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Napoleon and Russia and the Teaty of Tilsit: Its Implications for Europe

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NAPOLEON AND RUSSIA AND THE TREATY OF TILSIT:
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPE

by
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ABSTRACT

The Treaty of Tilsit of 1807 between Russia and France was a minor slowing of the flow of the Napoleonic Wars that dominated Europe in the early nineteenth century. It united the two nations against Britain, but, in larger terms, it polarized continental Europe into two separate (or distinct) conflicting spheres. The treaty and its effects provided a foreshadowing of post-World War I Europe and the subsequent twentieth-century concept of peaceful coexistence.

The major personalities involved in making the treaty were Alexander I of Russia and Napoleon Bonaparte of France. Their meeting on a boat in the Niemen River had frequently been depicted as a romantic convergence of east and west, yet, the theatrical air of these conversations quickly disintegrated into the polarization of France and Russia after 1807. But the general mood of the period, at least for Russia, was one of hopeful anticipation.

The diplomacy of Polish Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, who served as Alexander's Foreign Minister in the period leading up to the actual negotiations, suggested an uncanny understanding of European realities

along with a heightened sense of idealism and a desire for continental peace. But the Treaty of Tilsit was never intended to bring peace and serve as a permanent agreement.

In the end, the treaty offered Russia the opportunity to join the theater of European affairs as an equal member. The treaty defined Russia, formerly an unknown quantity of the east, as a legitimate power in the affairs of the west and, therefore, worthy of Bonaparte's diplomatic consideration.

INTRODUCTION

The Treaty of Tilsit of 1807 between France and Russia was a minor slowing of the flow of the Napoleonic Wars that dominated European affairs in the early nineteenth century. It united the two nations in a war against Britain, but, in larger terms, it polarized continental Europe into two separate and distinct spheres of influence. Therefore, although the Treaty achieved a fitful peace, it was not intended to serve as a permanent agreement and stop hostilities.

The period surrounding the treaty has often been depicted by historians as a psychological battle between the two emperors, Tsar Alexander I of Russia and Napoleon Bonaparte of France. Although the intrigue of personalities poses several interesting questions about the Europe of the period, the causes of and reactions to the Treaty of Tilsit involve several larger, more tangible issues.

Bonaparte spread a revolution that promoted a new order, a new political system that threatened the status quo of all Europe's monarchs. His new methods of diplomacy and warfare were met by an archaic series of traditional alliances which proved their inadequacies time

and again. Russia rose from a position of hapless opposition to Bonaparte to become a major European power with an influence far exceeding any it had held before. The Treaty of Tilsit revealed Russia's new-found prominence and found Alexander and Russia attempting to develop a diplomatic policy to meet the challenge.

Finally, problems of maintaining the peace in an ethnically diverse, highly populated area of politically divergent nations prevailed throughout the Napoleonic period. This question is approached from ideological and pragmatic directions and notes the emergence of a strong nationalism among all participants. Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski of Poland, Russian Foreign Minister to Tilsit, emerged in the midst of such problems as a mostly ignored architect of a nineteenth-century version of peaceful coexistence.

This study covers the events leading up to the Treaty of Tilsit as well as the immediate reactions to it. It will attempt to sort out the tangled alliances and motives that culminated with Tilsit. It will also offer a reprisal of the significance of this highly romanticized meeting of east and west and suggest the often forgotten implications of its failings.

CHAPTER I

RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH FRANCE AFTER THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The French Revolution of 1789 created a ripple of apprehension throughout the European monarchies. For the first time in European history, rule by divine right had been questioned and outwardly rejected. The question the revolution posed for the remaining monarchies was whether they could continue to exist or whether they would be eliminated. Each country's reaction toward France was subsequently guided not only by self-interest but also by the fear of the spread of the revolution. The ebb and flow of European relations during the Napoleonic years represent a vacillating struggle to achieve and maintain peaceful coexistence and a sturdy alliance system.

One of the best examples of that period of diplomatic fluctuation was the Treaty of Tilsit signed between Napoleon Bonaparte and Alexander I of Russia in 1807. To understand the complexities involved in this treaty, Russia's attitude toward France must be discussed.

In July 1789 when the French Revolution occurred, Catherine II was the Tsarina of Russia. Although considered to be an enlightened despot, Catherine pursued a

course of imperialism and Russian dominance, especially in regards to Poland (the so-called "Northern accord") and in the Balkans (the "Greek Project"). She was quite knowledgeable of things French. She corresponded with Voltaire and held many of the French philosophes in high regard. It was no wonder, then, that she watched the events of the French Revolution with a certain horror. Her major fear, of course, was that anti-monarchic sentiments might spread to Russia. In October of 1789, Catherine broke off all diplomatic relations with France.

Less than four years later, she signed a treaty of mutual friendship and assistance with Britain. In it, Russia and Britain agreed not to make peace with France until all of the French territories, illegally acquired since 1789, were returned. Russia also agreed to help Britain in the war at sea by closing her ports to France and by helping to curtail French maritime trade.

Besides her obvious fear of the revolution, Catherine may have been reacting to another stimulus, a document which today remains part fact and part fiction. Referred to as the Will, or Testament, of Peter the Great, this document was supposedly left in the Russian archives by Peter the Great himself. It was a blueprint for continental change including: the partition of Poland, the defeat of Turkey and, most importantly, the aggrandizement

and prosperity of Russia through her direct involvement in European affairs.

There are varying accounts of how and when this document made its way to France and came to public attention in Russia. One traces the French discovery of the Testament to Chevalier d'Eon, a colorful man sent to St. Petersburg to spy for the French government during the Seven Years War. Another credits Polish General Michel Sokolnicki for making the document public in 1797. Still another links the Testament to Maurice de Talleyrand's successor as the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Louis Lesur, who in 1812 produced an anti-Russian propaganda book based on its contents.¹

Whether or not any of these accounts is true, or if any document bearing any resemblance to the Testament ever existed, the story itself indicates the difficult atmosphere in which Russia was trying to become accepted as an equal in western diplomatic circles. Two different generalizations can be made regarding the Testament of Peter the Great and its influence in dictating Russian policy. If it did truly exist, Russia may have been simply taking it as a guide for the future. If it was a mythical document, the lengths to which both France and Poland went to embarrass Russia show the fear that Russia produced in other European nations.

In November 1796, Russian rule changed hands. When Paul I succeeded his mother, Catherine, he decided that his foreign policy should have two main goals: to oppose the ideals of the French Revolution and to maintain and expand the Russian presence in the Mediterranean. Both goals could be pursued with the opportunity afforded by the French occupation of Malta in June 1798. Paul was The Grand Prior of the Order of the Maltese Knights, and it appears that he had the idea of using the knights as an instrument with which to impede the spread of revolution.² The French occupation of Malta gave him the perfect excuse to intervene in the affairs of the Mediterranean.

As French hostilities and aggressions continued throughout Europe, Russia joined forces with Great Britain, Austria, the Kingdom of Naples, and Ottoman Turkey to form a second coalition against France. (The first coalition was a war which Bonaparte inherited from the Directory. Essentially it refers to the early battles in Italy where Bonaparte gained his fame.) Initially, it seemed to be a mutually satisfactory alignment. As problems developed among the powers, however, the coalition began to weaken.

In 1800 Britain seized control of Malta from the French and decided to retain possession of it. This occupation created an immediate shift in Russian policy,

for now Britain posed more of a direct threat to Russian interests than France did, so Russia withdrew from the Second Coalition.

The period that followed, during the winter of 1800-1801, became known as the rapprochement. As the threat of France seemed to be waning, Paul was able to survey both Europe and Bonaparte in a new light. Conversely, having the enemy reduced by one, Bonaparte was able to speculate about the idea of having Russia as an ally. In many ways, this period of rapprochement foreshadowed the Treaty of Tilsit six years later.

Because formal diplomatic relations between Russia and France had never been re-established after October 1789, this period of good feelings was remarkable. Paul reinstated the League of Armed Neutrality against Britain. Bonaparte countered by offering to liberate, without exchange, six thousand Russian prisoners taken captive by France during the recent battles.³ Simultaneously, France and Austria were holding peace negotiations at Luneville.

The influence that Russia enjoyed in continental decisions became evident in subsequent events. Paul wished to play the role of "arbiter of Europe, especially in German affairs," as Catherine had done in the past.⁴

In the negotiations at Luneville, talks between France and Austria were nearly deadlocked. The major disagreement

involved France's refusal and Austria's wish to allow Britain's entrance as a negotiator on the Austrian side. The Russian emissary, Georg-Magnus Sprengporten, on arriving in Luneville got the talks back on track. Oddly enough, it was a chain of misconceptions that accelerated the entire process.

Unknown to Austria, Sprengporten's one and only assignment was to accept Bonaparte's release of the aforementioned Russian prisoners. France, though, capitalized on Austria's belief that Sprengporten was in Luneville to represent Russia in the formal meetings and managed to claim additional sanctions. Austria's misconception led her to proceed with the negotiations without Britain's support. Subsequently, Austria suffered substantial territorial losses attributable directly to Luneville and, Austria thought, to Russia.⁵

The signing of this treaty on February 9, 1801, temporarily brought peace to Europe and left Britain as France's only adversary. The treaty signified that Russia's influence in continental affairs was growing in more ways than on the battlefield.

It must be remembered that despite this seeming Russian-French rapprochement, nothing between the two nations had been formalized. Formal relations were never renewed from the break made by Catherine in 1789. Simultaneously then, with the proceedings at Luneville,

Count Fedor V. Rostopchin, Russian Chancellor and President of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made France aware of the Russian terms for a new alliance. Up to this point, Paul's only concern at Luneville had been for the integrity of Sardinia, Naples, Bavaria, and Wurtttemberg. He decided to turn to Rostopchin for his expert opinion on foreign affairs and his advice on how best to proceed with France. According to Hugh Ragsdale, Rostopchin believed that France "had met her master in Bonaparte, who nurtured his power on fame and conquest, humbling Austria, frightening Prussia into submission, but not being able to reach England, his archenemy. In these circumstances Russia held the key to the European balance of power, and the fact of Bonaparte's generous offer to liberate the Russian prisoners indicated that he realized it. He was seeking to strengthen himself by enlisting Russia in the ranks."⁶

Paul agreed with Rostopchin. Their plan was to send Stepan A. Kolychev, Vice-Chancellor of the College Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to meet with Bonaparte and Charles Maurice Talleyrand, the French Foreign Minister, in hopes of gaining a new alliance. Talleyrand, who was suspicious of Russian interests and impatient with her delays, now attempted to influence the Russian court through a collection of unlikely correspondents, using procedures far removed from the standard.⁷

With Paul's new-found attraction to Bonaparte and his admiration for Bonaparte's military skills, there are some indications that he was considering the use of Russian troops to help Bonaparte invade India and begin the destruction of British colonialism. Whether or not this was an actual plan is of little importance, because a palace coup took place in St. Petersburg in March 1801, after which Paul's son, Alexander I, assumed the throne of Russia. Russia's attitude toward France and Bonaparte thus took another new direction.

NOTES

¹Dimitry V. Lehovich, "The Testament of Peter the Great," American Slavic and East European Review 7 (April 1948), pp. 111-124.

²Barbara Jelavich, A Century of Russian Foreign Policy 1814-1914 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1964), p. 26.

³Hugh Ragsdale, "The Origins of Bonaparte's Russian Policy," Slavic Review XXVII (March 1968), pp. 85-90.

⁴Ibid., p. 85.

⁵Hugh Ragsdale, "Russian Influence at Luneville," French Historical Studies 5 (1968), pp. 274-284.

⁶Hugh Ragsdale, "The Origins of Bonaparte's Russian Policy," p. 88.

