV (Kbh.: Nordisk Forlag, 1920), 240-241, 258-264

<sup>3</sup>Yeaman to Fish, May 12, 1869, NA M41 R12

<sup>4</sup>Bille to Frijs, April 13 & 16, 1869, confidential, MS, UM; cf. H. Fish's Diary, April 9, 1869, H. Fish Papers

<sup>5</sup>Luis E. Aguilar's article "Cuba, c. 1869-1934" in The Cambridge History of Latin America, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 232-234; Philip S. Foner, A History of Cuba and Its Relations With the United States, 2d vol. (New York: International Publishers, 1962-63) 198-223

<sup>6</sup>Frijs to Bille, April 17 & May 17, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>7</sup>Bille to Fish, May 17, 1869, excerpt, UM

<sup>8</sup>Frijs to Bille, June 12, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>9</sup>Bille to Frijs, June 1, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>10</sup>Bille to Frijs, June 1, 1869, MS, UM; H. Fish's Diary, May 13 & 27, 1869, H. Fish Papers

<sup>11</sup>Bille to Frijs, June 26, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Bille to Frijs, June 7, 1869, confidential, MS, UM

<sup>14</sup>Bille to Frijs, July 15, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>15</sup>Bille to Frijs, July 15 & 18, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>16</sup>Allerunderdanigst Forestilling, August 1869, MS, UM

<sup>17</sup>A.F. Krieger, IV, 285, 290-292

<sup>18</sup>Bille to Frijs, Aug. 14, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>19</sup>Bille to Frijs, Aug. 22, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>20</sup>Bille to Frijs, Sept. 6, 1869, MS, UM

<sup>21</sup>Bille to Frijs, Sept. 16, 1869, confidential, MS, UM

<sup>22</sup>H. Fish's Diary, Sept. 16, 1869, H. Fish Papers

<sup>23</sup>Bille to Frijs, Sept. 16, 1869, confidential, MS, UM

<sup>24</sup>H. Fish's Diary, Sept. 23, 1869, H. Fish Papers

- <sup>25</sup> Bille to Frijs, Sept. 23, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>26</sup> H. Fish's Diary, Sept. 23, 1869, H. Fish Papers; Telegram, Bille to Frijs, Sept. 26, 1869; Bille to Frijs, Sept. 27, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>27</sup> Bille to Frijs, Sept. 27, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>28</sup> Bille to Fish, Sept. 25, copy, UM
- <sup>29</sup> Bille to Frijs, Sept. 27, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>30</sup> Fish to Bille, Sept. 25, 1869, copy, UM
- <sup>31</sup> Telegram, Frijs to Bille, Sept. 26, 1869, MS.  
UM
- <sup>32</sup> Frijs to Bille, Sept. 27, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>33</sup> Copy of telegram, Frijs to Bille, Oct. 9, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>34</sup> Bille to Frijs, Oct. 14, 1869, MS, UM; Additional Article to the Convention of October 1867 between His Majesty the King of Denmark and the United States of America, October 14, 1869, MS and printed copies, UM
- <sup>35</sup> Frijs to Bille, Nov. 13, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>36</sup> Bille to Frijs, Dec. 2, 1869, private and confidential, MS, UM
- <sup>37</sup> Telegram, Frijs to Bille, Dec. 30, 1869, draft, UM. This draft was dated January 30, 1869, but everything points to the real date being December 30, 1869.
- <sup>38</sup> Bille to Frijs, Nov. 26, 1869, MS, UM; H. Fish's Diary, Nov. 25, 1869, H. Fish Papers
- <sup>39</sup> Bille to Frijs, Dec. 7 & 8, excerpts, UM
- <sup>40</sup> Bille to Frijs, Dec. 17 & 24, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>41</sup> Bille to Frijs, Dec. 17, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>42</sup> H. Fish's Diary, Dec. 7, 1869, H. Fish Papers
- <sup>43</sup> Bille to Frijs, Dec. 24, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>44</sup> "He": i.e. Bille

