



## МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В ПРОШЛОМ И НАСТОЯЩЕМ

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### THE VISIT OF ENVOY OSIP NEPEYA TO ENGLAND (1556–1557): SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF RUSSIAN DIPLOMACY?

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**Abstract. Introduction.** The visit of the Russian envoy Osip Nepeya to London in 1556–1557 is usually considered as the beginning of the official relations between Russia and England. In the light of modern views about the sixteenth-century diplomacy, this event requires a more thorough research. **Methods.** The Nepeya's trip was traditionally viewed as an insignificant episode in the context of general reviews of bilateral relations concentrated mainly on trade. The reasons and possibilities of the military and political rapprochement between England, Spain and Russia in the 1550s, which was the most likely goal of the Nepeya's journey to England, have never been investigated. Therefore, this article is based on an analysis of numerous multilingual sources. **Analysis.** The author clarifies the Nepeya's diplomatic rank and certain previously unknown details of the Muscovites' stay in London. He analyzes Nepeya's mission to England in the context of foreign affairs of Ivan IV, Mary Tudor and Philip II Habsburg. **Results.** It is concluded that the rulers of Spain and England could provide military support to Ivan IV, but they were not interested in military and political alliance with the Muscovy and the war against Turkey. However, establishing official equal relations between England and Russia at the highest level, as well as obtaining trade privileges for Russian merchants was the main result of Nepeya's trip. This allows us to conclude that the first Russian diplomatic mission in London was successful.

**Key words:** Osip Nepeya, England, Russia, Tudors, Ivan the Terrible, Muscovy company.

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### ВИЗИТ ПОСЛАНИКА О.Г. НЕПЕИ В АНГЛИЮ (1556–1557 гг.): УСПЕХ ИЛИ ПРОВАЛ РУССКОЙ ДИПЛОМАТИИ?

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**Аннотация.** В настоящей статье, основанной на анализе широкого комплекса источников, выявлены причины и возможности военно-политического сближения Англии, Испании и Московской Руси в середине XVI в., что было наиболее вероятной целью путешествия первого русского посланника О.Г. Непеи в Англию

в 1556–1557 годах. Сделан вывод, что в этой сфере переговоры в Лондоне оказались успешными лишь отчасти, поскольку правители Испании и Англии могли оказать военную поддержку царю Ивану Грозному, но не были заинтересованы в военно-политическом союзе с Московским государством и военных действиях против Османской империи. В то же время главным результатом поездки О.Г. Непеи было установление официальных равноправных отношений между Англией и Россией на высшем уровне, а также получение торговых привилегий для русских купцов. Это позволяет считать первую русскую дипломатическую миссию в Лондоне успешной.

**Ключевые слова:** Осип Непея, Англия, Россия, Тюдоры, Иван Грозный, Московская компания.

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**Introduction.** The origin of Anglo-Russian relations is traditionally dated to 1553, when the English ship “Edward Bonaventure” reached the banks of the Dvina. Its captain Richard Chancellor in February 1554 received an audience with Tsar Ivan IV, who allowed the inhabitants of England to trade in the Russian lands. However, the Chancellor’s “sea merchants” (“korabel’nie gosti” in Russian chronicles), according to the letter by King Edward VI Tudor, were not authorized to establish interstate relations, but only “to goe to Countreies to them heretofore unknowen, aswell to seeke such things as we lacke, as also to cary unto them from our regions, such things as they lacke” [39, p. 231]. Ivan IV hinted at this in his reply, asking to send “one of Your Majesty’s Council” to him [35]. But in 1555, only the merchants of the established Muscovy trading Company Richard Chancellor, George Killingworth and Richard Gray arrived from London again. Then in 1556, together with the Englishmen, the first Russian envoy Osip Grigorievich Nepeya was sent by the Tsar from Moscow to the Tudors. It was his visit to London, which ended with the obtention of trade privileges for Russian merchants, that can be considered the beginning of the official relations between Russia and England.

Unfortunately, except for a mention in the annals, the Russian materials of this trip have not been preserved. At the same time, the visit of the representative of the Muscovy state to London in 1556–1557 was described in English, French, Venetian, Dutch and Polish sources, so it is possible to clarify certain details of the Muscovites’ stay in the English capital, as well as to revise the generally accepted assessments of the mission of Osip Nepeya. In the light of modern views about the Tudor age, this event requires a more thorough research.