CHAPTER II

ALEXANDER I'S POLICY TOWARDS FRANCE

The reign of Alexander I marked a change in direction and orientation of Russian foreign policy from that of his predecessor, Paul I. Among Alexander's first official acts upon taking the throne was to re-establish friendly dealings with both Britain and Austria. He also called upon Rostopchin's enemy, the Francophile and Anglophile Count N. P. Panin, to head the College Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹ Upon sending Count Arkadii Ivanovich Morkov to Paris as the Russian ambassador, Alexander wrote a long, detailed instruction that summarized his thoughts about Russia and her involvement in European affairs.²

Alexander wrote to Morkov on June 27, 1801:

In order to achieve the entire goal that I seek, I will begin by describing for you my [main] purpose, toward which you should direct all your attention and for which develop modifications that might be appropriate when considering any circumstances that can be foreseen. In deciding to pursue the ongoing negotiations with France towards the end of last year, I had been guided by a double motive--one of which was to guarantee for my empire a state of peace and tranquility necessary for re-establishing order in the different administrative parties, and at the same time to cooperate as far as it could be in my power the hastening of a definitive peace, which would at least give Europe the time to restore structure to the

social system, shaking it down to its foundations, so that providence would never again permit the source of the disaster to dry up, which affects humanity.³

It was Alexander's desire to "esperer d'attendre en alliant la fermete a la justice et a la moderation."⁴

The age of Russian expansion was drawing to a close and a major directive in Alexander's foreign policy observed that trend and aimed to preserve the boundaries that Russia had already established. "If I ever raise arms," Alexander wrote on June 4, 1801, in a circular note to Russian diplomatic representatives abroad, "it will be exclusively in defense against aggression, for the protection of my peoples or of the victims of ambitions that endanger the peace of Europe. . . . I shall never participate in the internal dissensions of foreign states."⁵

Except for a brief flourish of initial changes, Alexander's foreign policy was not formalized until 1803 with the issuance of the "Instruction." It was drawn up by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski and the members of Alexander's informal committee, a group of advisors who functioned as a sort of cabinet to Alexander. In his Memoirs, Czartoryski described this committee as "a Secret Council composed of persons whom he [Alexander] regarded as his friends and believed to be animated by sentiments and opinions in conformity with his own."⁶

Those who comprised the informal committee were all friends of Alexander from his youth: the aforementioned Czartoryski, Count Paul Stroganov, Count Victor Kochubei, and Nicholas Novosiltsev. They also hoped for the presence of Alexander's former tutor F. C. LaHarpe, although he declined to participate regularly. In addition to this informal committee, several other members of the Russian intelligentsia were consulted from time to time. Included in this list were: Count Alexander Romanovich Vorontsov, Count Nicholas Semyonovich Mordvinov, Prince Platon Alexandrovich Zubov and Count Mikhail Mikhailovich Speransky, and others.

The informal committee stopped meeting in 1803 because all of the four members accepted posts in Alexander's government. Czartoryski became Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs under the aforementioned Vorontsov, Stroganov became Deputy Minister of Justice, and Kochubei and Stroganov served as Minister and Deputy Minister of the Interior, respectively. Alexander had carefully laid the groundwork for an orderly system of foreign affairs by surrounding himself with people he trusted and admired. Czartoryski mentioned that

Although the new system of policy was often criticised on account of vagueness and utopianism, it soon had serious and practical results. It was impossible to take prominent part in European affairs, to come forward as a judicial and

moderating influence, to prevent violence, injustice and aggression, without coming into contact with France at every step. She would have been a dangerous rival if she had wished to play the same beneficent part; but being led by the unlimited ambition of Napoleon, she sought to do the very contrary of what we wished. A collision sooner or later was inevitable.⁷

Alexander's foreign policy became clear in 1803 with the completion of the earlier work by the informal committee. In a letter to Bonaparte on April 10, 1803, Alexander noted "It is with great pleasure, that I see the affairs of Germany finally come to their end: and one must attribute this happy ending to the common measures in this case taken by Russia and France whose union and wisdom is not only valued by the two states, but must be regarded as very essential for the happiness and tranquility of all Europe."⁸ Indeed, Alexander already understood that the peace of Europe depended in large part on an agreement between Russia and France. George Vernadsky credited that result coming from Alexander's "instruction" as "one of the significant documents in the development of international law, since it proposed a project for international organization which should be considered as a prototype for the League of Nations. It was also one of the first Panslavic declarations, since it suggested the liberation of Slavs, both in Central Europe and the Balkans."⁹ The "instruction" revealed the idealism of both Alexander and Czartoryski. The

underlying principles behind it reappeared in their subsequent involvements in the affairs of Europe.

Unfortunately for Russia and the remainder of the Slavic nations, the "instruction" did not become Russia's policy. It had been drafted with both France and Britain in mind, as a show of Russian interests and aims in Europe, during the very brief time when hostilities between France and Britain had temporarily ceased. Peace had been declared on March 27, 1802, in the Treaty of Amiens, which brought nine years of animosities to a shaky end. Britain's primary interest, despite this treaty, had been and still remained the defeat of France not the stabilization of Europe.

With the Treaty of Amiens in mind, Czartoryski began the monumental task of trying to sway Britain to Russia's favor. Czartoryski realized, as did most of Europe, that France and Russia were on a collision course with destiny. He noted that

The two Emperors went in opposite directions in everything; one demolished, while the other restored, old ideas; and the comparison made between them was not to Alexander's advantage in the eyes of the very Russians for whom he was working. He was, in fact, not all that popular during the first few years of his reign, although he was never more devoted than he was then to the good of his country.¹⁰

With obvious Russian and French tension ahead and the lofty aims of the "instruction" to guide him, Czartoryski proceeded to draft the plans for a Third

Coalition against France. It must be remembered that, while he was serving Russia, Czartoryski was a Polish prince whose nationalistic tendencies were obvious. Several times during his service to Alexander and Russia, Czartorysky offered to step down from his position on the grounds that his interest in Poland perhaps hampered him in fully serving Russia's needs. In terms of enlightened service, however, Czartoryski was a most able diplomat.

Alexander was, at this point in 1804, still maintaining the position held by both his grandmother and father, which viewed Russia as a great arbitrator in European affairs. He still saw Russia as an integral part in "a system of defense to prevent any further advance or aggression on the part of France upon the territory or independence of the rest of Europe."¹¹ But an event in early spring, that scandalized much of Europe, served to set Alexander's policies off in a different direction.

On March 15, 1804, a former Bourbon prince, Duc d'Enghien, was abducted by one of Bonaparte's agents from his castle in non-aligned Baden. He was taken to France, tried by a military commission, and executed on March 20. The news of these events sent the court of St. Petersburg into official mourning. Not only was the Duc d'Enghien taken from the native home of the Russian

Empress Elizabeth Alexeievna, but Alexander also saw Enghien's death as a murder and his abduction as a violation of Baden's rights of neutrality. He immediately sent a note of protest to Paris. "The reply soon came: it was harsh and insulting. Talleyrand, at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs, reminded Russia that when Paul was assassinated, France did not consider herself justified in demanding an explanation."¹² Overall, the event increased the Russian court's sympathy for French emigres and heightened its disrespect for Bonaparte.¹³

Coupled with the deterioration of the Treaty of Amiens by May 1803, the assassination of the Duc d'Enghien brought Russia to the point of reconsidering policies. France was advancing into Germany, occupying both Hanover and the southern Kingdom of Naples, and showing interest in the Mediterranean. Although the possibility of a Russian confrontation with France was slight, a policy of containment was now a necessity.

By late 1803, control of the Russian foreign ministry had passed almost completely from Count Simon Vorontsov, who had clearly served as a figurehead, to Czartoryski. The first hint of a Russian-British alliance was made in a dispatch from Vorontsov to Czartoryski dated November 20, 1803. In it, Vorontsov suggested that, from what he could ascertain, France aimed at breaking up the Ottoman Empire and once again attempting to seize Egypt

as a route to India.¹⁴ The Russian ambassador in Paris, Arkadii Ivanovich Morkov, noted Bonaparte's willingness to threaten war in Egypt in a letter dated February 16, 1803, sent to Alexander Romanovich Vorontsov.¹⁵ Regarding this, Morkov said that Bonaparte "would declare war immediately, he already had an army of 400,000 soldiers that he would augment with another 50,000 men, he would try to execute a political fall in England, that he would place himself at the head of this expedition."¹⁶

The news of such plans would undoubtedly evoke anti-French sentiments in both Russia and Britain. Czartoryski believed that the Turks of the Ottoman Empire should be removed from Europe, yet he did not want another European nation with any established base of power located there. In philosophical terms, he also saw Russia as a protectorate of the coreligionists in the area and favored Russia's benevolent control over Poland to be a pattern for Russian dominance in the Balkans.¹⁷ The threat of a French invasion of India, of course, was intolerable to Britain. In a speech given on July 22, 1803, by British Foreign Minister William Pitt, Britain's true feelings about the inevitability of war with France were evident.

That the result of this great contest will ensure the permanent security, the eternal glory of this country; that it will terminate in the confusion, the dismay, and the shame of our vaunting enemy; that it will afford the means of animating the spirits, of the rousing courage, of breaking the lethargy of the surrounding nations of Europe;

and I trust that, if a fugitive French army should reach its own shores after being driven from our coasts, it will find the people of Europe reviving in spirits and anxious to retaliate upon France for all the wrongs, all the oppressions, they have suffered from her; and that we shall at length see that wicked fabric destroyed which was raised upon the prostitution of liberty, and which caused more miseries, more horrors to France and to the surrounding nations, than are to be paralleled in any part of the annals of mankind.¹⁸

Despite such favorable conditions for it in 1803, the formation of another coalition against France was beset by hesitation and differences of opinion among those nations that would have to form it. Austria was hesitant to ally with Russia and Britain because of the distasteful outcome of the Second Coalition and the peace concluded at Luneville. Prussia was hoping for some type of French constancy, while Sweden was eager to join a coalition and hoped to maintain the status quo while suppressing French revolutionary tendencies.

Alexander and Czartoryski believed that to oppose France meant more than to defend Europe militarily; it meant creating a new order for the continent for years to come. Czartoryski believed that

It would have been a great advantage to obtain the concurrence in our views of so powerful and influential a State as England and to strive with her for the same objects; but for this it was necessary not only to make sure of her present inclinations, but to weigh well the possibilities of the future after the death of George III and the fall of the Pitt Ministry. We had to make England understand that the wish to fight Napoleon was not in itself sufficient to establish an indissoluble bond between her Government and that of

St. Petersburg, and that such a bond, to be permanent, must be based not on a common feeling of revenge, but on the most elevated principles of justice and philanthropy.¹⁹

Throughout 1804, most of the dispatches from St. Petersburg to London were delivered by special Russian envoy Nikolai Nikolaevich Novosiltsev. Czartoryski said of Novosiltsev that "in one hour's talk [he] would be able to say more than a hundred sheets of paper."²⁰ Because there were both formal and private discussions being held at this time, that method was used rather than operating through the legitimate Russian ambassador to Britain, Simon Vorontsov. Although both Czartoryski and Alexander had high regard for Novosiltsev's skills in the art of diplomacy, they were worried about his highly visible pro-British sentiments. For this reason, Czartoryski stayed in private contact with Vorontsov in London about all the ongoing negotiations that both he and Novosiltsev were undertaking. Writing to a friend in 1836, Czartoryski gave his opinion of Novosiltsev: "a man without faith or principles, but very clever and astute, and with much knowledge."²¹

Late 1804, therefore, found Russia negotiating with nearly every European state in hopes of forming a workable coalition. Early on in the negotiations, Russia was hoping to receive British financial support in a war with France. In a letter to Count Simon Vorontsov, the Russian Ambassador at London, dated June 26, 1804, the British

Foreign Secretary Lord Dudley Ryder Harrowby briefly described what Britain hoped for in a coalition that would merit British financial support.

The particular appointment, to be regulated by a future treaty, must depend, not only upon the forces which each Power could bring into the field, but upon its means of maintaining them, and in some degree, upon the quarter in which they may actually be employed.

This appointment must evidently be different from the two suppositions

First. That Russia may be able to engage both Austria and Prussia in the contest.