- <sup>45</sup>H. Fish's Diary, Dec. 23, 1869, H. Fish Papers
- <sup>46</sup>Bille to Frijs, Dec. 24, 1869, MS, UM
- <sup>47</sup>N. Y. Tribune, 25 December 1869
- <sup>48</sup>N. Y. Times, 23 December 1869
- <sup>49</sup>Bille to Frijs, Dec. 29, 1869, confidential, MS, UM; N. Y. Times, 28 December 1869
- <sup>50</sup>N. Y. Times, 28 December 1869
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid., 27 January and 15 February 1870
- <sup>52</sup>Bille to Frijs, Jan. 10, 1870, confidential, MS, UM
- <sup>53</sup>Bille to Frijs, Jan. 22, 1870, MS, UM
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid.; Bille to Frijs, Jan. 28 and Feb. 1 & 16, 1870, MS, UM
- <sup>55</sup>Bille to Frijs, Feb. 7, 1870, MS, UM
- <sup>56</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 17, 1870, MS, UM; cf. H. Fish's Diary, Mar. 17, 1870, H. Fish Papers
- <sup>57</sup>Telegram, Bille to Danish Foreign Office, Mar. 22, 1870, MS, UM; Bille to Frijs, Mar. 23, 1870, *ibid.*
- <sup>58</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 23, 1870, MS, UM; cf. Raasloff to Fox, Jan. 1, 1869, G.V. Fox Papers
- <sup>59</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 24, 1870, MS, UM; H. Fish's Diary, Mar. 24, 1870, H. Fish Papers. In Bille's despatch the date of the interview is Mar. 23; in Fish's Diary Mar. 24.
- <sup>60</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 30, 1870, private; Bille to Frijs, Mar. 31, 1870, MS, UM. The quotation is from Bille's despatch of Mar. 30.
- <sup>61</sup>Bille to Frijs, Apr. 6, 7 & 15, 1870, MS, UM; H. Fish's Diary, Apr. 14, 1870, H. Fish Papers
- <sup>62</sup>Bille to Fish, Apr. 12, 1870, copy; Bille to Frijs, Apr. 15, 1870, MS, UM
- <sup>63</sup>Bille to Frijs, Apr. 16, 1870, MS, UM
- <sup>64</sup>Fish to Bille, Apr. 14, 1870, MS, UM

<sup>65</sup>Schurz to Pierce, Nov. 19, 1887; Cameron to Pierce, Dec. 9, 1887; Morrill to Pierce, Dec. 23, 1887, E.L. Pierce Papers

<sup>66</sup>Patterson to Pierce, Nov. 23, 1887, ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Harlan to Pierce, Jan. 14, 1888, ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 23, 1870, MS, UM

<sup>69</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 24, 1870, MS, UM

<sup>70</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 23, 1870, MS, UM

<sup>71</sup>Harlan to Pierce, Jan. 14, 1888, E.L. Pierce Papers

<sup>72</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 23, 1870, MS. UM

<sup>73</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 30, 1870, private, MS, UM

<sup>74</sup>H. Pinket, "Efforts to Annex Santo Domingo to the United States, 1866-1871". JNH vol. XXVI (1941), 12-45, 27

<sup>75</sup>Bille to Frijs, Mar. 24, 1870, MS, UM

<sup>76</sup>Yeaman to Fish, May 2, 1870, unofficial, NA M41 R12

<sup>77</sup>Yeaman to Fish, Apr. 16 & May 11, 1870, NA M41 R12; Fish to Yeaman, June 6, 1870; J. C. B. Davis to Yeaman, Aug. 9, 1870, NA M77 R50

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Yeaman to Fish, May 2, 1870, unofficial, NA M41 R12

<sup>79</sup>Frijs to Bille, May 20, 1870, draft, MS, UM

<sup>80</sup>Rigsdagstidende. Forhandlinge paa Folkethinget. Ordentlig Samling 1869-70, col. 5393; Forhandlinge paa Landstinget. Ordentlig Samling 1869-70, col. 2075

<sup>81</sup>Ibid. Forhandlinge paa Folkethinget. Ordentlig Samling 1869-70, cols. 5777-5778; Forhandlinge paa Landstinget. Ordentlig Samling 1869-70, cols. 2405-2408

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. Forhandlinge paa Folkethinget. Ordentlig Samling 1869-70. 3. Bind, cols. 5960-5964

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.: the English-language text quoted is from a printed translation of the speech enclosed with Yeaman's despatch to Fish, May 14, 1870, NA M41 R12

<sup>84</sup>P. N. Nieuwenhuis' article, 336-9; P. Engelstoft's article, 551-3; H. Holböll, "Generallöjtnant Wald. Rud. Raasloff", 60-61; F. G.-n., "W. R. v. Raasloff", 213, 214

<sup>85</sup>Berlingske Tidende, 3 April, 4 & 5 May 1870; Dagbladet, 20 April & 2 Maj 1870; Dagens Nyheder, 29 April 1870; Faedrelandet, 20 & 28 April 1870

<sup>86</sup>Faedrelandet, 20 April 1870

<sup>87</sup>A.F. Kriegers Dagböger, vol. IV, 348-9; Vedel to Quaade, Apr. 16, 1870, in Aage Friis, ed. Det nordslesvigske Spørgsmaal 1864-1879. Aktstykker og Breve til Belysning af den danske Regerings Politik, Bd. V (Kbh.: H. Koppels Forlag & Levins og Munksgaards Forlag, 1921-1948), 494-5

<sup>88</sup>Rigsdagstidende. Forhandlinger paa Folke-thinget. Ordentlig Samling 1869-70, cols. 6622, 6873-6874; Forhandlinger paa Landstinget, Ordentlig Samling 1869-1870, cols. 2818-2819, 3012-3013

<sup>89</sup>Yeaman to Fish, May 20, 1870, NA M41 R12; P. Engelstoft's article in Aage Friis, ed. Schulz Danmarkshistorie, vol. V (Kbh.: Schultz Forlag, 1942), 232-237; J. P. Trap. Fra fire kongers tid, vol. III (Kbh.: G.E.C. Gad, 1966), 168-169, 324 note 4

<sup>90</sup>Frijs to Vedel, Feb. 19, 1896, in Aa. Friis, ed. Det nordslesvigske Spørgsmaal, vol. V, 507-509

<sup>91</sup>Drafts and final copy of Aabent Brev til Indbyggerne paa St. Thomas og St. Jan, 7. Maj 1870, Kp.