**Methods.** The trip of Osip Nepeya to England has repeatedly become the subject of study by historians. However, due to the lack of detailed information about it in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Russian sources, the travel of the first Muscovy envoy to England was traditionally viewed as an insignificant episode in the context of general reviews of bilateral relations, mainly concentrated on the trade [17, pp. 56-67; 40, pp. 9-11; 28, p. 67; 42, pp. 15-18; 3; 38, pp. 28-29; 24, pp. 23-24]. But even in this direction, none of the researchers was able to estimate the business results of the visit of the Russian delegation to London, since this requires an analysis of England’s policy to the Muscovy, Hanseatic and Italian merchants in the mid-1550s.

Based on numerous multilingual sources, historians Yakov Luriye, Hieronim Grala and James Evans drew attention to the military and political goals of the mission of Osip Nepeya [27, pp. 426-429; 16, pp. 256-264; 11, pp. 291-298]. However, they did not delve into the international situation of the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, nor did they analyze the reasons and possibilities of the military and political rapprochement between England, Spain and Russia. So this case needs to be researched using systemic approach to the foreign affairs of Ivan IV, Mary Tudor and Philip II Habsburg.

The Russian sources about the travel of Osip Nepeya to England are extremely scarce and contain only brief mentions of this event in the annals [25, pp. 270, 285-286; 10, p. 150]. Much more detailed sources are the accounts of the Muscovy envoy’s visit to London, written by the protonotary (chief clerk) of the English royal court John Incent [19], and an anonymous Polish agent [16, pp. 264-266], as well as the diary of the

London clothier Henry Machyn [29]. The letters of the Venetian ambassador to England Michiel Surian [5, pp. 1005, 1022], the French diplomat François de Noailles [6, pp. 449-450] and the secretary of the Polish king Traianus Provano [36] are also important for this study.

**Analysis.** First of all, attention should be paid to the official status of the first representative of the Muscovy state in England. Due to the fact that in all non-Russian documents Osip Nepeya was denoted as “ambassador”, whereas in Russian sources – as “envoy” (*poslannik*), there is no consensus in historiography about his status. However, the difference between the diplomatic ranks of that time was clearly defined in the Muscovy of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, depending on the nature of the mission, the Russian Tsar in foreign countries was represented not only by ambassadors (*posly*), but also by envoys (*poslanniki*), messengers (*gontzy*) and couriers (*poslantzy*) [31, p. 16]. Therefore, when Ivan the Terrible wrote to the English Queen about Nepeya as “our envoy” [34, p. 139], he meant the status of his representative.

Why did Ivan IV choose Osip Nepeya for the first diplomatic mission to England? Who was this person? Historian Stepan Veselovskiy restored his biography, having found out that since 1558 Nepeya had been a clerk (*d'yak*), whose powers included foreign policy [41, p. 135]. Probably, this appointment could be a reward for a successfully completed mission. But what was Nepeya doing in 1556 when he was sent to England? In the “Nikonovskaya letopis” chronicle he was mentioned only as “the envoy Nepeya from Vologda (*Vologzhanin*)” [25, p. 270], which gave rise to disagreements among historians. Thus, he was called “a Vologda nobleman” by Iosiph Hamel [17, p. 56], “the Vologda lieutenant” by Yuri Tolstoy [40, p. 9], “the Vologda governor” by James Evans [11, p. 282], and “a merchant” by Hieronim Grala and Samuel Baron [16, p. 257; 3, p. 45]. But Osip Nepeya could not be a merchant, because, as it will be shown later, he was heading to the royal court to discuss with the English monarchs not only commercial, but also military and political issues. A Soviet historian Yakov Luriye rightly noted that “Nepeya’s mission... was already definitely political in nature” [27, p. 427]. In addition, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, merchants rarely met in person with the

sovereigns, since they were considered people of low origin (for example, Tsar Ivan IV called them “trading rubes” [40, p. 109]). Moreover, in “A Discourse of the Honourable receiving into England of the first Ambassador from the Emperor of Russia, in the yeere of Christ 1556”, written by the protonotary of the English royal court John Incent, the Tsarist envoy was called a “high officer in the towne and countrey of Vologda” [19, p. 285]. Obviously, Osip Nepeya was a nobleman, and most likely headed Vologda, where the local administration (*zemstvo*) operated at that time [43, p. 423].