Secondly. That Russia may be joined by one of these Powers only--in either case, some portion might be left to bring forward any of the smaller States, and particularly Sweden, in case that monarch should transport his troops into Pomerania, and co-operate, not merely for the defense of that province, but also for the independence of the north of Germany.²²

On September 11, 1804, secret instructions from Alexander I to Novosiltsev complemented those already received by Vorontsov in London.²³ (For a complete English translation of this document refer to Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, pp. 41-51.) The main premise of the "Secret Instruction" was to explain France's role in Europe to the potential members of the coalition and subsequently to show how to create a new balance of power.

The most powerful weapon hitherto used by the French, and still threatening the other European States, is the general opinion which France has managed to promulgate, that her cause is the cause of national liberty and prosperity. It would be shameful to humanity that so noble a cause should be regarded as the monopoly of a Government which does not in any respect deserve to be the defender of it; it would be dangerous for all the Powers any longer to leave to France

the great advantage of seeming to occupy such a position. The good of humanity, the true interest of the lawful authorities, and the success of the enterprise contemplated by the two powers, demand that they should deprive France of this formidable weapon.²⁴

Alexander and Czartoryski, in the "Secret Instruction," believed that the only way France could be stopped was through a Russian and British agreement. Their two-fold goal was to liberate Europe from Bonaparte's yoke and ensure a lasting peace among the nations. Achieving this would inevitably mean a war pitting Russia and Britain against the French government, but not against the French people. The result of such a war would be Europe's freedom from Bonaparte's rule and the realization of the right of national self-determination.

Czartoryski, recognizing the idealism in this idea, took it one step further by trying to create a more rational balance of power in Europe. He hoped to use the victory as an opportunity to establish a formal league of nations which would be governed by a code of international laws, including a type of world court which would be used to mediate disputes and thereby avoid war. In addition to this, Czartoryski believed that to maintain peace and harmony throughout Europe, the current concept of political boundaries would have to be re-evaluated. His suggestion was a redefinition of European boundaries according to the principle of natural frontiers,

but supplemented by the realities of nationality, economics, and geography.²⁵

The details of this proposal called for a preventive system designed to inhibit a recurrence of French aggression. Central to this plan was the creation of a federation of German and Italian states, protected by both Prussia and Austria. In exchange for the resulting advantages for Prussia and Austria, Russia would gain sovereignty over Poland. And from the Ottoman Empire Russia hoped to receive some combination of Moldavia, Cattaro, Corfu, Constantinople, and the Dardanelles.

Although both nations eventually agreed upon the notion of an alliance and the subscription of other nations to their plan, harmony ended there. Russia favored a complete reconstruction of the map of Europe, based on natural boundaries and nationalities. Britain favored status quo ante bellum, with France returned to her former boundaries. Russia was also willing to negotiate with Bonaparte and offer France a chance for reconciliation, while Britain wanted France to admit to being guilty for causing the existing problems in Europe. Russia was willing to accept any form of French government--a Bonaparte regime or a restoration of Bourbon rule--as long as it was friendly to Russia. But Britain believed that a victory over France was the only way to

peace.²⁷ William Pitt carefully detailed British policy regarding a potential concert of Europe in a memorandum dated January 19, 1805. In his memorandum the Prime Minister listed three distinct aims for such a coalition:

1st To rescue from the Dominion of France those Countries which it has subjugated since the beginning of the Revolution, and to reduce France within its former limits, as they stood before that time.--

2ndly To make such an arrangement with respect to the territories recovered from France, as may provide for their Security and Happiness, and may at the same time constitute a more effectual barrier in future against Encroachments on the part of France.--

3rdly To form, at the Restoration of Peace, a general Agreement and Guarantee for the mutual protection and Security of different Powers, and for reestablishing a general System of Public Law in Europe.--²⁸

A potential rupture in the negotiations came in January 1805 when Bonaparte proposed that France and Britain should conclude peace. King George III commented on the Emperor's offer:

I have received pacific overtures from the chief of the French Government, and have in consequence expressed by earnest desire to embrace the first opportunity of restoring the blessings of peace, on such grounds as may be consistent with the permanent interest and safety of my dominions; but these objects are closely connected with the general peace of Europe. I have, therefore, not thought it right to enter into any more particular explanation without previous communications with those Powers on the Continent with whom I am engaged in confidential intercourse and connection with a view to that important object, and especially the Emperor of Russia, who has given the strongest proofs of the wise and dignified sentiments with which he is animated, and of the warm interest which he takes in the safety and independence of Europe.²⁹

But much to Britain's dissatisfaction, Russia proceeded to a series of secret agreements with Austria and Sweden. These accords, then, combined with Britain's pressing fear of isolationism, became the impetus for England to pursue a workable coalition with Russia without further considering Bonaparte's overtures. Vorontsov's formal negotiations and Novosiltsev's more covert dealings successfully induced Britain to accept a compromise after a seven-month struggle over details.³⁰

The Anglo-Russian Treaty, with separate, secret, and additional articles, was provisionally formalized on April 11, 1805. But Britain, much to Russia's surprise, failed to ratify the treaty. Opposition to the treaty in Britain was spearheaded by Prime Minister William Pitt, who was reluctant to concede the Kingdom of Italy to Joseph Bonaparte, concerned about a new code of maritime law, and hesitant about the return of Malta to Russian protection. Regarding this final point, it must be remembered that during the reign of Tsar Paul I, Russia desired the control of Malta and the Maltese Knights, a remaining vestige of the age of chivalry. Britain, on the other hand, insisted on keeping Malta because it was her only remaining naval base in the Mediterranean.

The British rejection of the treaty terms caused a stir among those in St. Petersburg who were waiting to confront Bonaparte with a coalition. From London on May

10, 1805, Vorontsov wrote to Czartoryski, "You tell me that if England will not yield Russia will not ratify the Convention. That being so, I can only regard the negotiations as broken off. The Continent will be enslaved, and this country will either make peace before Christmas and keep Malta, or will continue a defensive war which will cost it little money and will preserve the rock which is the cause of all the existing difficulties."³¹

In another letter, eight days later, Vorontsov wrote:

I may be blamed for not having in my official reports stated that England would never consent to the evacuation of Malta, but I could not anticipate that such a demand would be made by our Government, as the matter was never mentioned to me, and in the conferences which M. de Novosiltzoff had with Mr. Pitt, both alone and in my presence, there was no question of England abandoning Malta. . . . The proposed new code of maritime law is equally out of the question, and Lord Harrowby assured me that if Lord G. L. Gower [British Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at the Court of St. Petersburg] had yielded on these points he would have been recalled, and never again employed in the diplomatic service. The Government here would have preferred that he should have altogether refused to accept the note you addressed to him on the subject of the maritime code, and that he should have replied to you verbally that Great Britain simply adheres to her practice during the last two centuries in this matter, which is in accordance with her treaties with Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland.³²

The British government softened its position somewhat as time passed. But Pitt's address to the British Parliament on June 21, 1805, revealed the problems that

constantly plagued the coalition, hesitation and lack of dedication. Said Pitt:

I am ready to allow that the alliance of Russia alone would not promise such effacious or powerful co-operation as it would make it worth while to protract the war on account of any hope it would hold, or even equivalent for the large vote of credit which is demanded; but it is my opinion that even the limited co-operation of even a few of the Powers, and for a short time, may be material service in the course of the war, in protecting those points which the enemy appear particularly anxious to attack.³³

In early July 1805, France annexed Genoa. This move, coupled with the negative British position regarding Malta, encouraged Alexander to accept Britain's treaty terms. Lord Gower responded by immediately signing it in its newly revised form on July 28, 1805. On August 9, Austria also signed the treaty.

At this point, Novosiltsev was supposed to proceed on behalf of the coalition to Paris and present to Bonaparte the ultimatum deciding Europe's fate. His presentation was supposed to coincide with the day that Russia moved armies into both Austria and Prussia--August 16. Several papers in Hamburg, however, printed the news of the cancellation of this mission by Alexander and eliminated the diplomatic impression it could have made. Instead, what remained was an allied force of Russian, British, Austrian, Hanoverian, and Swedish troops poised for their next move.³⁴

NOTES

¹Ragsdale, "The Origins of Bonaparte's Russian Policy," p. 89.

²Instructions to Arkadii Ivanovich Morkov from Tsar Alexander I, 9 July 1801, No. 93, Sbornik Imperatorskogo russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva [SIRIO] (St. Petersburg: Collection of the Imperial Russian Historical Society, 1867-1816), 70:202-223.

³Ibid., 202. Afin d'en retirer tout le fruit que je peux en attendre, je commencerai par vous decouvrir le but, auquel tous vos soins doivent se reunir, et vous developper les modifications, dont mon systeme est susceptible, d'apres les circonstances, qui peuvent etre prevues.--En me determinant a poursuivre les negociations entamees avec la France vers la fin de l'annee derniere, j'ai ete guide par un double motif,--celui d'assurer a mon empire un etat de paix et de tranquillite necessaire pour retablir l'ordre dans les differentes parties de l'administration, et en meme temps de concourir, autant qu'il serait en mon pouvoir, a l'acceleration d'une paix definitive, qui donne du moins a l'Europe le temps de restaurer l'edifice du systeme social, ebranle jusque dans ses fondements, si la providence ne permet pas encore de tarir la source des fleaux, qui affligent l'humanite.

⁴Ibid., 202.

⁵Michael T. Florinsky, Russia: A History and Interpretation, 2 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), 2:651.

⁶Adam Gieigus, ed. and trans., Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski and His Correspondence with Alexander I with Documents relative to the Prince's Negotiations with Pitt, Fox, and Brougham, and an Account of His Conversations with Lord Palmerston and Other English Statesmen in London in 1832, 2 vols. (1888; reprint ed., Orono, ME: Academic International, 1968), 1:257.

⁷Ibid., 2:12-13.

⁸Alexander I to Napoleon Bonaparte, 10 April 1803, No. 44, SIRIO, 77:100-1. C'est avec un tres grand plaisir, que je vois les affaires d'Allemagne toucher enfin a leur terme; et l'on doit attribuer cette heureuse fin aux mesures communes prises dans cette occasion par la Russie et la France dont l'union et la bonne intelligence est non-seulement precieuse aux deux etats, mais doit etre encore regardee comme tres essentiell pour la bonheur et la tranquillite de toute l'Europe. [translated by the author]

⁹George Vernadsky, Political and Diplomatic History of Russia (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1936), p. 282.

¹⁰Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 1:328.

¹¹Sir J. B. Warren to Lord Hawkesbury, 12 May 1804, Rose, ed. Selected Despatches from the British Foreign Office Archives Relating to the Formation of the Third Coalition Against France 1804-1805 (Sondon: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1904), p. 11.

¹²Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:15.

¹³Ibid., 2:14-26.

¹⁴Rose, Selected Despatches, pp. vi-vii.

¹⁵Arkadii Ivanovich Morkov to Alexander Romanovich Vorontsov, 16 February 1803, No. 22, SIRIO, 77:46-49.

¹⁶Ibid., 77:47. ". . . declarerait la guerre immediatement, qu'il aviat deja une armee de 400,000 combattants qu'il augmenterait encore de 50,000 hommes, qu'il tacherait d'effectuer une descente en Angleterre, qu'il se mettrait lui-meme a la tete de cette expedition." [translated by the author]

¹⁷Patricia Kennedy Grimstead, The Foreign Ministers of Alexander I: Political Attitudes and the Conduct of Russian Diplomacy, 1801-1825. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 125.

¹⁸Coupland, ed. The War Speeches of William Pitt the Younger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), p. 329.

¹⁹Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:35-36.

²⁰Marion Kukiel, Czartoryski and European Unity, 1770-1861 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955; reprint ed., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 44.

²¹Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:40.

²²Lord Harrowby to Count Woronzow [Vorontsov], June 26, 1804, Rose, Selected Despatches, p. 15.

²³Secret Instructions from the Emperor of Russia to M. de Novosiltzoff, September 11, 1804, Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:42-43.

²⁴Ibid., 2:41-51.

²⁵Kukiel, Czartoryski and European Unity, pp. 43-50.