<sup>92</sup>Translation of the Proclamation, St. Thomas Tidende, 4 June 1870

<sup>93</sup>St. Thomas Tidende, 2 & 27 April, 4 May 1870

<sup>94</sup>Petition of the Inhabitants of St. Thomas Addressed to His Majesty the King of Denmark - 11th July 1870, St. Thomas appearing in St. Thomas Tidende 13 July 1870; cf. ibid., 23, 27 & 30 July 1870.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 20 July 1870; St. Croix Avis, 22 July 1870

<sup>98</sup>O. Hornby, Kolonierne i Vestindien, 300-306;  
F. Skrubbeltang, Dansk Vestindien 1848-1880, 62-68

<sup>99</sup>Olive Risley Seward, "A Diplomatic Episode",  
Scribner's Magazine, vol. II (July-December 1887), 585-  
602

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 591

<sup>101</sup>E. L. Pierce, A Diplomatic Episode: The  
Rejected Treaty for St. Thomas (Boston, 1889); the  
references quoted here are to the reprinted version in  
E. L. Pierce, ed. Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner,  
vol. IV (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1893), 613-624

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Cf. Raasloff to Sumner, Mar. 28 & May 19,  
1869, C. Sumner Papers

<sup>104</sup>Pierce, Memoir and Letters, 62

<sup>105</sup>N. Y. Times, 25 January 1902

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 7 February 1902

<sup>107</sup>W. Wilson, Congressional Government (Cleveland  
and New York: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Co.,  
1965 (originally published 1885)), 52-53

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 52

<sup>109</sup>Arndt M. Stickles, "The Danish West Indies and  
American Ownership", JAH VII, no. 4 (1913), 849-875

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 865

<sup>111</sup>Tansill, Purchase of the Danish West Indies,  
148-151

## CHAPTER SIX

## CONCLUSIONS

Military and strategic considerations moved Seward to propose U.S. purchase of the Danish West Indies in early 1865. It is however impossible to determine whether Seward, Fox, the United States Navy, or even (possibly) George P. Hansen, should be credited with having originated the idea.

Though Raasloff soon personally began advocating the conclusion of a treaty, it was only after the formation of the Frijs Cabinet in November 1865 that Denmark, seeing the opportunity of economic gain after the loss of the Duchies, was willing to consider a definite offer from the United States. The matter was long delayed because Denmark would not make an offer that might damage relations with France in particular, and Seward could not find support for an acceptable offer in the Johnson Cabinet. It was only because Denmark did not change her position before Raasloff's leave of absence that Seward was finally moved to make a definite offer, in July 1866.

Seward took the initiative in January 1867 to speed up the negotiations, probably realizing that relations with Congress would make later action impossible. Upon securing a higher price than originally proposed by Seward, and a favorable

plebiscite in the islands, Frijs concluded the treaty, owing to the economic benefits to be gained.

The treaty was easily ratified in Denmark because it was regarded as economically advantageous and because the populations of St. Thomas and St. John were so overwhelmingly in favor of it. In the United States it met with indifference or outright opposition, because it suffered from the conflict between the Johnson Administration and Congress, as well as from the general political aversion to territorial expansion.

Raasloff's mission to Washington in the winter of 1868-1869 failed, despite energetic labors by himself and able collaborators, because Seward's and Johnson's expansionist policies could not possibly win the support either of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or of such leading politicians in the new Cabinet as Grant and Fish.

Raasloff's belief that Sumner and some members of the Grant Cabinet would ultimately be able to influence the United States Government in favor of a positive result led to the Danish Government not giving up its battle for ratification in 1869 and early 1870. Grant and Fish supported the treaty for 3 months after December 1869 only because they could not avoid promoting St. Thomas when Grant launched his own policy of Caribbean expansion. When the Senate Committee

reported against the Santo Domingo treaty, Grant subsequently dropped St. Thomas altogether.

The failure of the treaty caused Danish-American relations to cool off temporarily. In Denmark, it led to Raasloff's resignation, and should be regarded as a contributory factor to the resignation of the Frijs Cabinet.

Without Raasloff's excessive optimism in the St. Thomas negotiations, the project would most likely have been abandoned much earlier. Having become an ardent personal advocate of the transaction under the Bluhme Cabinet, he continued working for it even when the odds were insurmountable, and Frijs generally followed his advice. Upon the loss of the Duchies it was desirable to win a small victory in foreign policy. Raasloff must be blamed for not having faced the fact that the U.S. Senate could never be moved to go along with Seward's plans. Thus great injustice was done to Denmark, which was left in a most humiliating situation with failures in both the West Indian sale and in the Schleswig-Holstein question.

