

Received 17/01/2017

Published 30/06/2017

## Per Eric Skjöldebrand : The Man Towards Whom The United States Is Indebted

Linda BELABDELOUAHAB-FERNINI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Msila

### Abstract

After Algiers had discussed peace with Spain in July 1785, it declared war on the United States forthwith. Before its revolutionary war, the United States' commerce was protected by Great Britain. After its independence, the new infant country had to rely on itself and search for new markets. This is how it turned to the Mediterranean. But without the British shield, the American vessels were jeopardized. During a decade, two Algerian offensives had been directed against the United States before a treaty of Amity and peace was signed between the Regency of Algiers and the United States.

The signature of this treaty was not an easy task. Some countries were reluctant to it, and some others were neutral. The present article aims to underscore the Swedish role in the fulfillment of the peace treaty. Focus will be laid on the Skjöldebrand brothers in general, and on Per Erik Skjöldebrand in particular in his efforts to rescue peace. The welfare he provided to the American captives will be displayed. There will be an attempt to underline his role in paving the way and providing the necessary intelligence to peace negotiations. Moreover, this article highlights Per Erik's legacy in avoiding the rupture of negotiations and finalizing the details of the treaty. Finally, the article offers a reflection on Per Erik's refusal of any reward from the American government but a letter of gratitude.

**Keywords:** Regency of Algiers- Sweden- Per Erik Skjöldebrand- Algerian-American 1795 peace treaty-Swedish role in the Algerian- American treaty.

### 1. Introduction

It took the United States of America ten years of crisis before it signed a treaty of Amity and Peace with the Regency of Algiers. The late eighteenth century Algerian-American war had been a direct consequence of American independence. In fact, the most important part of trade the United States carried out with foreign countries was under the aegis of Britain. After the Revolutionary war, the loss of British protection led to the Confederation's loss of foreign trade which was aggravated by the British Order in Council of July 2, 1783. The latter interdicted US trade with the West Indies. <sup>1</sup> This conducted the infant country to seek new markets, thus, it turned to the Mediterranean and more specifically to the North African States. However, without British passports, the American vessels were to fall prey to Algerine corsairs. In fact, after Algiers had discussed a treaty of peace with Spain in July 1785, it immediately declared war on the United States.

Numerous attempts had failed to settle the problem of prisoners held in Algiers after the capture of two American frigates the *Maria* and *Dauphin* in 1785 and peace treaty before the delegation of Donaldson and Philip Sloan reached Algiers on September 3, 1795. The United States had to face countries hostile to its peace with the Regency of Algiers. Nevertheless, Holland and Portugal for instance were neutral and one country was particularly in favor of the signature of a peace treaty. Sweden was unique in its assistance to American prisoners and the fulfillment of peace between the Regency of Algiers and the United States. Even though James Cathcart, a former American prisoner and later the secretary to the Dey and Mattias Skjöldebrand, the Swedish Consul at Algiers, made manifold efforts to secure peace between the two countries, Per Erik Skjöldebrand played an outstanding role before, during and after the signature of the treaty of Peace between Algiers and the United States. Who was the man? Why his role in the resolution of the Algerian-American crisis is not enough highlighted in historical records? Did the American government reward him for his deeds? If this was the case, in which manner? Has he been devoted a comprehensive study that sheds light on his forgotten legacy in the 1795 Algerian-American treaty?

## **2. Per Erik Skjöldebrand's family background**

Per Erik Skjöldebrand 2 (1769-1826) was the son of Erik Brander who was born in Koping in 1722. He was the grandson of Fredrik Brander and Maria Elisabet Sahlan. His mother was Johanna Logie (1740-1780). He was the fourth of five children: Anders Fredrik Skjöldebrand (1754-1834); Mattias Arkimboldus Skjöldebrand (1765- 1813); Fredrika Charlotta Skjöldebrand (1767-1809); and Sofia Skjöldebrand, (1774-1815). Erik Brander, his father, was the Swedish consul in Algiers that had been raised to the nobility as Skjöldebrand in 1767. His mother was the sister of Charles Logie, a former naval lieutenant who was appointed to Algiers as British consul general in 1785. He occupied that post until 1791. He had previously served as consul general in Tangiers from 1772 to 1782. Charles Logie's grandfather, George Logie (1694-1776), a Scottish merchant, who alleged descent from the king of Scotland, was neither appreciated by the French nor by the British. He served for seventeen years as Swedish consul at Algiers and negotiated the first peace treaty between the Regency of Algiers and Sweden. He appointed British consuls and forced them out of office at will by inciting their nationals against them. Finally, he was appointed Consul-General in the Barbary States. 3 While the Swedish Consul Mattias and his brother Per Erik Skjöldebrand were the best friends to Americans, Charles Logie, their uncle, was their archenemy. 4 Cathcart did not relate the relationship between Logie and the Skjöldebrands, but according to Richard B. Parker, it was public knowledge at that time. Thanks to the descendents of Mattias living in Stockholm, Parker gathered such valuable genealogical information. 5 Logie's hostility towards Americans was revealed in supplying passes to Algerine cruisers before the Portuguese accepted the truce with Algiers. This is how eleven American ships were seized by Algerian privateers in 1793.

