

# Please Hello

Stephen Sondheim

(enters bearing documents and a plaque)  
Please hello, America back  
Commodore Perry send hello  
Also comes memorial plaque  
President Fillmore wish bestow

Emperor read our letter? If no  
Commodore Perry very sad  
Emperor like our letter? If so  
Commodore Perry very merry  
President Fillmore still more glad

Last time we visit, too short  
This time we visit for slow  
Last time we come, come with warships  
Now with more ships –  
Say hello!  
This time request use of port  
Port for commercial intention  
Harbor with ample dimension

But you can't –

Only one  
Little port  
For a freighter

But you can't –

Just for fun  
Be a sport

Maybe later –

But we bring many recent invention:  
Kerosene  
And cement  
And a grain  
Elevator  
A machine  
You can rent  
Called a "train" –

– Maybe later –

– Also cannon to shoot  
Big loud salute  
Like so:  
(Explosion)  
Say hello!  
(Explosion. Abe takes pen and signs document.)

Treaty meet approval? If no  
Commodore Perry very fierce  
Disregard confusion below:  
President Fillmore now named Pierce

Good! At last agreement is made  
Letter will let us come again  
First result of mutual trade:  
Commodore getting letter letting  
Councillor getting fancy pen!  
Goodbye  
(Bows; Abe bows back.)  
Goodbye

Goodbye  
(Bows; Admiral bows back.)

Goodbye

Goodbye

Please goodbye  
(Bows; Abe bows back.)

(appearing suddenly)  
Hello!

(to Abe)  
Goodbye  
(Bows; the British Admiral bows in greeting; Abe is confused, bows halfway between them.)

Hello, please!

Goodbye  
(All three bow again.)

Please  
Hello, I come with letters from Her Majesty Victoria  
Who, learning how you're trading now, sang "Hallelujah, Gloria!"  
And sent me to convey to you her positive euphoria  
As well as little gifts from Britain's various emporia  
(offers a tin of tea to Abe)

The man has come with letters from Her Majesty Victoria  
As well as little gifts from Britain's various emporia

Tea?

For drink

I see  
I thank you

I think  
Her letters do contain a few proposals to your Emperor  
Which if, of course, he won't endorse, will put in her in a temper or  
More happily, should he agree, will serve to keep her placid, or  
At least till I am followed by a permanent ambassador

A treaty port and, from the court, a permanent ambassador  
A treaty port and, from the court, a permanent ambassador  
A treaty port and, from the court, a permanent ambassador  
And more

Her Majesty considers the arrangements to be tentative  
Until we ship a proper diplomatic representative  
We don't foresee that you will be the least bit argumentative

So please ignore the man-of-war we brought as a preventative

(explosion)

Yes, please ignore the man-of-war  
That's anchored rather near the shore  
It's nothing but a metaphor  
That acts as a preventative

(explosion)

All clear?  
Just so  
Sign here

Hello, hello, objection resent!  
President Pierce say "Moment's pause."  
British get ambassador sent  
President Pierce get extra clause

(appearing suddenly)  
Wait! Please hello!  
Don't forget the Dutch!  
Like to keep in touch!  
Thank you very much!  
Tell them to go  
Button up the lips  
What do little Nips  
Want with battleships?

Hold everything!  
We gonna bring  
Chocolate!  
Wouldn' you like to lease  
A beautiful little piece  
Of chocolate?  
Listen, that's not to mention  
Wonderful – pay attention! –  
Windmills  
Und tulips  
(gives Abe a tulip)  
Und wouldn' you like a wooden shoe?  
(gives Abe documents)  
There – can you read?  
Good! We will need  
Two ports  
One of them not to rocky  
How about Nagasaki?  
Two ports  
One of them for the cocoa  
What do you call it? – Yoko  
Hama! Ja!  
Und Nagasaki! Ja!  
Sign here!

(Dances, making semaphore signals to the sea. Another explosion.) Wait please  
, objection again!

Dutch getting to many seaports

President now wanting three ports Great Britain wishes her position clear and indisputable:

We're not amused at being used and therefore stand immutable  
And though you Japs are foxy chaps and damnably inscrutable

(appearing suddenly)

Please hello...

Wait, please hello!

Comes the monkey wrench!

Smell that awful stench:

Probably the French—Also insist giving free ports—Reviewing it from where we sit, the facts are irrefutable —

Please hello...

Ach, nein, of course

My mistake, the Czar

Smell the caviar—

Leave the door ajar—Also want annual reports—And thus, in short, a single port is patently unsuitable!

Please hello

Is bringing Czar's request

Braving snow

With letter to protest:

Since we know

You trading with the West

You might at least

(Don't touch the coat!)