## APPENDIX I

Seward's Draft Treaty of May 27, 1867<sup>1</sup>

The United States of America and His Majesty, the King of Denmark, being desirous of confirming the good understanding which exists between them, have for that purpose, appointed as Plenipotentiaries, the President of the United States, George H. Yeaman, accredited as their Minister Resident to his said Majesty, and His Majesty the King of Denmark.

And the said Plenipotentiaries, having exchanged their full powers, which were found to be in due form, have agreed upon and signed the following articles.

## Article I

His Majesty the King of Denmark agrees to cede to the United States, by this Convention, all the Danish West India Islands, namely the Island of St. Thomas, the Island of Santa Cruz, and the Island of St. John.

## Article II

In the cession of territory and dominion made by the preceding Article, are included the right of property in all public lots and squares, vacant lands, and all public buildings, fortifications, barracks, and other edifices which are not private individual property.

Any Government Archives, papers and documents relative to the territory and dominion aforesaid which may be now existing there, shall be left in the possession of the Agent of the United States, but an authenticated copy of such of them as may be acquired, will be at all times, given by the United States to the Danish Government, or to such Danish officers or subjects as may apply for them.

## Article III

The inhabitants of the ceded territory, according to their choice, reserving their natural allegiance, may return to Denmark within two years, but if they should prefer to remain in the ceded territory they shall be admitted to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States, and shall be maintained and protected in their full enjoyment of their liberty, property, and religion.

#### Article IV

Immediately after the payment by the United States of the sum of money stipulated for in the fifth Article of this Convention, His Majesty the King of Denmark shall appoint an Agent or Agents for the purpose of formally delivering to a similar Agent or Agents appointed on behalf of the United States, the territory, Islands, property, and appurtenances which are ceded as above, including any fortifications or military posts which may be in the ceded territory. Any Danish troops which may be in the territory or Islands aforesaid shall be withdrawn as soon as may be reasonably and conveniently practicable.

#### Article V

In consideration of the cession aforesaid, the United States agree to pay at the Treasury in Washington within three months after the exchange of the ratification of this Convention, to the diplomatic representative or other Agent of His Majesty the King of Denmark, duly authorized to receive the same, seven millions five hundred thousand dollars in gold. The cession of the territory and Islands herein made is hereby declared to be free and unencumbered by any reservations, privileges, franchises, grants or possessions by any associated companies whether corporate or incorporate, Danish or any other, or by any parties except merely private individual property holders, and the cession hereby made conveys all the dominion rights, franchises, and privileges now belonging to Denmark in the said territory and Islands.

#### Article VI

When the Convention shall have been duly ratified by the President of the United States by and with the advice and consent of the Senate on the one part and on the other by His Majesty the King of Denmark, the ratifications shall be exchanged at Washington within ..... from the date hereof, or sooner if possible.

Done at Copenhagen, the day of ..... in the Year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven.

-----

<sup>1</sup>Enclosed with Seward's instruction to Yeaman  
May 27, 1867, NA M77 R50

## Convention

between

His Majesty the King of Denmark

and

the United States of America

concerning

the cession

of Terre St. Thomas og St. Jan  
i Vestindien.

Da Hans Majestæt Kongen af Danmark og de Forenede Stater af Amerika ere besjættede af Villet om at bekræfte det gode Forhold, som bestaaer imellem dem, have de i den Anledning udværet til deres Resuldningsmagte, Hans Majestæt Kongen af Danmark Sin Confuldepræsident og Udenrigsminister Christian Emil Wrede Inel-Vind Frijs, Kammerherre, Storlær af Dannebrog og Dannebrogsmænd, og Præsidenten for de Forenede Stater deres ved det Congreg. danske Hof accrediterede Minister Resident George H. Yeaman, hvilke efterat have udværet deres Fuldmagter, der befandtes i behørig Form, ere komne overens om og have undertegnet følgende Artikler.

## Artikel 1.

Hans Majestæt Kongen af Danmark forpligter Sig ved denne Convention til umiddelbart efter Udvektlingen af Ratificationerne at afstaa til de Forenede Stater af Amerika Terre St. Thomas og St. Jan i Vestindien tilligemed de tilhørende Smaaer og Klipper, beliggende Nord for den 18de Grad nordlig Brede.

Hans Majestæt Kongen af Danmark vil imidlertid ikke øve nogen Tvang over Befolkningen og vil derfor snarest muligt give den Befolkning til frit at udsænde sine Døttre med Hensyn til denne Afstaaelse.

## Convention

between

His Majesty the King of Denmark

and

the United States of America

concerning

the cession

of the Islands of St. Thomas and  
St. John in the West Indies.

His Majesty the King of Denmark and the United States of America being desirous of confirming the good understanding which exists between them, have for that purpose appointed as Plenipotentiaries, His Majesty the King of Denmark Count Christian Emil Inel-Vind-Frijs, President of the Council of the Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Grandcross of the Order of Dannebrog and decorated with the Cross of honour of the same Order, and the President of the United States George H. Yeaman, accredited as their Minister Resident to his said Majesty, and the said Plenipotentiaries having exchanged their full powers, which were found to be in due form, have agreed upon and signed the following articles:

## Article 1.

His Majesty the King of Denmark agrees to cede to the United States by this Convention immediately upon the exchange of the ratifications thereof the islands of Saint Thomas and Saint John in the West Indies with the adjacent islands and rocks, situated north of the 18th degree of north latitude.