## **3. His assistance to Americans**

The Treaty of Paris was the most outstanding accomplishment in the annals of American Diplomacy. Even though this treaty symbolized formal British acknowledgment of the United States' independence, it also represented the withdrawal of British privileges rendered to

Americans under their colonial status. Among these advantages was the shield for American Mediterranean commerce. In fact, Britain had already stopped delivering Mediterranean passes to American ships during their Revolution. After their independence, the Americans hoped to uphold their trade in Mediterranean waters. The ports of the Mediterranean bought 1/4 of American exports of dry and pickled fish and 1/6 of the wheat, flour and rice.

Just a year after American independence, in 1784, the American ship the *Betsy* was seized by Morocco.<sup>6</sup> In 1785, two American ships the *Maria* and the *Dauphin* were also captured by Algerine privateers. Eight years later, in 1793, eleven other American vessels were seized by Algerine corsairs and about one hundred and fifteen captives remained prisoners in Algiers until a Treaty of Amity and Peace was signed between Algiers and the United States in September, 1795.

The first treaty negotiator sent to Algiers was John Lamb. He arrived in Algiers in March, 1786, but he failed in his mission. He made promises to the Dey on behalf of his government he knew he could not fulfill. Congress annulled the commission and directives it delivered to him in September, 1786. The second choice fell on John Paul Jones. Unfortunately, he died on July 18, 1792, before the Barbary commission reached him. The next appointee was Thomas Barclay, who had been known for his successful mission in 1786. The latter was crowned by a treaty between Morocco and the United States. He also died in 1793, without knowing he had been appointed the U.S. envoy to the Dey of Algiers. He was replaced by Colonel David Humphreys, the United States Ambassador to the court of Lisbon. Humphreys was George Washington's officer during the Revolutionary war and went with him at Mt Vernon when he retired after the war. He had also been Secretary to the three Peace Commissioners in Europe. This position allowed him to be aware of the early stages of negotiations with Algiers.

David Humphreys opted for Swedish mediation in peace negotiations. He preferred the assistance of Sweden that had just concluded peace with Algiers in June 1792. This meant Sweden would enjoy quite a long period of good relations with Algiers. On November 5, 1793, Humphreys sent a letter of credence, from Alicante, to the Swedish consul general in Algiers, Mattias Skjöldebrand. He asked the latter to seek permission from the Dey to come to Algiers to discuss a peace treaty and ransom the captives. Mattias Skjöldebrand had been cordial and supportive to the American captives. Humphreys' letter complimented him, but he could not risk a formal representation of Americans since his position could have been jeopardized by the court of Sweden. Thus, he suggested his brother Per Erik, who was not in Algiers in a formal mission but was very accustomed with political affairs and ways of negotiation.<sup>7</sup>

After receiving Humphreys' request, Per Erik Skjöldebrand obtained an audience with the Dey and reported it in a letter he sent Humphreys on November 13:

The Brother of the Swedish Consul to D. Humphreys, Esq.

ALGIERS, November 13, 1793.

SIR:

In consequence of what my brother, the Swedish consul, has had the honor of writing to you, I take the liberty of presenting myself to you, sir, as a free man, and ready to sacrifice myself in every instance in which conceive myself able to assist suffering humanity.