Sixteen Russian merchants representing the Kholmogory region went to London with Nepeya. Of them, only Feofan Makarov and Mikhail Kositsyn were personified in the “Dvinskoy letopisetz” chronicle [10, p. 150]. The Makarovs and Kositsyns were among the largest salt and fish producers of Russian North in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, Feofan Makarov served as the elected head of the Dvina land and the local judge [30, p. 258, 282; 15, p. 35]. It was he who first met “the English ships from the Ocean-Sea” in August 1553 [10, p. 150].

Osip Nepeya was instructed to deliver the Tsar’s gifts and a letter in which the proposals of the Russian sovereign were set out. The text of this letter, apparently, has not survived, since it has not been found so far. “Despite all the searches, I could not find this letter either in the original, or in a copy or in translation”, wrote the Russian historian Iosiph Hamel [17, p. 61]. It is only known from the “Nikonovskaya letopis” chronicle that Ivan IV “wrote to the King about love and correspondence” [25, p. 270]. Therefore, researchers can only speculate about the official and unofficial goals of the visit of the first Russian envoy to England.

The expedition of four ships set off from the mouth of the Dvina on August 2, 1556. Having rounded the Scandinavian Peninsula, the flotilla was divided by a violent storm in the North Sea. The ships “Bona Confidentia” and “Bona Esperanza”, which participated in the very first Chancellor’s voyage in 1553, crashed on stones and sank off the coast of Norway. On board the “Bona Esperanza” there were several Russian merchants, among whom were the aforementioned Feofan Makarov and Mikhail Kositsyn. None of them survived. The ship “Philip and Mary” took refuge

in the Norwegian city of Trondheim and was only able to return to London the following spring. And the “Edward Bonaventure” was carried by storm to the shores of East Scotland, where the ship also crashed near Pitsligo Castle. The famous captain Richard Chancellor was among the dead.

Osip Nepeya managed to survive the shipwreck by a lucky coincidence, as well as nine other Russian men, whose names were captured in his treatise by the protonotary John Incent. They were Isaak, Demetre (Dmitry. – *A. K.*), Gorbolones (Yermolay. – *A. K.*), Symonde (Simon. – *A. K.*), Yeroffia (Yerofey. – *A. K.*), Stephen, Lowca (Luca. – *A. K.*), Andria (Andrey. – *A. K.*) and Foma [19, p. 290].

A handful of surviving passengers of the “Edward Bonaventure” landed in East Scotland. A month later, a letter came to London stating that “not only the said ship was broken, but also the whole mass and body of the goods laden in her, was by the rude and ravenous people of the country (Aberdeenshire. – *A. K.*) thereunto adjoining, rifled, spoiled and carried away” [19, p. 286]. In addition to the property and cargo of the Muscovy Company, the Scots also stole precious gifts from Tsar Ivan IV, which Osip Nepeya was carrying to the King and Queen of England. According to the compiled inventory, beautiful skins and furs were lost, including “twenty entire sables exceeding beautiful with teeth, ears and claws” and skins so rich and rare that they were “worn only by the Emperor”. Other missing gifts included four live sables, each with its own collar and chain, and a hunting white gyrfalcon who was a rare and precious bird [19, p. 289].

The Russian envoy Osip Nepeya and his companions who survived the shipwreck reached Edinburgh, where they remained to await help from England. Meanwhile, the Muscovy Company, having received a letter from the English Queen Mary Tudor to the Scottish Regent Mary of Guise with a request for support, sent its lawyers from London to Edinburgh. They were Lawrence Hussey, the son of the Company’s governor, and George Gilpin, who would later become a famous diplomat of the Elizabethan age. For two months, English lawyers tried to get the lost goods back, but in vain, despite the active support of the Scottish Dowager Queen. In February 1557, the Russian delegation, accompanied by the Englishmen, left Edinburgh and headed south.