His Majesty the King of Denmark will however not exercise any constraint over the people and will therefore, as soon as practicable, give them an opportunity of freely expressing their wishes in regard to this cession.

## Artikel 2.

Den i forrige Artikel omdannede Afstaaelse af Landet og Herredretten indbefatter den danske Krone og Landene til alle offentlige Grunde, Stæder og Pladser, offentlige Grunde, offentlige Bygninger, Kastningsværker, Mønter og andre Bygninger, som alle ere privat Eigendom.

Dei skulle de lutheriske Menigheder blive i Besiddelse af de Kirker, som de nu benytte sig af, og de Summe, der findes den danske Statskasse af Private, undtagne fra og ikke indbefattede under denne Afstaaelse.

Regjeringens Arkiver, Papirer og Dokumenter, som vedkomme det omdannede Land og Herredretten over samme, og som nu findes der, overgives til den Agent, som de forenede Stater i Overensstemmelse med Artikel 4 udvælge, men en betydelig Mængde af saadanne Dokumenter, som maatte ønskes meddeelte, vil til enhver Tid blive givet af de forenede Stater til den danske Regjering eller til de danske Embedsmænd eller Underafgæter, som maatte begjære Saadant.

## Artikel 3.

Indvognere paa de afstaaede Øer skulle beholde i Udøvelse af deres Frihed, Religion, Eigendom og private Rettigheder, og de kunne efter det Valg forskjellige boende paa Terne eller til enhver Tid forlade dem, beholde deres der værende Eigendom eller afskænde den og fore Udvalget af Afstaaelsen, hvorhen de ville, uden at der i den Anledning kan pålægges dem nogenformet Skat, Afgift eller Bøde. De iblandt dem, som foretrække at forblive boende paa Terne, have Ret til enten at bevare deres hidtilværende underordnede Forhold og de deraf følgende Rettigheder eller at erklære sig for Borgere i de forenede Stater, men de skulle træffe deres Valg i sin Henseende inden 2 Aar efter Udvekslingen af Ratifikationerne af denne Conven-

## Article II.

In the cession of territory and dominion made by the preceding article are included the rights of property of the crown of Denmark in all public lots and squares, vacant lands and all public buildings, fortifications, barracks and other edifices which are not private individual property. It is however understood that the Lutheran Congregations shall remain in possession of the churches which are now used by them, and that sums due the Danish treasury by individuals are reserved and do not pass by this cession.

Any Government archives, papers and documents relative to the territory and dominion aforesaid which may be now existing there shall be left in the possession of the agent of the United States appointed in accordance with article IV, but an authenticated copy of such of them as may be required will be at all times given by the United States to the Danish Government or to such Danish Officers or Subjects as may apply for them.

## Article III.

The inhabitants of the said islands shall be protected in their liberty, their religion, their property and private rights, and they shall be free to remain where they now reside or to remove at any time retaining the property which they possess in the said islands or disposing thereof and removing the proceeds wherever they please, without their being subjected on this account to any contribution, tax or charge whatever. Those who shall prefer to remain in the said islands may either retain the title and the rights of their natural allegiance, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. But they shall make their election within two years from the date of the exchange of

tion, og de, som forblive boende paa Terne efter Udløbet af dette Traktat, uden at have erklæret, at de vilje at bevare deres indtilværende underjættede Forhold, skalle antages at have bekræftet sig til at blive Borgere i de Forenede Stater.

#### Artikel 4.

Sans Majestæt Kongen af Danmark vil umiddelbart efterat de Forenede Stater have erlagt den i nærværende Conventions Artikel 3 fastsatte Pengesum, udnævne en eller flere Deputationsmagte, der vilje have paa forment Maade at overføre til den eller de af de Forenede Stater dertil Deputationsmagte de ovennævnte Terr. Eiendomme og Appertuentier, derunder indbefatter Kastningsværker og Militærposter, som findes paa de afstaaede Territorier, og at foretage alle de Skridt, som i dette Tilfælde maatte anses nødvendige. Dog skal Afstaaelsen og den dermed umiddelbart forbindne Eiendoms-overdragelse afholdes ved Udvekslingen af Ratificationerne anses som fuldstændig og endelig uden Forbehud til den senere formelle Overlevering. De danske Tropper, som maatte findes paa Terne, skalle trækkes bort inden en passende og bestemt Tidfrist.

#### Artikel 5.

Som Vederlag for den omhandlede Afstaaelse forpligte de Forenede Stater sig til inden Udløbet af 3 Maanedre efter Udvekslingen af denne Conventions Ratificationer ved Statelassen i Washington at lade udbetale 7,500,000 Dollars i Guld til Sans Majestæt Kongen af Danmarks diplomatiske Repræsentant eller hofsførelsest anden til Voldtagelsen af denne Sum Allerhøist befaldningsfuldt Person.