On the arrival of your despatches the day before yesterday, and after having consulted with my brother, as he has had the honor to inform you, I immediately obtained an audience of the Dey; and, on presenting to him your letter of credence and your memorial, I did not neglect interpreting to him their contents with every persuasive consideration and reason, adding thereto all that I thought capable of leading him to favor your demands and propositions. He replied to me, with an unshaken firmness, that he would not make peace with the Americans, or any other nation whomsoever, at any price whatever, that there had been a time when he was well disposed to support the engagements, at half price, made by his predecessor, the Dey Mahamet Bashaw, with Mr. Lamb, an American negotiator. 8

From his very first missive to David Humphreys, Per Erik Skjöldebrand displayed his sympathy toward the American captives and his desire to assist Americans to sign a peace treaty with the Regency of Algiers. He reported the Dey's refusal to treat with Americans to help the latter better grasp the Dey's arguments especially regarding John Lamb's failure in his mission. In fact, John Lamb had been appointed by the American Congress to discuss a treaty with Algiers. Lamb had no instructions for ransom of the twenty-one American prisoners of the Maria and Dauphin. These were hastily included. The information on the seizure of the two American ships reached America on October 13, 1785.

Actually, while the prisoners of the Maria navigated to Algiers, Lamb was en route there through the American ministers to debate on treaty terms.

Lamb met the Dey and after proposals and counterproposals, he agreed to pay the sum the latter suggested for the redemption of prisoners. Lamb promised to bring the money four months later. The Dey then instructed Osman Hodga, the main secretary of State, to record in the Books of the Regency that the American had consented to liberate twenty-one American prisoners for the sum of \$48,300 Spanish dollars prime cost in four months of his leaving Algiers. Lamb hoped that the Dey would listen to his proposals on the terms of a peace treaty after he would bring the money, but the Dey advised him to make peace with the King of England then come to make peace with him.

The problem is that Lamb did not have the money he suggested to release the prisoners. There is no doubt that the wrong choice of the man to negotiate with Algiers led to the failure of Lamb's mission. However, he could have avoided further trouble by not promising to come back with the needed money to free the captives. His flaw was twofold. He deceived the captives with regard to their redemption, on the one hand, and he did not fulfil his promise to come back with the money, on the other. This irritated the Dey of Algiers. That

understandable exasperation postponed and complicated future negotiations. Lamb's promise led Sidi Assan, or Hassan Wakil el Kharj of the Marine of Algiers, to write a letter to Congress on February 25, 1787, to inform them of the awaited return of Lamb to solve the problem of the captives. Unfortunately, the letter was not answered which led to further consequences on subsequent discussions. When the problem of the captives emerged six years later, Hassen had become a Dey. No surprise if he had been tough in negotiations as he had been ignored years earlier.

Per Erik Skjöldebrand's letter also comprises a set of advice to Humphreys that would aid Americans take the best opportunities for the signature of a peace treaty. He fully explained the reasons why the Dey had declined the possibility to receive Humphreys despite the arguments Per Erik pointed out namely that even though Americans lacked neither strength nor courage as they had shown in their war with England, they had never fought or enslaved Algerines. He also mentioned, in a very subtle manner, his assistance to the American captives by advancing them some money. Furthermore, Per Erik did not miss reporting the desperate feelings of the captives regarding their country for which they had fought. He depicted their sentiments of being abandoned by their nation. In addition, he recommended that Americans be more patient to achieve their aim since the Dey showed a certain inconstancy. Per Erik even provided a series of inquiries to prepare Humphreys for a prospective peace treaty with Algiers. Skjöldebrand also advised the shift of American backing from the Jewish house of Bassara, to that of Micaiah Bacri, the wealthiest and most prominent of all the Jewish negotiators in Algiers. It is also because the Bacris had more influence with the Dey.

The Skjöldebrands' assistance to the American captives can also be displayed in their aid to Cathcart. The latter became secretary to the Dey and Regency of Algiers in April 1794. This influential position entailed that Cathcart had to pay 1,000 Algerian sequins to the Public Treasury in addition to 383 sequins to the Chief Turkish secretary of the Regency for recording the assignment in his official book. The Dey advanced Cathcart from his privy purse half the amount, and the other half was provided by the Skjöldebrands. The Turkish secretary's commission was found by Cathcart himself. Mattias and Per Erik had also previously lent Cathcart \$ 5,000 that allowed him to buy a prize vessel loaded with wine. The sale of the latter for a considerable amount of money enabled him to purchase another ship. The independent in which he sailed to the United States.<sup>9</sup> What is worth mentioning is that the Skjöldebrands refused to accept any interest on their money. Besides, there was a risk of never claiming their money in the case of Cathcart's death. As Cathcart was an American captive, all his property would have been seized by the Regency. Despite of this endangerment, the Skjöldebrands did not hesitate to offer their help to an American captive. It is this generosity that needs to be emphasized. It is beyond humanitarian reasons, one can guess there was a genuine willingness to assist Americans.