In two weeks, the travelers reached London. At the entrance to the city, the delegation was met by numerous merchants of the Muscovy Company (a historian Iosiph Hamel wrote about 140 people [17, p. 59]) and aldermen led by the royal favorite Anthony Browne, Viscount Montagu, and the Lord Mayor of London Thomas Offley. The solemn entry of this procession into the English capital was captured in the diary of the clothier Henry Machyn, who, due to his professional interest, paid much attention to describing the outfits. “The twenty-seventh day of February came toward London out of Scotland a Duke of Muscovy as ambassador, and divers of the merchants of England as well as of all nations”, wrote Machyn. “And so they met him beyond Shoreditch in coats of velvet and coats of fine cloth bordered with velvet and with fringe of silk and chains of gold. And after come my Lord Montague and divers lords and knights and gentlemen in gorgeous apparel. And after comes my lord mayor and the aldermen in scarlet and the ambassador, his garment of tissue embroidered with pearls and stones, and his men in coarse cloth of gold down to the calf of the leg (like gowns) and high coping capes. And so to Mr. Dymoke’s place in Fenchurch Street, the merchant, and his (Nepeya’s. – *A. K.*) cape and his nightcap set with pearls and stones” [29, f. 67r].

Among the eyewitnesses of the Russian envoy’s entry to London was an unknown Polish agent, who, after a while, sent to Krakow “A meaningful and short description of the splendor with which the Muscovite ambassador entered and was introduced to London, as well as what presents he was gifted and honored by the Queen herself and London merchants” [16]. This author paid special attention to the fact that those who met had to stay for more than two hours in the February frost, and among the participants in the ceremonial entry was the founder of the Muscovy Company Sebastian Cabot. It is interesting that, unlike the English merchant Henry Machyn, who saw the Russian people for the first time, the Polish informant knew about the peculiarities of the Muscovites’ clothes, indicating that they were dressed “according to Russian custom”: in long dresses, red boots and white caps [16, p. 261].

The magnificent welcome given to an envoy from a distant country misled many Londoners

about the persona of the Muscovite. So, Machyn called him “a Duke of Muscovy”, and the famous chronicler Raphael Holinshed believed that the ambassador “from the Emperor of Cathay, Muscovy and Russeland” came to England [18, p. 132]. Considering that almost all the belongings of the Muscovites were drowned in a shipwreck or stolen by the inhabitants of the Scottish coast of Pitsligo, Osip Nepeya arrived in London, one might say, empty-handed. However, the Englishmen, including Queen Mary Tudor, presented guests with various gifts such as horses, expensive fabrics and rich clothing [17, p. 59; 11, p. 292; 16, p. 260].

The Russian envoy, along with the delegation, was accommodated in the house of the clothier John Dymocke, located in the eastern part of the City of London. The building was conveniently located since the Muscovy Company, the representative offices of Italian firms, the old Leadenhall market were all located nearby. The Muscovites were provided with “two chambers richly hanged and decked, over and above the gallant furniture of the whole house, together with an ample and rich cupboard of plate of all sorts”, John Incent wrote in the report [19, p. 287]. “During which time (Nepeya’s stay in London. – *A. K.*) daily divers Aldermen and the gravest personages of the said (Muscovy. – *A. K.*) companie did visite him, providing all kind of victuals for his table and his servants, with al sorts of Officers to attend upon him in good sort and condition, as to such an ambassadour of honour doeth and ought to appertaine” [19, p. 287]. The directorate of the Muscovy Company drew the attention of their agents to the fact that “the like (hospitality. – *A. K.*) we thinke have not bene seene nor shewed here of a long time to any Ambassadour” [1, p. 297]. The Venetian ambassador Michiel Surian noted that “London merchants greatly favour the Muscovite, because they expect through his medium to enrich themselves, by commencing a trade in those parts, he having announced good intentions to them, and they do him so much honour, that greater could not be done to the greatest sovereign” [5, p. 1005].

Due to the absence of the Spanish husband of the English Queen, Osip Nepeya managed to get an audience with the monarchs only a month after arriving in London. On March 23, 1557, the King and Queen solemnly entered the English

capital, accompanied by the nobility, the Lord Mayor, and the heads of the guilds; on March 25 the Muscovy envoy was invited to the palace. It should be noted here that both monarchs at that moment were feeling unwell (Mary had a severe cold and toothache, and Philip II fell ill even before his arrival in England), which is why the Venetian ambassador Michiel Surian could not get to see them [5, p. 1005], however, they made an exception for the representative of the Muscovy state.