Afstaaelsen medfører Overdragelsen af den fulde og udelte Souverænitæt over Terne og disses Appertuentier med al den Høihedret,

ratifications of this convention; and those who shall remain in the said islands after the expiration of that term without having declared their intention to retain their natural allegiance shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States.

#### Article IV.

Immediately after the payment by the United States of the sum of money stipulated for in the fifth article of this Convention, His Majesty the King of Denmark will appoint an agent or agents for the purpose of formally delivering to a similar agent or agents appointed on behalf of the United States the territory, islands, property and appurtenances which are ceded as above, including any fortifications or military posts which may be in the ceded territory, and for doing any other act which may be necessary in regard thereto. But the cession with the right of immediate possession is nevertheless to be deemed complete and absolute on the exchange of ratifications without waiting for such formal delivery. Any Danish troops which may be in the territory or islands aforesaid, shall be withdrawn as soon as may be reasonably and conveniently practicable.

#### Article V.

In consideration of the cession aforesaid the United States agree to pay at the treasury in Washington within three months after the exchange of the ratifications of this convention, to the diplomatic representative or other agent of His Majesty the King of Denmark duly authorized to receive the same, seven millions five hundred thousand dollars in gold.

The cession conveys to the United States the said islands and appurtenances in full and entire sovereignty, with all the do-

alle de Rettigheder og al den Rørdighed, som Danmark nu er i Besiddelse af og kan uøve over dem, jfr for og ubehæftet med nogenformigt Betingelser, Betingelser, Betingelser og Retigheder, som paa nogen Maade gøre Indgred i eller begrænse Udøvelsen af saadan Rørdighed.

#### Article 6

Naar denne Convention er bleven behørig ratificeret paa den ene Side af Hans Majestæt Kongen af Danmark med Rigsdagens Samtulle og paa den anden Side af de Forenede Staters Præsident med Senats Råd og Samtulle, blive Ratificationerne at udveksle i Washington i Maanedet efter Conventionens Underskrift eller om muligt tidligere.

I Udvekslingen herpaa have de respective Befuldmagttigede undertegnet denne Convention og forsynet den med deres Paabemerk.

Saaledes sket i Kjøbenhavn den 24de October i Herrens Aar atten hundrede og seks og trettindstyve.

C. E. Juul-Vind-Frijs.  
(L. S.)

Geo. H. Yeaman.  
(L. S.)

minion, rights and powers which Denmark now possesses and can exercise in them, free and unincumbered by any grants, conditions, privileges or franchises in any way affecting or limiting the exercise of such sovereignty.

#### Article VI.

When this convention shall have been duly ratified by His Majesty the King of Denmark by and with the consent of the Rigsdag on the one part, and on the other by the President of the United States by and with the advise and consent of the Senate, the ratifications shall be exchanged at Washington within four months from the date hereof or sooner if possible.

In faith whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed this convention and thereto affixed the seals of their arms.

Done at Copenhagen the 24 October the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty seven.

C. E. Juul-Vind-Frijs. Geo. H. Yeaman.  
(L. S.) (L. S.)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The bibliography below lists all sources, published and unpublished, cited in this dissertation. Documents from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Udenrigsministeriet) and the United States Department of State, as well as the papers of key figures, have been at the center of the research. It is therefore useful to comment especially on these sources.

The basic sources for the dissertation were the materials from the Danish Foreign Ministry relating to Danish-American negotiations regarding the Islands from 1865 to 1870, which are organized in a special collection comprising five boxes registered at the Danish National Archives (Rigsarkivet) as follows:- "Udenrigsministeriet, Samlede Sager: 1865-1907. De vestindiske Oeer. 5 pk.". Of these, Boxes 3 and 5 contain little or no material of direct interest to this project (their contents deal with a later period). Boxes 1, 2 and 4 contain the central Danish diplomatic sources. In Box 1 there are papers, mainly instructions and despatches, from the negotiations of 1865-1870 in six files: A3600/1865-67; A4038/1867-68; A4100/1868; A4202/1868-69; A4272/1869, and A4356/1869-70. Box 2 contains the following four files:- A4427/1870 treaty with U.S. on sale of the West Indies and

A3600/1865-66; A4038/1867; A4110/1868 concerning France's renunciation of the right of redemption of St. Croix, and A2681/1866-67 containing information on the West Indies. Box 4 contains a major file of handwritten copies of 73 despatches and instructions from the 1865-1870 period covering the attempted transfer; a collection of documents presented to the Landsting for their orientation. Much of the previous research seems to have been based on the documents presented to the Landsting, and as these documents are in a more ordered and accessible form, they have provided convenient entries for closer analysis of all the source material. Two boxes of material concerning the plebiscite in the Islands have also been included in the research.

On the American side, the most important diplomatic sources are the instructions from the U.S. Department of State to U.S. Ministers in Copenhagen as well as the despatches from U.S. Ministers in Denmark to Washington. As the bibliography and footnotes show, other relevant categories of diplomatic sources from the State Department and government publications have also been used.