Richard O'Brien also adverted Mattias Skjöldebrand's bounty toward the American captives and his ransom of George Smith to the President of the United States in a letter dated November 5, 1793:

Mathias Skjöldebrand, Esquire, the Swedish consul, has befriended them (the American captives) by advancing them money to relieve their present necessities. We hope you will order him to be reimbursed, and also paid for his generous advance in the ransoming of George Smith, one of the subjects of the United States. 10

Per Erik Skjöldebrand's help to the American captives was not restricted to Cathcart. In fact, it also embodied the three captured captains in 1785: Richard O'Brien and Zachaeus Coffin, captains of the *Dauphin* of Philadelphia, and Isaac Stephens, captain of the *Maria* of Boston. These captains were known as *Paga Lunars*, which meant that they were relieved from labour and the *bagnios* in exchange of a payment of a monthly fee to the Treasury. First, the British consul paid their monthly fee in return for some domestic work since he accommodated them. 11 Then, the American government provided the payment to the captains through the Spanish Consul-General. But, when these funds ceased, it was Per Erik Skjöldebrand who assumed the monthly payment during 1792.12

In the letter of the captive American captains sent to colonel David Humphreys dated December 29th, 1793, there were also acknowledgements and feelings of recognition toward the Skjöldebrands: "(...) We are much indebted to Monsieur Skjöldebrand, and brother, his Swedish majesty's agents, in this city, for their humanity, and attention to the American captives." 13 Captain O'Brien also complained about the absence of Per Erik Skjöldebrand and its impact on American affairs. This occurred when the Dey Sidi Hassen gave the Swedes only six months to send the presents under the menace of war. This required Per Erik to leave to Livorno and Sweden to festinate the forward of gifts and explain to the Swedish court the situation of their affairs. 14

David Humphreys, gave instructions to Robert Montgomery, the consul of the United States at Alicante, to refund the Skjöldebrands regarding their efforts in assisting Americans:

Thirdly, you will please to repay whatever moneys may have been advanced by the consul general of Sweden at Algiers, or his brother Pierre Eric Skjöldebrand, Esq. to relieve the pressing necessities of the citizens of the United States lately captured and carried into Algiers; also such other sums as may be expended by either of them for communicating intelligence of importance, or for other contingent charges which may become indispensably necessary. 15

Lastly, Humphreys recommended that Montgomery open a correspondence with Per Erik Skjöldebrand, in order to obtain utile intelligence, and provide whatever services to the United States from his favorable local situation. 16 It is undeniable that the Skjöldebrands' financial aid to the American captives provided for the welfare of the latter.

Per Erik Skjöldebrand's role in The 1795 Algerian-American Treaty Per Erik Skjöldebrand had an outstanding role in paving the way to peace negotiations. He had the task to request an audience from the Dey, to present Humphreys' letter of credence and seek permission for the American envoy to discuss a peace treaty and ransom of the captives. After the Dey's objection to receive Humphreys, Per Erik wrote a letter to the American minister

plenipotentiary to explicate the reasons of the Dey's refusal and to make some suggestions. He recommended that Humphreys wait for the Portuguese reply to the Dey's demands since in case of refusal, it would be the adequate time to renew the attempt to negotiate peace. He also suggested to move from the Bassara house to the Bacri's. This was mainly because the Bacris had more influence with the Dey. Besides, the brother of the Swedish Consul provided the necessary intelligence for peace negotiations as he enumerated the treaty terms submitted to Sweden, Denmark and Holland and wondered whether the U.S. could fulfill them.

The debate on who was diplomatically adequate to take part in the Algerian negotiations ended with the choice of a delegation involving David Humphreys, Joseph Donaldson and Philip Sloan. On board of the *Sophia*, on 8 April 1795, the three men were determined to settle the Algerian affair. From Alicante, Donaldson wrote letters to Richard O'Brien, Per Erik Skjöldebrand, and to the Consul-General of France, Vallière. He wondered whether the Dey was ready to discuss peace. Despite the refusal of the Military governor of Alicante to let the delegation sail to Africa, the letters were finally delivered in Algiers through a Spanish boat on August 13 1795. Then, James Cathcart informed the Dey that an American messenger was waiting in Alicante for his approval to come to Algiers to discuss peace with him. The Dey consented provided Cathcart would take full responsibility of this person. Once the Dey agreed to hear the offer of the American envoy, in great secrecy and for the sake of security, two passports were sent to Donaldson and Sloan under the seal of the Regency in a letter written by Cathcart, and given to Per Erik Skjöldebrand. 17 Even before the negotiations began, Per Erik had chartered a brig for \$ 400 to Alicante to bring the American envoy.