²⁶Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:52-55.

²⁷Kukiel, Czartoryski and European Unity, pp. 41-51.

²⁸Pitt's Memorandum on the Deliverance and Security of Europe, January 19, 1805, Harold Temperley and Lillian M. Penson, eds., Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902) (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1966), p. 11.

²⁹Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:69.

³⁰Kukiel, Czartoryski and European Unity, pp. 53-56.

³¹Simon Vorontsov to Prince Adam Czartoryski, May 10, 1805, Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:75.

³²Simon Vorontsov to Prince Adam Czartoryski, May 18, 1805, Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:75-76.

³³Coupland, The War Speeches of William Pitt, p. 349.

³⁴Kukiel, Czartoryski and European Unity, pp. 59-60.

CHAPTER III

THE CONDITION OF EUROPE: 1805-1807

The Third Coalition, formed in the summer of 1805, was a fragile union of hurried alliances, put together in response to Bonaparte's plans of aggrandizement. Despite all the negotiations prior to the agreement in 1805, it satisfied neither Russia nor Britain in the long term and was ill-fated from the outset.

The first problem faced by the coalition was to decide the status of Prussia. King Frederick William III was content with his position of neutrality. While attempting to deal with several domestic problems in Prussia, he saw non-alignment as the most beneficial way by which he could pursue and ensure peace for his country. His beliefs were supported, not only by several members of the Prussian court, but also by Prussia's omnipresent fear of the French and the problems that opposition to them could create.

The coalition needed the full cooperation of Europe in order to dictate terms to Bonaparte. The exclusion of Prussia would only create a crack that France would seek to penetrate and widen. The coalition felt, in respect

to Prussia, that two alternatives were available: either to induce Prussia to join them by offering monetary and territorial gain or to force the issue militarily. Such were the inauspicious beginnings of a coalition which both Alexander and Czartoryski had idealistically seen as the road leading to a new Europe. Czartoryski wrote of this in his Memoirs saying: "I must admit that the improbability of Prussia entering into the concert of the Powers was not what I most regretted. I did not neglect any arguments calculated to persuade her, but I foresaw with satisfaction the necessity of disregarding her interests in the event of a refusal, for in that case Poland would have been proclaimed a kingdom under the sceptre of Alexander."¹ Part of Poland was currently under Prussian rule; and, in the plan offered to Alexander, Czartoryski saw those Poles rising up and joining Russia in opposition to Prussia. Despite his obvious concerns for the fate of Poland, Czartoryski's interests have been seen by Marion Kukiel as generated by the most noble of intentions for a better Europe.²

The coalition's plan was to attack France from all sides. Britain was to press the naval campaign, while Russia and Austria were to attack with combined armies through central Europe and pick up help from such minor allies as Hanover and southern Italy. Czartoryski favored the plan to force the Prussians into the coalition

by declaring war on them at the appropriate time. He believed that Prussia was Russia's natural enemy and that an invasion of Prussia offered a logical solution to the problem. More important, though, were his secret hopes for a reunified Poland through an armed Russian intervention. Upon entering Prussian Poland, Alexander would be hailed as a liberator and could thus reunify Poland by assuming the throne. To this plan both Britain and Austria gave their qualified consent.³

Alexander, however, hoped to rekindle Prussian friendship and avoid unnecessary battles. Possibly sensing the troubles ahead, he was already beginning a gradual return to his initial policy of observing the European situation from a careful distance. Czartoryski, in spite of his strong nationalistic attractions toward Poland, did his best to serve Alexander and Russia as Foreign Minister. The disagreement over Prussia, however, effectively marks the beginning of the decline of Czartoryski's influence on Russian affairs in Europe and also marks a change in Alexander's notion of Russia's role there.

From the first formation of the coalition, Austria had hoped that Russia could persuade Prussia to join. This wish was largely motivated by self-interest, because Austria did not want Prussia to enjoy any more influence in northern German affairs than it already did. Austrian

policy-makers believed that if Prussia was not allied with Austria, exactly that situation would prevail. It was Austria's belief that, if she were allied with Prussia, France would have no opportunity to interfere with Hapsburg rule in northern Germany where Austria presently held an upper hand.

Austria had hoped that its involvement in the coalition would not only help it maintain the status quo in Germany but also help to reclaim Austrian positions in Italy which France had been assuming. Austria was not prepared for a war with France when she entered the coalition. From early on, Austria suffered from military ineffectiveness in an age when Bonaparte's army was revolutionizing the art of warfare. Austrian military reforms were slow to take hold, and several strategic errors allowed Bonaparte to occupy Vienna in November 1805. That French movement was quickly followed by the crushing defeat of the Austrian-Russian army at Austerlitz on December 2, 1805.

Before the year was out, Austria withdrew from the coalition and signed a separate peace with France in the Treaty of Pressburg (Bratislava). Signed on December 26, 1805, the treaty acknowledged Austria's loss of power in Italy and resulted in a declaration of independence for the kingdoms of Bavaria, Wurttemberg, and Baden. Russia,

to plot her next move, retreated far enough east to be out of Bonaparte's immediate reach.

Czartoryski sadly noted in his Memoirs that "I should have liked to bring the two Emperors together so as to ensure the safety of both, but I did not succeed. The Emperor Francis [Austria] went off in a different direction, but he charged me from time to time to communicate with Alexander some words of consolation. These were always the same, assuring us that he had already experienced similar disasters, and that although the blow fell mainly upon himself, he was far from losing hope."⁴

The defeat of Austria and Russia at Austerlitz left Prussia alone to deal with France. As Austria had feared, France induced Prussia to remain neutral by offering her the coveted possession of Hanover, the key to a power base in northern Germany. It is interesting to note that, prior to her defeat at Austerlitz, Russia was making similar promises to Prussia to induce her to join the allies. Pitt and Britain had been firmly opposed to that alliance, but they learned of the Prussian-Russian negotiations too late to protest.⁵

Like Alexander, Pitt felt that the tide of the European war hinged on whether Prussia decided to align with France. Even after Austerlitz, Pitt sought support for Prussia at home and abroad. Speaking in November 1805 at a banquet in his honor, he stated "Europe is

not saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example."⁶ But Pitt did not live to see the final outcome. The man, who for the previous two years had directed the course of British foreign policy, died on January 23, 1806.

The Prussians found themselves in the unattractive position of acting as a French satellite. On February 16, 1806, they signed another treaty with Bonaparte, the Treaty of Paris. This forced agreement required that Prussia supply troops in any future battles with Russia and added her to the economic blockade known as the Continental System. Britain responded to the new situation by declaring war on Prussia on June 11, 1806.

Realizing that it was no longer maintaining a position of neutrality, Prussia decided to turn the tables and declare war on France. As Austria had earlier done, Prussia picked the worst possible time for such a significant change of strategy. Unfortunately for both Russia and Britain, Austria, due to recent losses, had been a negative factor in the Third Coalition. That, combined with Russia's recent retreat out of Bonaparte's reach, left Prussia to fight the French on her own. France soundly defeated Prussia at the battle of Jena-Auerstadt on October 14, 1806, once again exhibiting

the remarkable style of Napoleonic warfare. Eugene Newton Anderson explained one of the many difficulties faced by Frederick William III:

The history of his reign to his point had been that of careful investigations and consultations, each ending in disagreement and further consultation. The practice continued before, during, and after the battle of Jena. The duke [of Brunswick, general in charge of Prussian troops] was undecided and consulted the king; the king was uncertain and consulted the duke; both were uncertain and consulted the staff officers. They were still discussing the proper strategy when Napoleon attacked. Further consultation was not necessary to establish the fact or even the degree of the defeat.⁷

It must be remembered that Britain, upon the untimely death of Pitt, underwent a change in direction with the creation of a new government. William Wyndham, Lord Grenville, became Prime Minister in February 1806, and one of Pitt's major adversaries, Charles James Fox, became Foreign Secretary. The stage seemed set for Bonaparte to make a move.

In March 1806, a packet of dispatches was delivered to a British naval officer just off the coast of Dover by a French vessel flying the flag of truce. In this packet were two letters from Maurice de Talleyrand addressed to Charles Fox.⁸ These two letters were a response to Fox's earlier letter of February 20 which initiated a call for secret peace negotiations between the two nations.⁹ This was not, however, the officially sanctioned British policy as shown in King George III's response to the transaction.

The King has read the correspondence which has passed between Mr Fox & Mr. Talleyrand and regrets very much that his name should have been mentioned in any way, as he is by no means anxious to receive commendation from such a quarter. His Majesty trusts that his confidential servants will upon consideration of what has passed think it their duty to quash at the outset any idea or proposal of negotiations, and that Monsieur Talleyrand's communication in which an opening is given, will be looked upon as one of a nature entirely private to Mr Fox and therefore not requiring official notice.¹⁰

France lessened Fox's hopes for peace by insisting that Russia not be involved in the negotiations. But that kind of secrecy was expressly prohibited by the agreements made when the coalition was formed. The episode shows the skill of Talleyrand and Bonaparte in playing ally against ally in order to create dissension within the coalition. Thus, Fox could do nothing but attempt to resume Pitt's policies and renew the war with France.

As was often the case with this coalition, the allies' policies were contradictory. As Britain hoped to increase the scope of continental war, the Russian entourage was returning home to lament its loss at Austerlitz and re-evaluate its policy. The break between Alexander and Czartoryski had by now become almost complete. Alexander wanted neither to accept the responsibility for the defeat nor to admit that Czartoryski's plan involving Poland may have proved to be wiser. Instead, Czartoryski became a political scapegoat for

Alexander, and his role and influence diminished until his departure from the foreign ministry in June 1806.¹¹

Czartoryski continued throughout 1806 to draw up plans for a Russian recovery. He still favored his plan of allying Russia more firmly with Prussia than with Austria. He believed Russia should be pressuring the Ottoman Empire to take a defensive stand against France, even if that meant reinforcing Russian power in the Adriatic. He also believed that the relationship with Britain should be closely maintained, because, besides Russia, only Britain could stand up to Bonaparte. If war became a reality, he believed Russia should establish two fronts, one in northern Europe and one in the Ottoman Empire. In Europe, the Poles, along with the Prussians, would lend assistance; and, in the southeast, a similar approach, using nationalism as a motivation, would induce the Greeks and southern Slavs to support the Russians.¹²

Alexander was taking Czartoryski's advice less and less, and, in most cases, he acted directly contrary to it.¹³ The Tsar, instead, was moving much closer to a policy of peace at all costs and war only if Russian soil was threatened. Czartoryski, in a memorandum to Alexander dated January 17, 1806, attempted to remind him of what their original goal had been upon the

formation of the coalition and how the tsar's present philosophy contradicted those beliefs.

Russia does not wish to acquire anything for herself, but she is not willing, and she ought not, to lose the place and character which a century of glorious achievements has assigned her. Satisfied with her advantages, her only ambition has been to preserve the weak against the attacks of the strong; her weapons have been appeals to the right and justice, and she has only used force when those weapons have proved ineffectual. When the employment of force has also not been successful, the general confidence of mankind has been her reward, or has made her forget her temporary reverses.¹⁴

Fox had been frequently consulting Czartoryski about the possibilities of renewing the war with France. Czartoryski, while eager to act, was in a position of diminished authority, a situation which both Nikolai Nikolaevich Novosiltsev and Pavel Aleksandrovich Stroganov were also experiencing.¹⁵ But Alexander was thinking along different lines, entertaining notions of negotiating a peace treaty with France and turning his back on continental affairs. Frustrated at being unable to serve Russia to his best ability, Czartoryski got Alexander to accept his retirement from office. In his final official memo to Alexander on March 22, 1806, he again stressed the potential problem in Russia's course of action.