The papers of key participants on the Danish side proved a disappointing source, mainly because Raasloff's and Frijs's papers are not available. On the other hand the papers of many American participants

in the affair have been most useful. The William H. Seward Papers contain much material of relevance, though some of the documents are duplicates from the State Department. The Andrew Johnson Papers, by contrast, turned out to contain but few sources of interest. As expected, the Charles Sumner Papers and the Hamilton Fish Papers were rich sources. It was also most encouraging to discover the previously unused sources in the Gustavus Vasa Fox Papers and the James Parton Papers. As mentioned above, these made it possible to throw new light on the negotiations.

MANUSCRIPTSRigsarkivet, Copenhagen

## Konseilspraesidiet

1867-1883. Bilag til Indberetning fra den overordentlige regeringskommissær for Dansk Vestindien

2 boxes

## Udenrigsministeriet

1855-1907. De vestindiske Oeer

5 boxes

Houghton Library, Harvard University

## James Parton Papers

## Edward L. Pierce Papers

## Charles Sumner Papers

Library of Congress

## James R. Doolittle Papers (microfilm)

## Hamilton Fish Papers (partly on microfilm)

## Andrew Johnson Papers (microfilm)

## William H. Seward Papers (microfilm)

## Elihu B. Washburne Papers

## Gideon Welles Papers

New York Historical Society

Gustava Vasa Fox Papers

National Archives (National Archives microcopy No.)

U.S. Department of State. Despatches from U.S. Consuls in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. (T 233)

\_\_\_\_\_. Despatches from U.S. Consuls in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. (T 350)

\_\_\_\_\_. Despatches from U.S. Ministers in Denmark, 1811-1906. (M 41)

\_\_\_\_\_. Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906. (M 77)

\_\_\_\_\_. Miscellaneous letters of the Department of State, July 2-17, 1866. (M 179)

\_\_\_\_\_. Notes from the Danish Legation in the U.S. to the Department of State, 1801-1906. (M 52)

\_\_\_\_\_. Notes to Foreign Legations in the U.S. from the Department of State, 1834-1906. (M 99)

\_\_\_\_\_. Special Agents, 1861-1869. (M 37)

\_\_\_\_\_. Reports of Clerks and Bureau Officers of the Department of State, 1790-1911. Vol 6, 1850-1888  
(M 800)

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONSDanish

Friis, Aage, ed. Det nordslesvigske Spørgsmaal 1864-1879. Aktstykker og Breve til Belysning af den danske Regerings Politik, I-VI. Kbh.: H. Koppels Forlag & Levins og Munksgaards Forlag, 1921-1948.

Rigsdagstidende. Kbh. 1867-1870.

Statsraadets Forhandlinger 1848-1912. Bd. I-XII, 3. udg.. Kbh.: Munksgaards Forlag, 1972.

American

James D. Richardson, A Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 11 vols. New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1911.

U.S. Congress. Congressional Globe, 1867.

\_\_\_\_\_. House Executive Document. Report of the Navy, 39th Cong., 1st Session, 1865-66 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866).

U.S. Senate. Senate Document No. 231, 56th Congress, 2d. Session, Compilation on Reports of Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 1789-1901. Treaties and Legislation Respecting Them, vol. VIII. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901.

\_\_\_\_\_. 40th Congress, 3d Session, Executive, Confidential, Papers Relative to the Negotiations with Denmark for the Purchase of St. Thomas and St. John. January 19 & 20 and February 17, 1869. Kept in National Archives fil tray SEN 40B-138 12 Foreign Relations.

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALSAmerican

Boston Daily Advertiser

Commercial and Financial Chronicle

Merchant's Magazine and Commercial Review

New York Daily Tribune

New York Herald

New York Times

Danish

Berlingske Tidende

Dagbladet

Dagens Nyheder

Fædrelandet

Danish-West Indian

St. Croix Avis

St. Thomas Tidende

PAMPHLETS, MEMOIRS, BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARIES, LETTERS  
AND SIMILAR SOURCES.

Andrews, Sidney ("Dixon"). The St. Thomas Treaty, A  
Series of Letters to the Boston Daily Advertiser  
New York; n.p., 1869.

Baker, George E., ed. The Works of William H. Seward.  
4 vols. New York: Redfield, 1853-1861.

Dansk Biografisk Leksikon. Red. af P. Engelstoft.  
Bd. 1-27. Kbh.: J. H. Schultz Forlag, 1933-44.

Dansk Biografisk Lexikon. Tillige omfattende Norge for  
Tidsrummet 1537-1814. Udgivet af C. F. Bricka.  
Bd. 1-19. Kbh.: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag,  
1899.

Van Dockum, Carl E. Livserindringer. Udgivne af Wm.  
Carstensen. Kbh.: 1893.

Hansen, Jules. Les Coulisses de la Diplomatie. Quinze  
Ans à l'étranger. Paris: J. Boudry, 1880.

Krieger, A.F. Andreas Frederik Kriegers Dagbøger  
1848-1880. Udgivet af E. Koppel, Aa. Friis, J.  
Munch. Bd. 1-10 (Kbh.: Nordisk Forlag, 1920).