It is necessary to refer to the unsupportive attitudes of France, Britain and Spain regarding the American efforts to negotiate peace with the Regency of Algiers. In fact, Thomas Jefferson bespoke French aid concerning Lamb's mission to discuss a peace treaty with the Dey of Algiers. This plea was replied by a letter and a cryptogram from the marquis de Castries, minister of the navy, to De Kersey, the French consul in Algiers. In a letter he addressed to De Kersey on October 23, 1785, de Castries recommended the French assistance to Americans to deal with the North African regencies as stipulated in the 1778 French-American treaty. 18 In a cryptogram he sent a week later, he perfidiously exhorted the French consul to do nothing in favour of the achievement of negotiations between the Americans and the Dey of Algiers. The French position was denounced by Parker and Cathcart who attributed it to the fear of France that such a treaty would interfere with its grain trade. 19 In addition, Vaillière would later ignore Donaldson's letters and convince the Dey that the latter had *carte blanche* to discuss a treaty just to abort negotiations.

Britain also eagerly acted to halt peace negotiations. It could not accept that the new independent colonies would benefit from the Mediterranean trade. That would be against Britain's commercial interests to participate in the flourishing of its not long own colonies. In case of peace treaty with Algiers, American trade would prosper. This is why Charles Logie advised the Dey toprehend American ships and even hinted to Sidi Hassen that Lamb's ship could make a good prize as it might not be Spanish and might contain the \$80,000 for peace. Similarly, Spain had the desire to frustrate American peace to safeguard her own interest. Court D'Expilly was unhelpful to Lamb. Later, he attempted to prevent Sloan from sailing to

Algiers. By opposing American peace, Spain wished to preserve its wheat trade. It feared that the low-priced American wheat reaching her Atlantic ports would not permit higher prices in the Mediterranean. 20

Despite these nations' hostility to the signature of a peace treaty between Algiers and the United States, Per Erik saved no effort for the fulfilment of peace. From the very first day of Donaldson's arrival, he summed up the American situation since the visit of John Lamb 9 years earlier. During the negotiations, Per Erik played an outstanding role with O'Brien and Cathcart in convincing Donaldson to make a counter proposal to the Dey after he was demoralized by the proffer of the latter. The Dey's suggestion consisted in \$2,247,000 in addition to 2 gunships with an annual payment of 1200 sequins and presents to all officers of the Regency in addition to consular presents every 2 years or on the arrival of a new consul. Donaldson agreed to make a counter proposal that comprised \$ 543,000 for peace and ransom of captives with \$100,000 for the Dey and \$50,000 for his wife & daughter. After his counter proposal was declined, despite of Skjöldebrand's advice Donaldson refused to make another offer. He refused to change his position after the Dey's second proposal that embodied \$982,000 and 2 armed frigates. Consequently, the Dey ended negotiations and ordered that Donaldson embark the following day. The Dey had in mind the claims he made to Heysell as he tried to open negotiations at the beginning of that year.

The previous year, Edmund Randolph was informed that captain Heysell, who had once transported a cargo of peace presents and naval stores from Denmark to Algiers, had a particular esteem for Americans and wished to help them by placing at their disposal his particular knowledge of Algeria affairs. 21 When the United States needed a full-scale Ambassador to Madrid, Randolph appointed Heysell U.S. Consul to Barbary and instructed him to report to Humphreys. Instead, Heysell wrote a letter to the Dey on his own initiative to open negotiations and the Dey's response was 2, 247,000 Mexican dollars for the peace and redemption of one hundred American prisoners. This was disapproved by Edmund Randolph and Humphreys and Heysell's attempt to initiate negotiations with the Dey in January 1795 aborted.