During the last four years Russia and her allies have four times made overtures of peace to Napoleon, and on each occasion the shameful conditions which he imposed and the outrageous pretensions which he put forward rendered peace

impossible. . . . Finally, England--the only Power which by her dominion over seas can in combination with us still justify the hope of a possible equilibrium in Europe--always faithful to our alliance, always frank in her transactions with us and strict in fulfilling them, showed herself ready to second us everywhere, and was actually doing most effectually in the Mediterranean and on the Adriatic.¹⁶

Alexander, assuming the role of Foreign Minister, proceeded in the opposite direction. He decided to send Pierre d'Oubril to Paris as Russian plenipotentiary to negotiate peace terms. A treaty was concluded in July 1806. Several reports suggested that Alexander decided to sign this peace despite the concessions that Russia would have to make to France.¹⁷ The reaction in St. Petersburg, however, was much different. Eventually, Alexander saw the futility of abandoning Europe in favor of France and did not ratify the treaty. His change of heart was due primarily to dissatisfaction with its terms, especially regarding France's dominance in Germany (which Alexander did not care to recognize), Bonaparte's dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, and the organization of the Confederation of the Rhine. Desiring to save face before the members of his court, Alexander banished Oubril from Russia for his role in drafting this treaty.

Alexander now found himself needing an able foreign minister to replace Czartoryski. While many, both in Russia and particularly in Britain, hoped for the return

of Czartoryski, such was not to be. Instead, Alexander invited Andrei Gotthard Budberg to serve in that position. Budberg had been one of Alexander's tutors, but he was neither as close a friend as Czartoryski nor as ideologically compatible with Alexander. Due in part to his ever-failing health and in part to the monumental tasks he faced in following the charismatic Czartoryski, Budberg's influence on Alexander was slight during his short tenure. The policies that Budberg advocated for Russia were a return to those of Catherine the Great. He suggested not only conquest in Poland and partition in Turkey, but also a coalition with France against Britain.¹⁸

In October 1806 France attacked Prussia in an attempt to divide the coalition even further. Acting on a personal commitment to Frederick William III which dated back to the spring in Memel in 1802, Alexander called the Russian forces back into action. Slowly, the Russian army moved westward in response to the French attack.

While Russian forces were moving to the aid of Prussia, other non-Russian forces were being moved into the Danubian principalities, territories which Russia sought. Since about 1802, Russia had had some control over local appointments of officials, or hospodars, in both Moldavia and Wallachia. This movement was part of a growing Russian presence in the Balkan region which

greatly concerned Sultan Selim III of the Ottoman Empire. Russia's difficulties gave the Sultan a chance to recoup some of his control in the Balkans.

The role of the Ottomans in the coalition was founded on a somewhat traditional Franco-Ottoman friendship. This had been breached, however, in 1798 when France invaded Egypt and threatened Ottoman territory during the Second Coalition. The Ottomans opposed France during the War of the Second Coalition and concluded an armistice and peace in 1801-1802. A general lessening of the Ottoman Empire's control over its outlying provinces shortly followed. Its weakened position was exacerbated by Russia's access to the Mediterranean, its protectorate over the Ionian Islands, and its involvement in Moldavia and Wallachia.

In a response to this heightened Russian influence, Selim III attempted to resume the Empire's former alliance with France in 1802. Bonaparte would agree only if Selim III followed a strictly anti-Russian policy. As this failed to materialize to his liking by late 1805, Bonaparte instead made overtures to Persia for an alliance and hoped that the Ottomans would remain neutral. While French military successes weakened the Third Coalition, Selim III planned to save his empire and regain lost territory by now allying with France and Persia.

When the Ottoman Empire resisted Russian influence in the Danubian region, Russia quickly countered by sending troops. This whole episode culminated in the Ottoman declaration of war on Russia in December 1806.¹⁹

Involved in the Prussian-French confrontation and at war with the Ottomans, Russia now was involved in the two-front war that Czartoryski had warned against since the defeat at Austerlitz. Near the end of 1806, the French had captured Prussian papers that exposed the earlier Russian-Prussian agreement at Memel. Bonaparte now realized that Alexander had been playing France and the allies against one another and he decided to go to war against Russia. In December 1806 he advanced into Poland and won a major victory against Russia at Eylau on February 8, 1807.

Bonaparte was now in a dangerous situation. His troops had advanced far into Poland and were short on supplies and in a difficult position for quick, accurate communications with rear command and Paris. The situation in which Bonaparte found himself reflects his notion that diplomacy should always be a reflection of military strategy.²⁰ His uncertainty about Austria's and Britain's positions led him to pursue peace if for no other reason than to replenish his forces.

With Russia caught in a two-front war, Bonaparte had once again effectively spread out and splintered his

opposition in Europe. Prussia was presently being held at bay. Austria's Foreign Minister, J. P. Stadion, was strongly opposed to France, but problems, both internally and externally, left Austria afraid of any potential war. Britain's "Ministry of All the Talents" was hardly Austria's sympathetic ally of the Pitt years, and British indecision left the coalition lacking in solidity.

When war between Russia and France resumed in the spring of 1807, Russia's allies did not come to its aid. The grand plan to reorganize Europe had dwindled to a series of diplomatic maneuvers and well-choreographed, lightning-quick battles. The final blow was dealt to the Third Coalition on June 14, 1807, when Russia suffered another major military defeat at Friedland.

NOTES

- ¹Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:98.
- ²Kukiel, Czartoryski and European Unity, pp. 41-60.
- ³Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:96.
- ⁴Ibid., 2:111.
- ⁵John M. Sherwig, Guineas and Gunpowder: British Foreign Aid in the Wars with France 1793-1815 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 169-70.
- ⁶Coupland, The War Speeches of William Pitt the Younger, p. 359.
- ⁷Eugene Newton Anderson, Nationalism and the Cultural Crisis in Prussia, 1806-1815 (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1939), p. 272.
- ⁸Times (London), March 20, 1806.
- ⁹Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondences of George III, Vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 410-411.
- ¹⁰The King's Reply to Charles James Fox, March 22, 1806, Aspinall, ed., Later Correspondences, p. 412.
- ¹¹Grimstead, Foreign Ministers of Alexander I, p. 142.
- ¹²Ibid., pp. 142-144.
- ¹³Ibid., pp. 147-148.
- ¹⁴Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:113.

¹⁵Grimstead, Foreign Ministers of Alexander I, p. 146.

¹⁶Gielgus, Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, 2:159-161.

¹⁷Grimstead, Foreign Ministers of Alexander I, p. 159.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 151-165.

¹⁹Derek McKay and H. M. Scott, The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648-1815 (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1983), pp. 315-317.

²⁰Ibid., p. 317.

CHAPTER V

DRAFTING THE TREATY OF TILSIT

The Third Coalition came to an end with the French defeat of the Russians at Friedland, a battle which Bonaparte described at the time as being "as decisive as Austerlitz, Marengo and Jena."¹ Despite the French victory, Bonaparte was impressed with the Russian army and had no desire to pursue an eastern European campaign any further. Bonaparte's wish was to arrive at a speedy settlement and free himself for more important issues: the formulation of a new policy regarding Britain and the reorganization of his holdings in Italy and Germany.

Alexander was, by that point, thoroughly disillusioned with the Third Coalition. He resented the British lack of dedication to being involved in continental affairs, the ineffectiveness of Austrian troops and politics, and Prussia's quick surrender to the French. He believed, after suffering another major defeat at the hands of the French, that the only chance to save his reputation, both at home and throughout Europe, was by forging a major diplomatic triumph in cooperation with Bonaparte.

Following the battle at Friedland in East Prussia (now Pravdinsk in the Soviet Union), Alexander sued Bonaparte for peace, and the stage was set for the dramatic meeting between the two emperors at Tilsit. The first meeting between Alexander and Napoleon indicated both the geopolitical reality as well as the anticipation.

In terms of historiography, this scene is most often recounted when discussing Tilsit for it is the precursor to modern meetings of heads of state. Unfortunately, much of the significance of Tilsit is lost in the appeal of the theatrics. Albert Vandal best described the meeting:

At this moment, Alexander had two objects of aversion, England, which poorly supported him, and Austria, which failed to answer his entreaties. One is assured that the first word to the Emperor was the following: "Sire, I hate England as much as you."--In that case Napoleon would have responded, "peace is made."²

In fact, the tone of the negotiations had an air of high drama with the bulk of the lengthy discussions being conducted on a raft in the Niemen River equidistant from each bank. That location had been a concession made by Bonaparte to show respect for Alexander's rank. Maurice Paleologue well depicts the romantic setting:

The arrangements of that memorable interview, the decor, the setting, the behaviour of the chief actors and the supernumeraries, all the details of that grand spectacle have been fixed for long in the popular imagination: the raft in the middle of the Niemen; the two Emperors publicly proclaiming

their friendship; their smiling walks together arm in arm, through the gaping little town; their interminable rides along the banks of the river and in the neighbouring forests; their military parades; the solemn distribution of decorations to the bravest soldiers in both armies; the enthusiastic fraternisation between the Imperial Guard of Russia and of France and their rapturous shouts of: "Long live the Emperor of the East! Long live the Emperor of the West! Then, in the evening, the two monarchs withdrawing anew for long and secret confabulations, from which they emerged equally delighted with each other.³

Despite the setting, historical consensus agreed that Bonaparte had never intended that Alexander be his equal either in stature or in power on the continent, either immediately or in the future. The negotiations and subsequent treaty represented another in a long history of Napoleonic diplomatic triumphs. But, in contrast to that consensus, historians have speculated widely about Alexander's motives and his reasoning.

At least one has interpreted Alexander's diplomacy as having been a "desertion of Prussia at Tilsit."⁴ It is that point which separates the Treaty of Tilsit from the previous continental agreements made during Alexander's reign. Prior to Tilsit, Alexander had adhered to the 1802 Memel agreement that tied his hands in all instances to favor Prussia and which left Russian policy to be, in some cases, not in Russia's best interests. Another view, more sympathetic to the French, analyzes from a larger perspective the reasons Russia signed the Treaty of Tilsit. "In all classes of [Russian] society

abuse was showered on the man who lost the battle of Friedland and, to crown his infamy, had 'prostrated himself at the feet of the victor and fraternised with him.' Never before, people said, has Russia, Holy Orthodox Russia, the Russia of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, submitted to such ignominy."⁵ In one way, Tilsit represented a pivotal point in Alexander's psychological make-up, for while he was led by Bonaparte to believe that he was his equal, Alexander's own nation and his allies were shocked and disappointed by his actions.

The treaty was concluded in separate accords on June 29 and July 9, 1807, and signed in the city of Tilsit (now Sovetsk). In addition to arranging an armistice with France, Alexander also acted on behalf of both Prussia and Poland. The majority of the final decisions came out of the meetings held between Alexander and Bonaparte. Their agreements were then passed down to a smaller committee which formalized the ideas into a treaty. In these meetings Talleyrand represented France, and Prince Alexander Borisovich Kurakin and General Prince Dmitry Lobanov-Rostovsky represented Russia.

The treaty, which was made known to all of the European powers, consisted of twenty-nine articles that dealt primarily with new boundaries and new rulers of continental Europe. It also hinted at a series of new alliances which were actually formalized in a series of

secret articles. The secret articles, which were known within a few months, were not published in Britain, neither in the Times nor read into the Parliamentary records. (See the appendix for an English translation of the treaty which appeared in the Times (London) on August 8, 1807.)

That the treaty was punitive to both Austria and Prussia was not surprising, since neither of those nations was a strong ally in the coalition nor a difficult adversary for the French army. Of the two nations, Prussia suffered the most severe losses. The French occupation of Prussian territories following the battle of Friedland was settled by the treaty, resulting in a loss of nearly one-half of Prussia's population and one-third of Prussian territory. (See Article IV in the appendix.) Also by the terms of the settlement, Prussia agreed to reduce its army to 40,000 men and to pay a war indemnity of some one hundred million francs to France. It was only through Alexander's personal appeal to Bonaparte that Frederick William III was allowed to remain on the throne of a Prussia now reduced in size. (See Articles IV, V, and XI in the appendix.). In this respect, Alexander remained at least superficially true to his pledge given to Frederick William III at Memel.