Start looking East—

(thinking about it)

—Or closer West—

(thinking again)

—Well, farther North—

(looking around)

Are we the fourth?

I feel depressed

(Don't touch the coat!)

Coming next

Is extraterritoriality

Noting text

Say "extraterritoriality."

You perplexed

By "extraterritoriality"?

(points)

Just noting clause

(Don't touch the coat!)

Which say your laws

Do not apply

(Don't touch the coat!)

When we drop by—

Not getting shot

No matter what:

A minor scrape

A major rape

And we escape

(Don't touch the cape!)

That's what is extraterritoriality

Fair is fair—

You wish perhaps to vote?

What we care

You liking what we wrote?

(points to sea)

Sitting there

Is finest fleet afloat

Observing boat?

(explosion)

Don't touch the coat  
(explosion)

Just sign the note  
The British feel these latest dealings verge on immorality  
The element of precedent imperils our neutrality  
We're rather vexed, your giving extraterritoriality  
We must insist you offer this to every nationality!

We want the same

What the Russkies claim!  
Why you let them came?  
Dirty rotten shame!

U.S.A. extremely upset!  
President Pierce say solid "No!"

(appearing suddenly)  
'Allo! –  
Please 'allo!  
Please 'allo!  
'Allo! 'Allo! 'Allo!  
(blows them all a kiss)  
I bring word, I bring word  
From Napoleon ze Third.  
'E 'ad 'eard what 'ave occured 'ere  
From ze little bird!  
Undeterred, we conferred  
Though we felt zat we'd been slurred  
And ze verdict was he spurred  
Me 'ere to bring ze word!

Would you like to know ze word  
From Napoleon ze Third?  
(shoves bundle of papers at Abe)  
It's détente! Oui, détente!  
Zat's ze only thing we want!  
Just détente! Oooh, détente!  
No agreement could be more fair!  
Signing pacts, passing acts  
Zere's no time for making warfare  
When you're always busy making wiz ze  
Mutual détente!  
(blows another kiss)  
A détente! A détente  
Is ze only thing we wish!  
Same as zem, except additional  
Ze rights to fish!  
You'll be paid, you'll be paid  
And we'll 'ave ze big parade  
If we somehow can persuade  
You to accept our aid  
(gestures to the sea – tiny explosion)  
It is not to be afraid ...  
(another one)  
As we merely wish to trade ...  
(the biggest explosion yet)  
A détente! Oui, détente!  
Zat's ze only thing we want!  
Leave ze grain, leave ze train  
Put champagne among your imports!  
Tell each man zat Japan  
Can't be bothered giving him ports  
While she's in a tizzy

Dizzy wiz ze  
Mutual détente!

It is late  
And I fear —  
Well, you see  
There's a famine ...  
Could you wait  
For a year?  
We'll agree to  
Examine  
It

A détente! A détente!  
Zat's ze only thing we want!

(Everybody sings simultaneously, squabbling with each other.)

(to each in turn)  
— But lat-  
Er, I fear  
There's a drought  
And a famine ...  
If you wait  
For a year  
Then no doubt  
We'll examine  
It, but we've  
Had a quake  
And a flood  
And a famine ...  
Please believe  
We will take  
It to stud-  
Y, examine  
It, but please  
If you'll wait  
For a year ...  
There's a famine ...

Just détente! Oooh, détente!  
No agreement could be more fair!  
Signing pacts, passing acts  
Zere's no time for making warfare  
Why discuss, make ze fuss  
Since ze West belongs to us?  
And ze East we have leased for ze French administration  
If you want force in ze Norce  
Zen we burn ze Dutch legation

Wait please hello!  
Don't forget the Dutch!  
We want just as much  
Fishing rights and such!  
Tell them to go  
Otherwise we post  
Battleships at most  
Ports along the coast  
You can have the West  
We will take the rest

One moment, please, I think that these assure us exclusivity  
For Western ports and other sorts of maritime activity

And if you mean to intervene, as is the Dutch proclivity  
We'll blow you nits to little bits, with suitable festivity

Wait please, hello, West is ours  
Wait please, the East is the best coast  
We'll trade you two on the West coast

Please hello, no seaports on the West  
United States too near to Czar  
Is tempting fates, is go too far –  
(Don't touch the coat!)

Ah, détentes! Ah, détentes!  
They're what everybody wants!  
You should want a détente –  
Makes a nation like a brother!  
We'll be here every year  
To protect you from each other  
And to see you aren't  
Signing foreign  
Treaties and détentes!

Please hello! We must go  
But our intercourse will grow  
Through détente, as détente  
Brings complete cooperation  
By the way, we must say  
We adore your little nation  
And with heavy cannon  
Wish you an un-  
Ending please hello!!!