Skjöldebrand's skillful manoeuvre to save negotiations was to give the impression Donaldson was leaving by contacting the brig's agent to prepare his departure. On the one hand, he wanted to make the Dey realize he was misled by Vaillère and attempted to soften his position in case he wanted to conclude peace. On the other hand, he essayed to convince Donaldson that raising his offer would be beneficial in the long term as the U.S. would be reimbursed for the trade in the Mediterranean. Per Erik also put an emphasis on the fact that Portugal could conclude peace with Algiers that would lead to the capture of more ships and subsequent negotiations. Skjöldebrand's arguments persuaded Donaldson who admitted he could go up to \$650,000 all expenses included. Obrien, Cathcart and Skjöldebrand prepared an offer of \$585,000. The Dey first refused, then, he accepted because the offer was more than the Dutch's that amounted to \$279,000, and \$240,000 were allotted for the Dey's family. 22

The Dey finally accepted peace terms. The Annuity in stores, presents on the arrival of an Ambassador, Consular and biannual presents had to be the same as those of Holland, Sweden and Denmark. The Swedish list of seafaring supplies revealed to be more important than that



of Holland and Denmark. Skjöldebrand counseled Donaldson to reject the claim. His shrewd idea was to vindicate that Americans were going to pay \$100,000 in cash. Sweden did not pay the amount in cash. As the naval stores amounted \$60,000, the Dey accepted to deduce this amount from the cash. The owed money was reduced to \$40,000.

After the proclamation and salutation of the American colors, no treaty had been written. Since it was signed in 1729, the treaty between the Regency of Algiers and Sweden had been used as a source for all treaties Algiers had to sign with Christian Powers. The 1795 treaty between the Regency of Algiers and Sweden was a similar copy of the 1729 treaty signed between Algiers and Sweden.

#### **4. Joel Barlow's letter of Gratitude**

Joel Barlow 23 reached Algiers on 4 March, 1796, on board the American brig Sally. David Humphreys had addressed him an express dispatch informing him to sail to Algiers straightaway. He was ordered to Algiers as acting consul sharing responsibility with Donaldson because of the latter's sickness. Humphreys believed that Barlow was the adequate man to keep the Dey patient as the treaty money was delayed. By the end of 1796, the thirty-six gun frigate and the payment of the naval stores had not still arrived to Algiers. But before Barlow left Algiers in 1797, he wanted to pay tribute to Per Erik Skjöldebrand and to his brother Mathias for their help in the American negotiations for peace with Algiers as well as for their priceless assistance to the captive Americans.

Joel Barlow attempted to thank Per Erik by offering him a present of articles worth \$ 2.500, but the latter declined this gift. In fact, Per Erik had also refused to take any fee for the payment and distribution of the stipend the United States had established for its captives. He had also felt obliged to decline the post of American consul at Algiers even though he deployed all his efforts to promote the Algerian-American peace and release of the American captives. The only thing Per Erik necessitated was the following certificate of gratitude:

[5 March 1797]

A Certificate of Gratitude to Pierre Eric Skjoldebrand, Charge d'Affaires, Sweden, from Joel Barlow, U. S. Agent, Algiers

#### **COPY**

I Joel Barlow, Agent and Consul General for the United States of

America for the city and Regency of Algiers, certify and attest to all whom it may concern, particularly to my much esteemed friend Mr Pierre Eric Skjoldebrand, charge d'affaires of his Majesty the King of Sweden, that on my arrival in this place in the year 1796 for the purpose of redeeming our prisoners and establishing a peace with this Regency I was deeply affected with gratitude towards the said Mr Skjoldebrand, as well as towards his brother Mr Mathias Skjoldebrand, at that time Consul general of his said Majesty in this place, for the singular acts of humanity which they had exercised towards our said prisoners in protecting them as far as possible against the severities incident to their situation, and advancing them pecuniary

succours, before the American Government had made any provision for that purpose, and before there could be any certainty that such provision ever would be made or such advances reimbursed.

My sentiments of Gratitude could not but be farther increased towards the said Mr P. E. Skjoldebrand by the following additional proofs that all his conduct in this business had been perfectly disinterested: - when the American Government made provision for regular pensions to be paid monthly to the said prisoners, he was charged with the payment & the distribution; for which service, continued for several years, he refused to receive any commission or compensation: - the said Government afterwards offered him the Consulate General of the United States for this Regency, which he likewise declined - - accepting. 24

Since 1785, before the American Government decided to establish a stipend for its captives in Algiers, the Skjöldebrands had advanced money to the American prisoners and provided them with a monthly allowance: eight dollars for the American captains, six dollars for the mates and twelve cents for the sailors. 25 David Humphreys would subsequently enjoin Robert Montgomery, United States consul at Alicante, Spain, to refund the Skjöldebrands for the money they provided to the captive Americans.