Prussian and Austrian losses since the formation of the coalition in 1805 included two major setbacks that

predated the Tilsit accords: the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire and Bonaparte's acceptance of the Protectorate of the Confederation of the Rhine, both of which took place in 1806. Many of the German states that were included in the Confederation had at one time or another been under Austrian or Prussian control. They were now divided among the four German client states that France had acquired since the revolution and formed the heart of the Confederation: Baden, Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstedt, and Wurttemberg.

Another section of the treaty (Articles V, XIV, and XVIII), which specifically named rulers to several thrones throughout Europe, allowed Bonaparte to affirm nepotism in his empire and to raise members of his family to monarchical status. From Prussian territory the Kingdom of Westphalia was created, over which Bonaparte placed his brother, Jerome, as king. Louis Bonaparte was made King of Holland, and all of these were united in the Confederation of the Rhine. Throughout the period from 1806 to 1808, several other family members were given royal positions. The period surrounding the Treaty of Tilsit represented a peak in Bonaparte's goal of empire and dynasty.

Poland's configuration also changed because of Tilsit. (See Articles V, VII, and IX in the appendix.)

Prussian Poland became the Grand Duchy of Poland under the direct rule of the King of Saxony, another French puppet. The parts of Poland acquired by the Russians in the previous forty years still remained under Russian control. Yet, to regard Poland from a strictly geographic standpoint, it is not clear why Bonaparte would not cede additional Polish holdings to Russia under any circumstance, for in many ways Poland acted as a buffer between Russia and the west, which now was quite apparently a French dominion. For Bonaparte to cede additional territory to Russian Poland, however, would be to open the door to Polish hopes for a reunification and subsequent independence. The fate of Poland at Tilsit highlights a recurring motif in Polish history which pitted its eastern identities against its western ones and left Poland caught in the middle, never able to act strongly in either direction.

The remaining sections of the treaty dealt with peace settlements, alliances, and diplomatic intervention. Regarding the recent Russian and Ottoman declaration of war on one another in 1806, Bonaparte offered to serve as a mediator to make an equitable peace between the two empires. (See Article XXIII in the appendix.) In a secret clause to the treaty, Bonaparte also pledged to Alexander that should negotiations fail, France would enter the conflict on Russia's side. A similar agreement

was reached in Tilsit regarding Britain. In this case Russia assumed the role of mediator and potential ally to France. If Britain could not come to terms with France, Russia would join France in a declaration of war on Britain; and a secret clause outlined an ultimatum which would be delivered to Denmark, Sweden, and Portugal in that circumstance. The ultimatum would demand closing ports to Britain and British goods and breaking off diplomatic relations with Russia and France. Together, Russia and France would declare war on any nation failing to comply.

The Treaty of Tilsit ended the Third Coalition. It reunited Russia and France for the first time since 1801. The similarities between that period of rapprochement and this new one became evident almost immediately. The treaty appeared on the surface to reduce Europe to two friendly regions, one dominated by Russia and the other by France.

The treaty succeeded in buying time for Europe to attempt to forge a more desirable peace. But, as usual throughout the entire Napoleonic period, that peace could only come from war.

The immediate effects of Tilsit achieved peace through the polarization of Europe (except for Britain) into spheres of territorial control. The position of virtually every European nation had now been decided by

either defeat or declaration. The only major remaining question mark was Britain, and, with Russian policies being more favorable to France, Bonaparte could turn all of his attentions directly to Britain's defeat. In effect, while the Treaty of Tilsit created an atmosphere of peace, in reality it was a calm before the storm, leaving the nations of Europe wondering what was going to happen to the European balance of power in the coming months and years.

NOTES

¹Markham, Napoleon (New York: The New American Library, 1963), p. 129.

²Albert Vandal, Napoleon et Alexandre I: L'Alliance Russe sous Le Premier Empire (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1891-1896), 1:58. "A ce moment, Alexandre avait deux objets d'aversion: l'Angleterre, qui l'avait mal seconde, l'Autriche, qui s etait derobee a ses instances. On assure que son premier mot a l'Empereur fut celui-ci: 'Sire, je hais les Anglais autant que vous.--En ce cas, aurait repondu Napoleon, le paix est faite.'" [Translated by the author]

³Maurice Paleologue, The Enigmatic Czar: The Life of Alexander of Russia (Archon Books, 1969), p. 59.

⁴Herbert Butterfield, The Peace Tactics of Napoleon, 1806-1808 (New York: Octagon Press, 1972), pp. 372-380.

⁵Paleologue, The Enigmatic Czar, p. 70.

CHAPTER V

EFFECTS AND REPERCUSSIONS OF THE TREATY OF TILSIT

The Treaty of Tilsit left Europe in a state of disarray. Austria and Prussia were downcast and defeated, both without strong allies and without competent armies. Their many internal problems had combined with their failure to adapt themselves to Bonaparte's recent geopolitical changes in Europe. After Tilsit, they found themselves subservient to France, without much hope of mounting a successful opposition or constructive reaction to French aggression.

Britain, as a result of Tilsit, found itself to be the target of France's attempt to remove it from the European arena. By forming a rapprochement with Russia and arranging mainland Europe in a temporarily satisfactory alignment, Bonaparte gained the time and opportunity to focus his attentions on Britain. Unwittingly perhaps, or blinded by hubris, Bonaparte never realized that he had granted Russia the same freedom of action as France. Alexander, despite the agreements of Tilsit, was not interested in challenging Britain. Other goals soon became more attractive.

Immediately following the Treaty of Tilsit, Bonaparte was at the peak of his control over Europe. His positioning of various relatives on the thrones of Europe was his direct attempt not only to show this power but also to legitimize his empire in terms which all the monarchies of Europe would understand and fear. Since 1802, Bonaparte had doubled France's territorial holdings. The next step of his plan was to ensure the maintenance of his empire by enforcing the Continental System against Britain and thereby weakening Britain's economic influence on the continent.

Bonaparte's Continental System had been initiated, though not named as such, as early as 1800-1801 with the French-Russian period of rapprochement, when Tsar Paul I revived the Russian League of Armed Neutrality. Essentially, the Continental System called for the exclusion of all British goods from ports under French control. But the system did not declare that European goods could not be exported to Britain. The system was conceived as being punitive for Britain, but not for the rest of Europe. The underlying concept was to reduce Britain's income, create a drain on her treasury, and ultimately stop the flow of British money to France's enemies. British financial support of France's enemies obviously concerned Bonaparte, therefore he hoped to weaken Britain economically. Britain was a major naval power during

Napoleonic times and virtually untouchable by any contemporary navy. From this, Bonaparte reasoned that economic warfare would defeat Britain in a way that the French navy could not.

As Bonaparte's domination of Europe expanded, so did his ability to enforce the blocking of British imports. Despite Britain's huge empire, she could not ignore the European market without weakening the British economic system.

France, before 1803, also had holdings in North America which Britain feared could be the start of a rival colonial system that could possibly challenge British markets,¹ although, by the time of Tilsit, Bonaparte had forgotten about world domination and was focused primarily on Europe.

On November 21, 1806, Bonaparte issued the Berlin Decree. This document announced that Britain was now in a state of blockade and that all nations were prohibited from importing from or exporting to Britain. Bonaparte warned that British goods in European territorial waters would, from that day on, be seized and confiscated.² The Berlin Decree marked the official establishment of the Continental System. When the settlement at Tilsit was concluded, Britain was effectively shut out of European affairs--economic as well as political. Bonaparte was able, at long last,

to enforce his Continental System against Britain and expected to receive help from virtually every European port and nation.

Britain was in a difficult political situation-- as well as economic. During the French-Russian negotiations at Tilsit, Britain was again faced with the task of creating a new government. Lord Grenville's so-called "ministry of all talents" had collapsed in early March 1807. Both Grenville and Foreign Minister Charles James Fox had hoped to ensure peace for Britain during their short period of power. Despite Britain's inactivity on the European battlefield, her role in all the previous European coalitions had been a major one, for Britain had poured large sums of money into continuing the opposition to Bonaparte. In 1805-1806, Pitt had provided seven million British pounds to help support the wars of the Third Coalition. With the change from Pitt to Grenville in early 1806, the subsidies decreased to a relatively small amount. The allies viewed this decrease as a sign of British selfishness and withdrawal from continental affairs.² Because of Grenville's cautious policies and because of the growing pressures of the Continental System, Britain had gradually withdrawn from financial support of even limited warfare against France.

In the spring of 1807, the Duke of Portland, William Cavendish Bentinck, became the titular head of the British government. With him, two of Pitt's proteges came into power. George Canning became the foreign secretary and Lord Robert Stewart Castlereagh became the secretary of war. After the failings and hesitation of British policy following Pitt's administration, these three men represented a return to Pitt's concepts of coalition--staunch opposition to France and support for European unity.³ The new English government sought quite different things for Europe from those presented to it by the Treaty of Tilsit.

The initial British reaction to the Treaty of Tilsit was published in the London Times on August 12, 1807. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Times, though not an official organ of the British government, often described official British policy. The columns of the Times provided a forum for discussion but, more importantly, served to spread information to the British upper classes. Parliamentary debates, governmental decrees, and world developments were all prominently displayed in the pages of the Times.

The mood following Tilsit was one of utter contempt for the French and especially for Bonaparte. "Everything, in short, within the range of his power, is to be cut and modeled after the French fashion. As if the concern

of the French Empire was insufficient for the vast grasp of his mind, he has gratuitously assumed the regulation and the superintendence of all those Governments he has created or tolerated."⁴

Overall, the educated British understanding of the Treaty of Tilsit saw it as a minor tragedy waiting to enlarge and manifest itself. On August 12, an editor wrote "We should have expected that the interferences of ALEXANDER, and the peace of Tilsit, would have put an end to the exactions and oppressions of these harpies [Bonaparte and Talleyrand]. Quite the contrary. The spirit of rapine seems to increase in proportion to the shortness of their stay in the conquered territories."⁵ Yet, in this case, the editors of the Times did not seem to see through the publicly announced parts of the Treaty to its secret clauses which contained the essence of the French-Russian alliance. One month after the Treaty of Tilsit was concluded, on August 12, the Times printed the following advice:

The difficulties which stood in the way of a liberal commercial intercourse, between this Country and Russia, are not, we are happy to learn, likely to last much longer. Some very satisfactory information on this important subject, has been received from St. Petersburg. The latest letters from that city speak generally with confidence as to the removal of the recent restrictions upon foreign commerce. It is stated in one of these, "that things have taken a more favourable turn; and that great hopes are entertained that the

Commercial Treaty with England will be speedily revived, and affairs placed upon their former footing."⁶

Regarding the proposed Russian mediation in the conclusion of a treaty between Britain and France, the British Parliament concluded that such an arrangement was of no benefit to Britain. The Times noted that when a similar proposal had been made to France in 1805, "Bonaparte refused such mediation. 'No,' said he, 'you have an army on foot to force your terms on me; but what means have you to compel England to comply with your mediatory proposals?' Why then has he so readily accepted this mediation in the present instance?"⁷

As to how that decision further involved Alexander, and more importantly the Russian army, Britain hoped Russia would be peaceful. Again the Times speculated: "'Such are the terms,' he [Alexander] may say, 'I, as impartial umpire between you, propose for your acceptance: if you refuse them, you must terminate your own quarrels yourself, I desist from any further interference.'"⁸

In late August, a pamphlet appeared in London entitled, "A Key to the recent Conduct of the Emperor of Russia."⁹ Although it cannot be considered to reflect official British intelligence, the pamphlet demonstrated that the Treaty of Tilsit did not escape the notice of upper-class British society. The existence of the pamphlet showed the concern which some sections of the

British opposition had about the new Russian-French alliance. In it, Alexander's motives were declared to be generated by the humiliation of Russian forces on the battlefield and Alexander's personal disgust with the entire situation. The pamphlet stated that Tilsit was signed because "Alexander could not stoop to receive what, instead of being considered due to him, was to be conferred on him as a favour of obligation. He therefore, took the weight of the war upon his own shoulders. . . ." ¹⁰

The pamphlet's author, whose identity was not revealed, maintained that Alexander applied to Britain for a loan on his personal account for five million pounds. This loan was apparently refused on the basis of Grenville's philosophy toward the continental war. Obviously annoyed by the refusal, the author of the pamphlet wrote,

Can it be believed, then, that a Country in which every hope of Europe was centered, which not only might but ought to have contributed to its salvation, and which, at least, ought to have performed what was its duty, and not favourable to ALEXANDER, refused the sum to save the continent, which was scarcely more to her than a few drops from the ocean? Such was, however, the case. ¹¹

The pamphlet stated the changing policies of Britain toward the continent, and especially Russia, because of the Treaty of Tilsit. In the mind of the pamphlet's author, Tilsit might not have been signed if Britain had fervently supported Russia throughout the many coalitions and military campaigns. This support, however, had

to be all encompassing: financial, military, political, and emotional. Britain's own irresolute policies contributed heavily to the crisis now faced after Tilsit.