Parton, James. The Danish Islands: Are We Bound in  
Honor to Pay for Them? Boston: Fields, Osgood &  
Co., 1869.

\_\_\_\_\_. De dansk-vestindiske Øer. Fordrer den  
amerikanske Nations Ære, at vi betale for dem?  
(Paa dansk ved Carl Hohlenberg). Kbh.: Fr.  
Wøldikes Forlag, 1869.

Pierce, Edward L. A Diplomatic Episode: The Rejected  
Treaty for St. Thomas. Boston: 1889.

\_\_\_\_\_. ed. Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner.  
4 vols. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1893.

Seward, Frederick W. Reminiscences of a War-Time  
Statesman and Diplomat, 1830-1915. New York and  
London: Putnam's Sons, 1916.

Trap, J.P. Fra fire kongers tid. Bd. I-III. Udgivet  
af Det danske Sprog- og litteraturselskab ved  
Harald Jørgensen. Kbh.: G. E. C. Gad, 1966.

Welles, Gideon. The Diary of Gideon Welles With an Introduction by John T. Morse, Jr., 3 vols. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1911.

GENERAL SURVEYS, MONOGRAPHS ETC..

Baily, Thomas A. A Diplomatic History of the American People. 7th ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964.

Bancroft, Frederic. The Life of William A. Seward. 2 vols. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967 (reprint edn.).

Bemis, Samuel Flagg. A Short History of American Foreign Policy and Diplomacy. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959.

Chase, Harold W. et al., eds. Dictionary of American History. 8 vols., rev. edn. New York: Charles Scribner, 1976-78.

Van Deusen, Glyndon. William Henry Seward. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Dookhan, Isaac. A History of the Virgin Islands of the United States. College of the Virgin Islands: Caribbean Universities Press, 1974.

Fink, Troels. Estruptionens politiske historie, 1785-1894. I-II. Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1986.

\_\_\_\_\_. Fem foredrag om dansk udenrigspolitik efter 1864. Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1970.

Foner, Philip S. A History of Cuba and its Relations with the United States. 2 vols. New York: International Publishers, 1962-63.

Friis, Aage. ed. Schulz Danmarkshistorie. Vort Folks Historie gennem Tiderne. Kbh.: Schultz' Forlag, 1942.

Hornby, Ove. Kolonierne i Vestindien. Kbh.: Politikens Forlag, 1980.

- Langley, Lester D. Struggle for the American Mediterranean. United States-European Rivalry in the Gulf-Caribbean, 1776-1904. Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1976.
- Lewisohn, Florence. St. Croix under Seven Flags. Hollywood, Fla.: The Dukane Press, 1970.
- Merk, Frederick. Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation. New York: Vintage Books, 1963.
- Paolino, Ernest N. The Foundations of the American Empire. William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1973.
- Pratt, Julius. A History of the United States Foreign Policy. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1955.
- Sjøqvist, Viggo. Peter Vedel. Udenrigsministeriets Direktør. I-II. Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1962.
- Skovmand, Roar. Folkestyrets Fødsel, 1830-1870. Politikens Danmarks Historie, vol. 11. Kbh.: Politikens Forlag, 1971.
- Skrubbeltrang, Fridlev. Dansk-Vestindien 1848-1880. Politiske brydninger og social uro. 2. udg. Kbh.: Fremad, 1967.
- Tansill, Charles C. The Purchase of the Danish West Indies. New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968 (reprint edn.).
- \_\_\_\_\_. The United States and Santo Domingo, 1798-1873. A Chapter in Caribbean Diplomacy. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938.
- Wilson, Woodrow. Congressional Government. Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1965.

ARTICLES

- Bethell, L., ed. The Cambridge History of Latin America, vol V. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. S.v. "Cuba, c. 1860-1934", by Luis E. Aguilar.
- Bancroft, Frederic. "Seward's Ideas of Territorial Expansion." North American Review CLXVII (July-December 1898): 79-89.
- Dyer, B. "Robert Walker on Acquiring Greenland and Iceland." Mississippi Valley Historical Review XXVII (June, 1940-March, 1941), 263-266.
- G.-n., F. "W. R. v. Raasløff." Nutiden 336 (1883), 213-214.
- Hollbøll, H. "Generalløjtnant Wald. Rud. Raasløff." Illustreret Tidende 57 (1916), 60-61.
- Koht, Halvdan. "The Origin of Seward's Plan to Purchase the Danish West Indies." American Historical Review 50, no. 4 (October 1944), 762-767.
- Pinkett, Harold T. "Efforts to Annex Santo Domingo to the United States, 1866-1871." Journal of Negro History XXVI, no. 1 (January 1941), 12-45.
- Porter, David D. "Secret Mission to San Domingo." North American Review CXXVII (1879), 616-630.
- Seward, Olive Risley. "A Diplomatic Episode." Scribner's Magazine II (July-December 1887), 585-602.
- Stickles, Arndt M. "The Danish West Indies and American Ownership." Journal of American History VII, no 4 (1913), 849-875.
- Welch, Jr., R. E. "American Public Opinion and the Purchase of Russian America." American Slavic and East European Review XVII (1958), 481-494.