For all the acts of humanity towards American captives, for his refusal to receive any commission or compensation for his assistance to American prisoners, for declining the position of Consulate General of the U.S. at the Regency of Algiers, for being in charge of the American affairs after the second Algerian declaration of war on the U.S. and departure of Tobias Lear in 1812, P. E. Skjoldebrand only asked for a certificate of Gratitude from Joel Barlow. Before the latter retired from the Regency of Algiers made another effort to induce him to accept some presents worth of \$ 25000 on the part of the U.S. government for the services rendered to its citizens he refused by declaring: “(...) that the consciousness of having followed the dictates of Humanity in what he had done for the Americans was a reward which he would not barter for any emolument whatever. 26

## **5. Conclusion**

The outstanding assistance that Per Erik Skjöldebrand demonstrated towards the captive Americans and testified during the Algerian-American peace negotiations bring out the uniqueness of the Swede humanity and generosity. In fact, the Swedish amity vis-à-vis of the United States can be traced back to the early days of American independence. The Swedish sovereign was the first who had voluntarily proposed a treaty with the United States. 27 The latter was signed on April 3, 1783.

Per Erik declined the post of American consul, the presents offered by Barlow, any pecuniary interest, but the only thing he could accept was the certificate of gratitude of Joel Barlow. Americans did name one of the vessels 28 the Dey ordered at his own expense: The Skjöldebrand in gratitude for the help of the Skjöldebrands in the negotiations and their aid to the American captives.

Historical records have not been fair with Per Erik Skjöldebrand. A considerable literature is available regarding the treaty negotiations between the Regency of Algiers and the United States, but there is little mention of the outstanding role of the Skjöldebrands in general and Per Erik in particular in the Algerian-American peace treaty. Without the latter intervention, the treaty with Algiers would probably not have been signed.

The Swedish legacy in the 1795 Algerian-American peace treaty is highlighted in paving the way to peace negotiations, avoiding their rupture on several occasions and in finalizing the details of the treaty. The United States as a newly independent country needed the recognition of the leading power of the Barbary States to welcome her in the big family of nations. That recognition was fulfilled by the signature of a peace treaty with the Regency of Algiers in 1795, a treaty in which Per Erik Skjöldebrand had played an undisputed role. The United States' presence in the Mediterranean would subsequently be reinforced with the signature of peace treaties with Tunis and Tripoli.

### **Endnotes :**

<sup>1</sup> Olson, E. A. (1991, November). The Evolution of US Maritime Power in the Pacific. Retrieved February, 2013, from

<http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/28728/evolutionofusmar00olse.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

<sup>2</sup> He had two wives : Katharina Charlotta Bagh who gave him Maria ConstantiaSkjoldebrand and Urika Magdalena Levin.

<sup>3</sup> Hirschberg, H. Z., & Bashan, E. (1981). A history of the Jews in North Africa (Vol. 2). P.18 Leiden: Brill.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Logie supplied the Algerine cruisers with passes before the Portuguese accepted the truce document. The Portuguese-Algerian truce resulted in the capture of eleven American ships by Algerine privateers in 1793.

<sup>5</sup> Parker, R. B. (2008). Uncle Sam in Barbary: a diplomatic history. P. 250Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

<sup>6</sup> Morocco was the first country to capture a US ship. The Betsy was seized off the coast of Spain in 1784. It was Conde de Floridablanca, the Spanish foreign minister who solicited the Sultan Sidi Mohammed of Morocco for the release of the ship with her crew and cargo. This took place on July 9, 1785.

<sup>7</sup> The Swedish consul to D. Humphreys, Esq, (1832). American state papers. Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, Foreign Relations (Vol. 2, p. 414). Washington: Gales & Seaton. This will be further abbreviated ASP.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 414-415.

<sup>9</sup> Parker, R. B. (2008). Uncle Sam in Barbary: a diplomatic history. P. 91Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

<sup>10</sup> ASP, p. 418.

<sup>11</sup> Among the prisoners of the Maria and Dauphin, three captured ship's masters: O'Brien, Stevens and Coffin. Thanks to their rank, they were separated from ordinary captives. They were known as Pega Lunars. This meant they had to pay the Treasury a monthly amount of money to be exempted from the bagnios. In 1785, Charles Logie paid their monthly fee in return of domestic work. Later, Charles Logie would explain his hostility toward Americans by the fact he was obeying orders.

<sup>12</sup> Barnby, H. G. (1966). *The prisoners of Algiers an account of the America-Algerian War 1785-1797*. P. 135 Oxford University Press.