According to Henry Machyn, the Russian envoy, whose “garment was of cloth of tissue (“Turkish... long to the ground”, as described by an eyewitness from the Netherlands [7, p. 61]), and his hat and his nightcap was set with great pearls and rich stones as ever I saw”, went to the royal audience, accompanied by ten aldermen and numerous merchants of the Muscovy Company [29, f. 68v]. At the palace he was greeted by Lord Chancellor Nicholas Heath, Lord High Treasurer William Paulet, Lord Privy Seal William Paget, Lord Admiral William Howard, Bishop Thomas Thirlby and other members of the Privy Council. After communicating with them Osip Nepeya was invited to a personal meeting with the English monarchs.

From the available brief descriptions of this audience made by eyewitnesses, protonotary John Incent and Secretary of the State and Privy Council of the Netherlands Josse de Courtewille, it can be concluded that the meeting went in accordance with the traditional protocol practice. The Russian envoy Osip Nepeya presented the letter of Tsar Ivan IV “full of love and friendship” to King Philip II and Queen Mary, read out the text, previously translated into English and Spanish, and then presented eighty sable furs as a gift. Considering that Nepeya had previously been robbed in Scotland, most likely the gifts were provided from the stocks of the Muscovy Company. The meeting was held in a friendly atmosphere, since, as John Incent reported, the Muscovy envoy was “in most loving manner embraced” by the monarchs at the end of the audience [19, p. 287].

From the text of the reply letter of the monarchial couple to Tsar Ivan IV, it is known that his proposals were carefully considered: “We not only in our own presence listened to how he (Nepeya. – *A. K.*) detailed those subjects that,

according to the available instructions, he had to introduce to us and personally explain; but we also ordered that what he proposes on your behalf be extensively and diligently discussed by some of our Councillors, whom we instructed to negotiate with him" [33; 40, p. 15]. These people turned out to be the diplomat and bishop Thomas Thirlby and the Secretary of State Sir William Petre, who shaped the foreign policy of England. They conducted "secret" (as John Incent described) negotiations with Osip Nepeya, as a result of which they "willingly agreed to everything that related to your expectations and requests" [33; 40, p. 15].

According to the text of the letter of the monarchs Philip II and Mary, Russian merchants were given the opportunity to "freely come to our kingdom of England and conduct their affairs in all its parts... freely sell their goods brought from your countries and possessions", hence it was proposed to open trading houses throughout the country. Negotiants from Muscovy were exempted "from paying taxes and import duties on a par with the subjects of other Christian princes who trade within the above-mentioned kingdom", and the Anglo-Russian commerce itself was declared protected by local legislation and the Court of Chancery [33; 40, p. 16].

Such a favorable attitude of Philip II and Mary to Russia and its merchants could only be considered a symmetrical response to the privileges given by Ivan IV to English merchants (as the monarchs themselves wrote in a reply letter, "in gratitude for it, in order to show a sign of our will, we did this the same for your merchants and subjects" [33; 40, p. 16]). However, there were also pragmatic political intentions behind the declaration of "brotherly love and strong friendship".

The privileges of free trade given to the Muscovites were a challenge to the monopoly of the Hanseatic League. Earlier in 1553, in order to support the growing English trade, King Edward VI Tudor abolished the privileges of the Hanse. Mary Tudor, who became Queen a few months later, reintroduced them to strengthen relations with the Habsburgs, but faced strong opposition from the City of London. Even the marriage of Mary to Philip II did not change the relationship between England and the Hanse, because the spouses differed in their opinions on this issue: Philip II supported the German merchants, but Mary was

on the English traders' side [37, pp. 151-153]. Since 1555, the Hanseatic trade in England had been gradually imposed with duties and bans, which was finally enshrined in an act of parliament of 1558, that also caused damage to Italian merchants [26, pp. 292-301; 14, p. 39]. King Philip could not prevent it.

