A short period in the history of Russia, involving the Provisional Government, has not been adequately studied. This observation applies not only to political history but the study of the development of international cultural and scholarly contacts which occurred during that period. Recently I discovered two documents in the collection of the Leningrad [St. Petersburg] Branch of the Soviet [Russian] Academy of Sciences Archive, which open a new and very interesting page in the history of Russian-American relations in the sphere of science and culture. Here is a summary of this case.

On August 7, 1917 the leadership of the Russian Academy of Sciences received a letter from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which stated, "We are forwarding to you an Appeal to the Academy of Sciences from the National Institute of Arts and Letters of the United States of America .... it would be desirable to send a response to it." The letter was signed by the Vice-Director of the legal department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, A. I. Dolivo-Dobrovolskii.

Two days later, during a General Meeting of the Academy of Sciences, academician M. A. D'iakonov, its Secretary, read the congratulatory message received from the United States (see Appendix 1). The people present decided to send a return message to their American colleagues. Academy member A. S. Lappo-Danilevskii was assigned the task of preparing its text.

In less than a month, on September 2, during another General Meeting of the Academy, Lappo-Danilevskii read the text he had prepared (see Appendix 2). The academicians present approved the text and "agreed to use the press to inform Russian scholars, literary figures, and artists about it and offer it to them for signing." However, this plan was never carried out. This was the time when an attempted military coup by General Kornilov had just been suppressed and
when the Bolsheviks were beginning their preparations for an armed uprising aimed at seizing power. The Provisional Government’s days were numbered . . . . Under these circumstances, only some of the Russian scholars were able to sign the reply to the American message. While the Russian response had been printed and some signatures for it had been collected, it was never sent overseas. A few days later this important historical document, along with the message sent by American scholars, writers, and artists, was simply turned over to the Archive of the Academy of Sciences where it was destined to be kept forever.

Let us now try to reconstruct the events of this incident in more detail. It is well known that on March 22, 1917 the US Government recognized the government of A. F. Kerenskii. A mission headed by a well-known American public figure and politician, E. Root, was sent to Russia. Its task was to establish contacts with the Provisional Government and find “the best and the most practical ways of promoting cooperation between the two peoples for the sake of the completion of their struggle for the freedom of all peoples.”

Upon his return to the US, Root began an energetic campaign of organizing support for the Russian Revolution among the American public. He enlisted dramatist A. Thomas, the President of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, in this campaign. In his letter, dated April 17, 1917, Root wrote, “. . . from now on Russia will no longer be slowly turning in a vortex, but will be moving forward, along with the rest of the world stream. In this progress, it will be led by that powerful and unstoppable force which encourages thoughts about the necessity to destroy an aristocratic government and create a universal democracy. Our brothers, Russian writers and artists, will have the good fortune of seeing the light of a great new day. I am sure that by sending them its greetings, the National Institute of Arts and Letters will be conveying the true sentiments of all Americans.”

On April 23 a meeting of American writers, artists, and composers sponsored by the National Institute of Arts and Letters took place in New York City at the Hudson Theater. After Thomas made the opening remarks, a message, written by George Kennan and Nicholas M. Butler, President of Columbia University, was read. It was unanimously supported by those present. In addition to these three persons, it was signed by a number of prominent Americans. Among them were: D. A. Weir, President of the National Academy of Design, W. B. Faxon, President of the American Fine Arts Society, E. H. Blashfield, President of the Federation of Fine Arts, and

5. AAN, fr. IV, op. 1, d. 466, ll. 6-7.