<sup>13</sup> Steavens, J. W. (1797). *A historical and geographical account of algiers; comprehending a novel and interesting detail of events related to the american captives*. P. 252 Philadelphia.

<sup>14</sup> Captain O'Brien to Colonel Humphreys, 1832. ASP, pp. 419-420.

<sup>15</sup> Instructions to Robert Montgomery, Esq. Consul of the United States of America at Alicante, 1832. ASP, p. 419.

<sup>16</sup> Idem.

<sup>17</sup> Cathcart, J. L. (2007, December). *The Captives, Eleven years a Prisoner in Algiers*. La Porte, Ind: Herald Print Retrieved January, 2014, from <http://archive.org/stream/captives00cathrich> The accounts of Cathcart can also be found in another source: Cathcart, J. L. (1955). *The Diplomatic Journal and Letter Book of James Leander Cathcart, 1788-1796* Worcester, Mass: American Antiquarian Society.

<sup>18</sup> The De Castries's Letter in Parker, Uncle Sam in Barbary, pp. 217-218.

<sup>19</sup> Cathcart, *The Captives*, p. 163.

<sup>20</sup> Barnby, *The Prisoners of Algiers*, p. 158.

<sup>21</sup> State Department Consular Dispatches. Algiers series, vol., 1, part 1, Philadelphia, 13 September 1794, Blackden to the President.

<sup>22</sup> Cathcart mentioned to the Dey that in case he did not accept these terms, America would arm itself rather than request peace.

<sup>23</sup> Joel Barlow had been at Yale at the same time, during the American War of Independence, as Humphreys. They were both poets and patriots. While living in Paris, Barlow was such on great terms with the French Government that they had elected him an honorary French citizen.

<sup>24</sup> Naval Documents related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers, (1939) V. 1 pp. 198-199 United States Government Printing Office, Washington. Electronically published by American Naval Records Society, (2011). Bolton Landing, New York.

<sup>25</sup> Wilson, Gary E. *American Prisoners in the Barbary Nations, 1784-1816*. Denton, Texas. UNT Digital Library. Retrieved September, 2016 from

<<http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc331824/>>.

<sup>26</sup> Idem.

<sup>27</sup> CARLSON. KNUTE EMIL, Relations of the United States with Sweden, (1921) a PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved September, 2016 from at

<<https://archive.org/stream/relationsofunite00carlrich#page/n3/mode/1up>>

<sup>28</sup> The Dey had ordered a brig and a schooner at his own expense: the Hassan Bashaw and the Skjöldebrand. They were respectively completed in 1798 and delivered in February of the following year.

## Bibliography

- Barnby, H. G. (1966). The prisoners of Algiers: an account of the American-Algerian War 1785-1797. Oxford University Press.
- Carlson Knute E., Relations of the United States with Sweden, (1921) ,PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved September, 2016 from <https://archive.org/stream/relationsofunite00carlrich#page/n3/mode/1up> .
- Cathcart, J. L. (2007, December). The Captives, Eleven years a Prisoner in Algiers. La Porte, Ind: Herald Print Retrieved January, 2014, from <http://archive.org/stream/captives00cathrich>.
- Cathcart, J. L. (1955). The Diplomatic Journal and Letter Book of James Leander Cathcart, 1788-1796 Worcester, Mass: American Antiquarian Society.
- Hirschberg, H. Z., & Bashan, E. (1981). A history of the Jews in North Africa Vol. 2. Leiden: Brill.
- Instructions to Robert Montgomery, Esq. Consul of the United States of America at Alicante, 1832. ASP
- Olson, E. A. (1991, November). The Evolution of US Maritime Power in the Pacific. Retrieved February, 2013, from <http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/28728/evolutionofusmar00olse.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.
- Parker, R. B. (2008). Uncle Sam in Barbary: a diplomatic history. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- State Department Consular Dispatches. Algiers series, vol., 1, part 1, Philadelphia, 13 September 1794, Blackden to the President.
- Steavens, J. W. (1797). A Historical and Geographical Account Of Algiers; Comprehending A Novel And Interesting Detail Of Events Related To The American Captives. Philadelphia.
- The Swedish consul to D. Humphreys, Esq, (1832). American state papers. Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, Foreign Relations Vol. 2, Washington: Gales & Seaton
- Wilson, Gary E. American Prisoners in the Barbary Nations, 1784-1816. Denton, Texas. UNT Digital Library. Retrieved September, 2016 from <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc331824>.