The Russian delegation arrived in London in the midst of the contradictions between the Hanse and England. The peculiarity of the situation was that in November 1556 the congress of the Hanseatic cities in Lubeck recognized direct Anglo-Russian trade as a threat to commerce in the North and Baltic Seas, and appealed for support to the rulers of Poland, Sweden and Prussia [22, S. 424; 9, S. 213-220]. The Polish and Swedish monarchs sent their envoys to London with an appeal to stop this trade [8, S. 360-361; 5, p. 141; 21]. Historian George Forsten was convinced that Anglo-Russian commerce was the main reason behind the Swedish-Russian war of 1555-1557, initiated by King Gustav I Vasa [13, pp. 17-18]. Therefore, the trade privileges granted to Muscovy merchants in England not only testified to the success of Osip Nepeya's diplomatic mission, but also underscored the pronounced course of the City of London towards independence from intermediaries in international trade.

Another result of the Russian delegation's journey was the royal permission "so that both our merchants and artisans, if any of them want, go to the cities and towns of your state" [33; 40, p. 17]. The recruitment of foreign specialists was one of the Muscovy state's foreign policy goals in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Many masters from Italy and Germany are known to have worked in Russia at that time.

During the next two months, while the negotiations continued, the Muscovy envoy got acquainted with the life of the English capital. He was a guest of honor at dinners regularly given for him by the Lord Mayor of London, the aldermen and merchants of the Muscovy Company. On April 20, 1557, Nepeya visited the Benedictine monastery of Westminster Abbey restored by Queen Mary, where he attended a Mass, dined with the abbot and saw the tomb of King Edward the Confessor, and three days later he took part in religious celebrations on the occasion of St. George's Day [29, f. 70r-71r].

The envoy of the Russian Tsar and his companions could observe the peculiarities of the English Catholic queen's policy: from the mass celebration of Easter, in which some 20,000 people took part, to the execution of Protestants outside the city walls in Smithfield [29, f. 69r].

At the same time, the Muscovites witnessed a failed uprising. In late April 1557, an armed detachment formed by the exiled noble Thomas Stafford, supported by French ships, captured Scarborough Castle in Yorkshire, intending to revolt against the Queen. However, the rebels were arrested three days later and imprisoned in the Tower of London in early May [29, f. 71v]. This event caused public condemnation and became the reason for the soon outbreak of the Anglo-French war.

On April 29, the London merchants arranged a farewell dinner for Osip Nepeya. The event took place at the Draper's Hall, which previously belonged to the famous Chancellor Thomas Cromwell. The traders announced to the Russian envoy that the Muscovy Company would cover all the expenses he had incurred in Scotland and England, that, according to John Incent, was "a testimony and witness of their good hearts, zeal, and tenderness towards him and his country" [19, p. 288]. However, as is known from the letter of the Company's directorate to its agents, by this time Osip Nepeya had disappointed the Englishmen. "We do not find the ambassador now at the last so conformable to reason as we had thought we should. He is very mistrustful and thinks every man will beguile him", wrote Andrew Judd, George Barne and other leading merchants of the company. "For they (Muscovites. – *A. K.*) be subtill people, and do not always speak the truth, and think other men to be like themselves" [1, p. 301].

On the May 1 1557, Thomas Thirlby and William Petre visited Nepeya in order to present the Tsar's envoy the formal letters from the English monarchs and gifts for Ivan IV: "the alive male and female lions, and the King has sent his full armor, and fine pieces of cloth" [25, p. 286]. According to a more detailed report by an anonymous Polish informant, whose source "could have come directly from the English Royal Chancellery", the armor was an expensive Milanese brigandine commissioned by the former king Henry VIII (but not Philip II, as the Russian chronicler believed), and the lions were named

Edward and Elizabeth in honour of close relatives of the reigning queen [16, p. 264].

On May 3, 1557, a Russian delegation led by Osip Nepeya and accompanied by merchants of the Muscovy Company left London to embark on a squadron of 4 ships and leave England. The expedition was headed by a young but already experienced traveler Anthony Jenkinson. In the instructions to the skippers, the Company's directorate paid particular attention to the Danish port of Vardhus (or Wardhouse), where "treachery, invasion, or other peril of molestation" could have occurred "by any kings, princes, or companies, that do mislike this new found trade by seas to Russia, or would let & hinder the same... If the wind and weather will serve, it is thought good rather to go by the Wardhouse then to come in and (drop) anchor there" [20, p. 296]. After a two-month voyage, the ships reached Russia.