The Times of September 7, 1807, reported about another factor affecting British policy--the antagonism of the United States of America. The Times reported that "The political horizon, both to the East and West, appears at present sufficiently dark and lowering. Russia on the one side, and America on the other, are, if reports say true, ready to wreak their wrath upon us."¹² The potential conflict with Russia had something to do with Britain's defense of the neutrality of the Danish navy. This was a relatively small matter which camouflaged the underlying British sentiment that "Russia is no match for France without the assistance of England. Where then is the prudence of Russia's uniting with France to subjugate, or even weaken England?"¹³ As Castlereagh's power began to increase, British policy turned to the possibility of another coalition with Russia against France. With respect to America, Britain was seeing the origins of what would culminate in the War of 1812. Britain was already questioning America's motives for entering into Europe's affairs. The editors of the Times wrote, "They are far removed from the scene of European carnage, and a more destructive warfare than ever desolated Europe.

Why would they rush, like a dazzled insect, into a flame which does not approach them?"¹⁴

Britain was now caught in a difficult situation. America was reigniting a flame of rebellion, and Russia appeared to be joining France in war directed against it. In early October 1807, the Times included several reports of the recent armistice concluded between Russia and the Ottoman Empire and mediated by France. British opinion suggested that Russia was making too many unnecessary sacrifices in the settlement, specifically the cession of Moldavia and Wallachia to the Turks. From this, Britain, at least as shown by the Times, believed that of those provinces Bonaparte would create another vassal state for France. "Everywhere he [Bonaparte] is cooping up, and surrounding the Russian monarchy, whose destruction, were England overthrown, would not linger one year; and yet that same Russia hesitates at the part she is to act in the present contest between us and France; nay, hesitates between hostility to us and bare neutrality. . . ." ¹⁵ By October 17, reports from throughout Europe were printed in the Times recounting what Britain had been fearing for several months, an embargo of British goods consigned to Russian ports.¹⁶

In late November, the entire contents of the Treaty of Tilsit, except for the secret articles, were finally

made available in Britain. Reports from the Times' many foreign sources reached London and led the Times to predict:

We cannot wonder at the opinion that Russia will be forced or seduced to declare war against us ultimately, though it may not take place until spring, when alone the Baltic will be open for naval operations, and when the armies of France may be ready to punish the Emperor ALEXANDER for refusing to join the league, by wresting from him his possessions in Poland, Courland, and Livonia, not for getting his conquests in the last war, secured to him by the peace of Tilsit.¹⁷

Opinion of knowledgeable Russian leaders about these developments was no more enthusiastic than those in London. Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich, the grandson of Tsar Nicholas I, writing in Paris in the early twentieth century, remarked: "The new alliance was unpopular in Russia but particularly in Moscow. The displeasure did not cease until after the rupture; but Alexander, without a worry for either public opinion or the complaints of the dignitaries, followed the firm path that he had outlined, imposing silence not only to those in Moscow society, but down to the Imperial Family's nearest relatives."¹⁸

The Russian gentry, dismayed at the terms of Tilsit because of the great concessions made to Bonaparte, directed the majority of the blame at Russian Foreign Minister Budberg. Budberg had attempted to resign from service during the Tilsit negotiations, but Alexander refused to accept his resignation. Perhaps aware of what

was to come, Alexander decided to use Budberg as a scapegoat to bear the brunt of any possible objection to the treaty that could arise in Russia. Bulberg, however, had had no part in negotiating the treaty and had actually opposed the idea of a Russian-French alliance.¹⁹

Near the end of 1807, Alexander dismissed Budberg and appointed Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumiantsev to the post of Russian foreign minister. The choice of Rumiantsev was an interesting one for it allowed Alexander to proceed with a policy of duality toward France. Rumiantsev "supported the French alliance, not as a Western-oriented Francophile who blithely sanctioned the aggressive conquests of Napoleon but rather as a patriotic Russian who believed the alliance to be in the best interests of his native country."²⁰ As Rumiantsev pursued favorable Russian relations with France, Alexander had, in essence, the perfect decoy in place to formulate a covert policy against France.

Rumiantsev's policy proposed that Russia should not be directly involved in the affairs of western Europe. He believed that Russia's coexistence with Bonaparte could be advantageous, both diplomatically and territorially, only if Russia were to expand to the north and to the south rather than to the west. Rumiantsev believed that if Bonaparte controlled in the west, he would allow Russia a free hand to negotiate with the

Ottomans in the Balkans and would also tolerate Russian expansion into Finland and Sweden. Although Bonaparte would allow Russian domination in both Finland and Sweden, he would never allow Russia to possess the Straits and especially not Constantinople. Early in 1808, to prove his loyalty to the terms of Tilsit and to turn Russia's thoughts from Constantinople, Bonaparte suggested a joint venture of Russian and French troops to march into India.²¹ Russian imperial ambitions, however, remained in the Danubian regions and looked to the north.²²

After the conclusion of the Treaty of Tilsit, King Gustavus IV Adolphus of Sweden, long an enemy of Bonaparte, remained true to his alliance with Britain. The geographic realities of having a hostile nation so near to St. Petersburg prompted Russia to invade Sweden in February 1808. Sweden was easily conquered and the Russian forces proceeded to Finland and annexed it as a Russian holding the following month. By late March, King Gustavus Adolphus abdicated his throne, and Russia had expanded territorially and increased the size of what was by now referred to as the "empire of the east."

NOTES

- ¹Markham, Napoleon, p. 104.
- ²Sherwig, Guineas and Gunpowder, p. 181.
- ³Ibid., pp. 182-185.
- ⁴Times (London), August 12, 1807.
- ⁵Ibid.
- ⁶Ibid.
- ⁷Times (London), August 18, 1807.
- ⁸Ibid.
- ⁹As reported in Times (London), August 26, 1807.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹Ibid.
- ¹²Times (London), September 7, 1807.
- ¹³Ibid.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Times (London), October 9, 1807.
- ¹⁶Times (London), October 17, 1807.
- ¹⁷Times (London), November 30, 1807.

¹⁸Grand-Duc Nicolas Mikhailovich, L'Empereur Alexander Ier Essai D'Etude Historique (St. Petersburg: Manufacture des Papiers de L'Etat, 1912), 1:57.

"Impopulaire en Russie, la nouvelle alliance l'etait surtout a Moscou. Le mecontentement ne devait cesser qu au jour de la rupture, mais Alexandre, sans nul souci de l'opinion publique ni des doleances des dignitaires, suivant d'un pas ferme la voie qu'il s etait tracee, imposant silence non seulement a la societe de la capitale, mais jusque dans la Famille Imperiale a ses proches parents." [Translated by the author]

¹⁹Grimstead, The Foreign Ministers of Alexander I, pp. 164-166.

²⁰Ibid., p. 170.

²¹Markham, Napoleon, p. 187.

²²Grimstead, The Foreign Ministers of Aleander I, pp. 170-176.

CONCLUSION

Bonaparte, despite being allied with Russia by the Treaty of Tilsit, allowed Russia only limited opportunities for aggrandizement in comparison to the seemingly limitless opportunities he reserved for French expansion. In essence that one-sidedness was the major reason Tilsit failed to last as a peace treaty. Although Bonaparte schemed to dominate Europe, he believed that he could allow Russia to remain a power only in the east.

Bonaparte felt that such an arrangement was needed to allow him the time for the formation of new policies aimed at continental domination. Tilsit afforded Bonaparte the luxury of reshaping Europe without the friction generated by Russia that had proved to be more than a passing irritation in the past.

Russia, in terms of sheer numbers, had always posed a large military threat to any major French campaign. Russia was also an unknown quantity of sorts. Up to the time of Tilsit, neither Russia's diplomatic nor military presence could be accurately assessed. It was only after Alexander came to power that Russia's numerically superior military forces were augmented by thoughtful, cautious diplomacy, fueled with both idealism and

self-interest. While Tilsit gave Bonaparte a freer hand to deal with other matters, including especially Britain, it also gave Alexander a similar free hand to pursue Russia's interests. That Russia's interests might not continue to support France's was a fact not fully appreciated by Bonaparte. In general, Russia could no longer be taken lightly in European and Ottoman affairs and Bonaparte underestimated her growing role in that direction.

Only four years after Tilsit, events made it obvious that Bonaparte had overestimated the potential benefits of Tilsit and had been over-confident about the immediate and longlasting effects of the treaty. During the Napoleonic period, Russia asserted her prominence and importance in continental decisions, and the Treaty of Tilsit clarified that fact. The treaty itself, if we ignore the romanticism surrounding the emperors' meeting, offered Russia a practical and significant entrance into European affairs.

Britain also recognized Russia's emergence as a powerful nation-state. Her fault was not in underestimating a Russian presence, but rather in failing to capitalize on this new phenomenon in a timely way for the good of Britain and Europe. Britain suffered throughout the period by underestimating Russian diplomatic and military abilities. British leaders watched Russia gain

in importance in European affairs, yet they were often distracted from the concerns of the continent by their many colonial responsibilities. Their age-old hostility toward France kept them from matching British policy to the new geopolitical realities that Bonaparte was rapidly imposing upon the continent. Their hesitancy to use Russia as a counterweight in this struggle marked their major diplomatic failure of the period.

Russia, and Alexander in particular, more accurately gauged the situation. Alexander was not afraid to change Russia's policies and alignments to meet changing needs. He attempted to enhance Russia's stature in Europe and, especially through Czartoryski, to install an equitable and enlightened system of peace. Even his idealistic policies, which played a less important part shortly after Tilsit, were, however, more realistic than those of either Britain or France.

Caught in this three-way struggle were all the countries of central Europe, most notably Prussia and the Hapsburg empire. As a result of the many coalitions and of Bonaparte's determination, the Central European countries either fell under foreign rule or their boundaries were radically altered. Essentially these monarchies had serious difficulties for which the Tilsit period offered only fear, defeat, and frustration.

The Treaty of Tilsit symbolized a new system of foreign affairs brought about by revolutionary France and Bonaparte. The accepted methods of warfare and diplomacy were being replaced by modern techniques more suited to the times. Once all the nations became accustomed to these developments, Europe seemed gradually to settle into the status quo ante and to resume the normal, or at least regular, course of international affairs--a course that led by 1812 to French defeat. But for the historian, Tilsit clarified those changes in techniques, changes which were often not clear to contemporaries. In general, however, the Treaty of Tilsit was more than an annoyance to the balance of power in Europe, but less than a trauma.

AFTERWORD

The Treaty of Tilsit offers a strangely ironic foreshadowing of twentieth-century European affairs. As early as 1805, the ever-growing problems of modern alliances, the rise of nationalism, economic warfare, and ultimately, the distinction between eastern and western Europe are becoming clear. The Treaty, because of its falterings, has often been relegated to a footnote in textbooks. But, in terms of western European historiography, the Treaty of Tilsit offers substantial insight into many subsequent European conflicts.