The "Nikonovskaya letopis'" chronicle briefly informs the reader about the results of the trip: "And King Philip and Queen Mary wrote with great love and honor... and they established free trade for the merchants of the Tsar and the Grand Duke, and gave them a court in their great city of Lun'sk (London. – *A. K.*) and allowed them to trade without any duties. And the King sent away with Nepeya many professionals: doctors, and gold and silver seekers, and artisans, and many other masters, and they came with Nepeya together" [25, p. 286]. The travel of the first Russian envoy to London is described as an unconditional success of the Tsarist diplomacy in trading relations with England.

However, the Muscovy chronicler did not know or deliberately kept silent about the fact that the mission of Osip Nepeya was also of a military and political nature, which is known from non-Russian sources.

The first clue can be found in the letter of the Venetian ambassador Michiel Surian dated April 3, 1557, where it was reported that "there is now here an ambassador from the Muscovites, who demands a loan of ammunition and artillery, his lord being at war, and subsequently another ambassador arrived from the King of Sweden, to prevent the grant of this demand, protesting that it would cause a rupture between his King and this Crown... but their Majesties (Philip II and Mary. – *A. K.*) here have not yet formed

any decision” [5, p. 1005]. From this important message it becomes clear that Osip Nepeya was sent to England not only for the sake of a trade agreement and a recruitment of civilian specialists.

Indeed, there was a war between Sweden and Russia in Finland and the Baltic (1554–1557), which ended in the complete victory of the Muscovy state. A peace treaty was concluded between the two states in March 1557, although nobody in London knew about it yet. England, like other European states, occupied a neutral position in relation to the Swedish-Russian war, but earlier in 1555, King Philip and Queen Mary promised the Polish ambassador “be forbidden under heavy penalties the exportation hence to those parts (Russia. – *A. K.*) of any sort of arms or military engine, in order that the Duke of Muscovy, who is always at war with his King (Sigismund II Augustus. – *A. K.*), may not be able to avail himself of such instruments against him, which would have been much to his detriment” [5, p. 141].

Nevertheless, in August 1557, the secretary of the Polish King Traianus Provano informed Duke Albrecht of Prussia that the Russian envoy had gone home from London not only with English artillery, but also together with the cannon specialists (“bombardarum magistris et pixidum”) [36, p. 106]. In April 1558, the English trade agent Thomas Alcock was arrested in Poland, where he was accused of having delivered to Russia (despite the promise made to the Polish King) “thousands of ordnance, as also of harnesses, swords, with other munitions of war, artificers, copper, with many other things” [2, p. 304]. Finally, in May of the same year the French diplomat Francois de Noailles remembered that “when I was ambassador to England, the ambassador of the King of the Muscovites arrived there... and King Philip... supplied him with all kinds of weapons... to defeat the country of the Sultan” [6, pp. 449-450]. So, according to several documents, Osip Nepeya asked the English monarchs Philip and Mary on behalf of Tsar Ivan IV for weapons and military specialists, received them (although this is not mentioned in the Russian chronicles), and these weapons were intended for the war with the Ottoman Empire. Why did Ivan the Terrible and Philip II need a war with the Sultan?

Although Muscovy state in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century did not seek direct conflict with Turkey, relations between the two countries were rather tense. The conquest of the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates by Russia led the Tsar to believe that it was necessary to consolidate the achieved successes and resolve the issue of security of the southern borders (“the Crimean affair”). In 1555 Ivan IV ordered his diplomats to work out the plan of transferring the Crimean throne, where Khan Devlet Geray I sat, to the Astrakhan prince Yantemir, son of the vassal ruler of Astrakhan Dervish-Ali [23, pp. 197-198]. However, the Crimean Khanate was a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, and, therefore, the coup conceived by Ivan IV inevitably meant a military clash with Turkey.

For such a large-scale action, the Muscovy state needed allies in the international arena. At this time, the Tsar did not dare to make his own war with the Crimean Khanate, limiting himself only to raids on individual regions (*ulusy*) and the building of strongholds on the Don and on the Dnieper. In 1556–1559, Russian diplomats conducted long negotiations with the Polish King Sigismund II Augustus to “be united against Muslims” [32, p. 521]. It is possible that in London Osip Nepeya discussed the prospects of England, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire joining the anti-Turkish coalition.

At that moment Philip II was already at war with the Sultan. In 1555–1556, Pope Paul IV formed an anti-Habsburg coalition to liberate Naples. The pontiff managed to ally with several Italian states, France and its ally the Ottoman Empire. In January 1557 French troops attacked the Netherlands and entered Italian territory, violating the treaty of Vaucelles. Philip II, who was the ruler of Spain, the Netherlands, Milan, Naples and Sicily, had to defend his possessions. Collecting troops throughout the Habsburg lands, he returned to England in March 1557, hoping to draw his wife’s kingdom into this international conflict.

In April 1557, news of the Turkish threat to the possessions and influence of Philip II in North Africa reached the English court. “The Turks in Barbary have taken several places and are marching towards Tunis, where they have a certain understanding, and think of occupying that kingdom, which here (in London. – *A. K.*) is



considered of importance, the King of Tunis being the vassal of the King of England”, reported the Venetian ambassador Michiel Surian. “So the loss of that province might easily cause all the Christian possessions in those parts to fall into the hands of the Turks, and consequently predominance in the Mediterranean” [5, p. 1022].

Obviously, the proposal for a war against Turkey, made – if it was made – by the Tsar of distant Muscovy, turned out to be very well-timed. Battles in the rear of the Ottoman Empire would have distracted the Sultan from confronting the Habsburgs, so Philip II, despite his earlier promises to the Polish King, willingly gave Osip Nepeya the necessary weapons and specialists, as reported by the French diplomat Francois de Noailles. In this context, the phrase “we refrain from writing you a more detailed letter and ask you to believe what that your envoy will say” from the letter of the English monarchs to Tsar Ivan IV does not seem strange [33; 40, p. 17]. Osip Nepeya had to give the most important information to the Russian Tsar verbally.

However, most likely, Ivan IV was denied a military alliance against Turkey. Many years later, the Russian Tsar would write to Queen Elizabeth I that “the Spanish king Philip and your sister Mary received our envoy with honor and let him return, but nothing about business was reported through him” [34, p. 139]. Despite the fact that the mission of Nepeya actually opened the way for Russian merchants to the English markets, Tsar Ivan IV did not consider this achievement to be a “business” and counted on a different result from the trip. Moreover, judging by the information of the English trade agent Thomas Alcock, who was arrested in Poland in 1558, the English weapons and supplies transferred to Nepeya could have turned out to be outdated junk from old warehouses. “We had brought thither (to Russia. – A. K.) about one hundred shirts of mail, such old things new scowred as no man in England would wear”, Alcock told the Poles [2, p. 304].

Philip II’s plans at that time did not include a full-scale war with the Ottoman Empire. Fortunately for him, “in the decisive year of the war, 1557, the Turks did not even arrange... a minor sabotage” [4, p. 60]. In August 1557, the French troops suffered a crushing defeat in the Battle of Saint-Quentin, and the war against the Habsburgs ended. Then, in the east of Europe in March 1559, the Polish King Sigismund II

Augustus rejected the proposals of Tsar Ivan IV for a joint struggle against Turkey and Crimea [12]. Muscovy’s foreign policy interests at that moment had already shifted to the Baltic. The project of the international anti-Turkish coalition had to be postponed for many years.

**Results.** Referring to sources in different languages sheds light on the military and political goals of Osip Nepeya’s trip to London, which he apparently achieved only partially. Unfortunately, the existing set of documents doesn’t provide a more accurate answer to this question. At the same time, the analysis of the international situation in Western and Eastern Europe in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century leads to the conclusion that it was possible for the English monarchs to provide military support to Ivan IV, but both England and Spain lacked the interest in the military and political alliance and the full-scale war against the Ottoman Empire.

However, the main result of the Muscovy envoy’s visit to London in 1556–1557 was the establishment of official and, which was important in this age, equal relations between England and Russia at the highest level. English markets were opened as well as trade privileges were granted to Tsar’s merchants, while the leading European traders (Germans and Italians) were deprived of them in this country. The travel of Osip Nepeya to England undoubtedly became the success of the Russian diplomacy in the western direction in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

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