For example, if the events surrounding the Treaty of Tilsit were extrapolated, they could be considered a model for many events leading up to World War II and its settlement. They are highly suggestive of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the Winter War, and decisions made at Yalta and Potsdam which dealt with many of those same issues-- Poland, the Balkans, Germany. Czartoryski's policy and the failings of the Third Coalition could be an eighteenth-century equivalent of Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations. Czartoryski, in this particular setting, assumes the role of the misunderstood diplomat

firmly grounded in idealism, while the rest of the world focuses only on current conditions.

The course of French-British relations has been an important factor in making Russia the fulcrum of a European balance. This role also allowed Russia not only to become important in European affairs, she did so while still retaining a major position in parts of Asia.

Overall, the Treaty of Tilsit offers a glimpse of the Europe of the future with a foreshadowing of major trends earlier initiated by the French Revolution. The revolution essentially proved that monarchies were no longer the standard forms of government that they had been in the past. Tilsit also showed that alliances based on that same system were quickly giving way to those based on nationalism and to a diplomacy based on the concepts of national self-interest and spheres of influence.

In light of Tilsit, it is interesting to read a passage written by the historian George F. Kennan; while doing so, one can imagine him to be describing the Europe of 1807 rather than the one of the twentieth century.

The things people thought they were trying to achieve by the long and terrible military exertion in Europe were simply not to be achieved by this means. The indirect effects of that war--its genetic and spiritual effects--were far more serious than people realized at the time. We can see, today, that these effects penalized the

victor and vanquished in roughly equal measure, and that the damage they inflicted, even on those who were nominally the victors, was greater than anything at stake in the issues of the war itself. . . . Both sides hoped for more than could really be achieved. Both underestimated the seriousness of the damage they were doing to themselves--to their own spirit and to their own physical substance--in this long debauch of hatred and bloodshed.¹

The Treaty of Tilsit, for all of its shortcomings, gave Europe a textbook study of modern international relations and the problems that come with them. That significance of its interpretation was not noticed or remembered has proved to be sadly apparent in our current ideological east-west conflict.

NOTES

¹George F. Kennan, Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), pp. 9-10.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE TREATY OF TILSIT AS PRINTED IN
Times (London), 8 August, 1807, p. 1.

TREATY OF PEACE BETWEEN HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF FRENCH,
THE KING OF ITALY, AND HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF ALL THE
RUSSIAS.

His Majesty, the Emperor of France, King of Italy,
Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine, and his
Majesty the Emperor of Russia, animated with the same
interest in putting an end to the devastations of war,
have, for this purpose, nominated and furnished with full
power on the part of his Majesty the Emperor of France
and King of Italy, Charles Maurice Talleyrand, Prince
of Benevento, his Great Chamberlain, and Minister of
Foreign Affairs, Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour,
Knight of the Prussian Order of the Black and of the Red
Eagle of the Order of St. Hubert.

His Majesty, the Emperor of all the Russias, has,
on his part appointed Prince Kourakin, his actual Privy
Counsellor; Member of the Council of State, and of the
Senate; Chancellor of all Orders in the Empire; Amba-
sador Extraordinary, and Plenipotentiary of his Majesty
Knight of the Russias to his Majesty the Emperor of Austria;
Knight of the Russian Order of St. Andrew; of St.
Alexander; of St. Aube; of the first class of the Order
of St. Wolodimir, and of the second class of the
Prussian Orders of the Black and Red Eagle; of the
Bavarian Order of St. Hubert; of the Danish Order of

Dannebrog, and the Perfect Union, and Bailiff and Grand Cross of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem; and Prince Demety Labanoff Van Rostoff, Lieutenant General of the armies of his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias; Knight of the first class of the Order of St. Anne. of the Military Order of St. Joris, and of the third class of the Order of Wolodimir.

The abovementioned, after exchanging their full powers, have agreed upon the following Articles:

ARTICLE I.

From the day of exchanging the ratification of the present Treaties, there shall be perfect peace and amity between his Majesty the Emperor of the French and King of Italy, and his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias.

ARTICLE II.

Hostilities shall immediately cease at all points by sea or land, as soon as the intelligence of the present Treaty shall be officially received. In the meanwhile, the High Contracting Parties shall dispatch couriers extraordinary to their respective Generals and Commanders.

ARTICLE III.

All ships of war or other vessels, belonging to the High Contracting Parties or their subjects, which may be captured after the signing of this Treaty, shall

be restored. In cases of these vessels being sold, the value shall be returned.

ARTICLE IV.

Out of esteem for his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, and to afford to him a proof of his sincere desire to unite both nations in the bands of immutable confidence and friendship, the Emperor Napoleon wishes that all countries, towns, and territory, conquered from the King of Prussia, the Ally of his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, should be restored, namely, that part of the Dutchy of Magdeburg, situated on the right bank of the Rhine; the Mark of Prignitz; the Uker Mark; the Middle and New Mark of Grandenburg, with the exception of the Circle of Kotbuss, in Lower Alsace; the Dutchy of Pomerania; Upper, Lower and New Silesia, and the County of Glatz; that part of the District of the Netze, which is situated to the northward of the road of Driesen and Schneidemuhl through Waldau to the Vistula, and extending along the frontier of the circle of Bromberg, and the navigation of the river Netze and of the canal of Bromberg, from Driesen to the Vistula and back, must remain open and free of all tolls; Pomerellia; the island of Nogat; the country on the right bank of the Vistula and of the Nogat, to the West of Old Prussia, and to the Northward of the circle of

Culm; Ermeland. Lastly, the kingdom of Prussia, as it was on the 1st of January, 1772, together with the fortresses of Spandau, Stettin, Custrin, Glogau, Breslau, Schweidnitz, Neisie, Brieg, Kosel, and Glatz, and in general all fortresses, citadels, castles, and strong holds of the countries above-named, in the same condition in which those fortresses, citadels, castles, and strong holds may be at present; also, in addition to the above, the city and citadel of Graudentz.

ARTICLE V.

Those Provinces, which, on the 1st January, 1772, formed a part of the Kingdom of Poland, and have since, at different times, been subjected to Prussia (with the exception of the countries named or alluded to in the preceding Article, and of those which are described below the 9th Article), shall become the possession of his Majesty the King of Saxony, with power of possession and sovereignty, under the title of the Dutchy of Warsaw, and shall be governed according to a regulation, which will insure the liberties and privileges of the people of the said Dutchy, and be consistent with the security of the neighbouring States.

ARTICLE VI.

The City of Dantzic, with a territory of two leagues round the same, is restored to her former

independence, under the protection of his Majesty the King of Prussia, and his Majesty the King of Saxony; to be governed according to the laws by which she was governed at the time when she ceased to be her own mistress.

ARTICLE VII.

For a communication betwixt the kingdom of Saxony and the Duchy of Warsaw, his Majesty the King of Saxony is to have free use of a military road through the States of his Majesty the King of Prussia. This road, the number of troops which are allowed to pass at once, and the resting places, shall be fixed by a particular agreement between the two Sovereigns, under the mediation of France.

ARTICLE VIII.

Neither his Majesty, the King of Prussia, his Majesty the King of Saxony, nor the City of Dantzic shall oppose any obstacles whatever to free navigation of the Vistula under the name of tolls, rights, or duties.

ARTICLE IX.

In order as far as possible to establish a natural boundary between Russia and the Duchy of Warsaw, the territory between the present confines of Russia from

the Bug to the mouth of the Lassona shall extend to a line from the mouth of the Lassona along the towing path of the said river; and that of the Bobra, up to its mouth; that of the Narew from the mouth of that river as far as Suradiz; from Lissa to its source near the village of Mien; from this village to Nutseck, and from Nutseck to the mouth of that river beyond Nurr; and finally, along the towing path of the Bug upwards to extend as far as the present frontiers of Russia. This territory is for ever united to the Empire of Russia.

ARTICLE X.

No person of any rank or quality whatever, whose residence or property may be within the limits stated in the above-mentioned article, nor any inhabitant in those provinces of the ancient kingdom of Poland, which may be given up to his Majesty the King of Prussia, or any person possessing estates, revenues, pensions or any other kind of income shall be molested in his person, or in any way whatever, on account of his rank, quality, estates, revenues, pensions, income, or otherwise, or in consequence of any part, political or military, which he may have taken in the events of the present war.

ARTICLE XI.

All contracts and engagements between his Majesty the King of Prussia and the ancient possessors, relative

to the general imposts, the ecclesiastical, the military or civil benefices, the creditors or pensioners of the old Prussian Government, are to be settled between the Emperor of all the Russias and his Majesty the King of Saxony; and to be regulated by their said Majesties, in proportion to their acquisitions, according to Articles V. and IX.

ARTICLE XII.

Their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Saxe Cobourg, Oldenburg and Mecklenburgh Schwerin, shall each of them be restored to the complete and quiet possession of their estates; but the ports in the Duchies of Oldenburg and Mechlenburgh shall remain in the possession of French garrisons till the Definitive Treaty shall be signed between France and England.

ARTICLE XIII.

His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon accepts of the mediation of the Emperor of all the Russias, in order to negotiate and conclude a Definitive Treaty of Peace between France and England; however, only upon condition that this mediation shall be accepted by England in one month after the exchange of the ratification of the present Treaty.

ARTICLE XIV.

His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias being desirous on his part to manifest how ardently he desires to establish the most intimate and lasting relations between the two Emperors, acknowledges his Majesty Joseph Napoleon, King of Naples, and his Majesty Louis Napoleon, King of Holland.

ARTICLE XV.

His Majesty, the Emperor of all the Russias, acknowledges the Confederation of the Rhine, the present state of the possessions of the Princes belonging to it, and the titles of those which were conferred upon them by the act of the Confederation, or by the subsequent treaties of accession. His said Majesty also promises, information being communicated to him on the part of the Emperor Napoleon, to acknowledge these Sovereigns who may hereafter become members of the Confederation, according to their rank specified in the Act of Confederation.

ARTICLE XVI.

His Majesty the Emperor of all Russias cedes all his property in the right of Sovereignty to the Lordship of Jever, in East Friesland, to his majesty the King of Holland.

ARTICLE XVII.

The present Treaty of Peace shall be mutually binding, and in force for his Majesty the King of Naples, Joseph Napoleon, his Majesty Louis Napoleon, King of Holland, and the Sovereigns of the Confederation of the Rhine, in alliance with the Emperor Napoleon.

ARTICLE XVIII.

His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, also acknowledges his Imperial Highness, Prince Jerome Napoleon as King of Westphalia.

ARTICLE XIX.

The kingdom of Westphalia shall consist of the provinces ceded by the King of Prussia on the left bank of the Elbe, and other states at present in the possession of his Majesty the Emperor Napoleon.

ARTICLE XX.

His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias engages to recognize the limits which shall be determined by his Majesty the Emperor Napoleon, in pursuance of the foregoing XIXth article, and the cessions of his Majesty the King of Prussia (which shall be notified to his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias) together with the state of possession resulting therefrom to the Sovereigns for whose behoof they shall have been established.

ARTICLE XXI.

All hostilities shall immediately cease betwæen [sic] the troops of his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias and those of the Grand Seignior, at all points, wherever official intelligence shall arrive of the signing of the present Treaty. The High Contracting parties shall, without delay, dispatch Couriers extraordinary, to convey the intelligence, with the utmost possible expedition, to the respective Generals and Commanders.

ARTICLE XXII.

The Prussian troops shall be withdrawn from the Provinces of Moldavia, but the said Provinces may not be occupied by the troops of the Grand Seignior, till after the exchange of the Ratifications of the future Definitive Treaty of Peace between Russia and the Ottoman Porte.

ARTICLE XXIII.

His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias accepts the mediation of his Majesty the Emperor of France and King of Italy, for the purpose of negotiating a peace advantageous and honourable to the two powers, and of concluding the same.

The respective Plenipotentiaries shall repair to that place which will be agreed upon by the two powers

concerned, there to open the negotiations, and to proceed therewith.

ARTICLE XXIV.

The periods, within which the High contracting parties shall withdraw their troops from the places which they are to evacuate pursuant to the above stipulations, as also the manner in which the different stipulations contained in the present treaty, shall be executed, will be settled by a special agreement.

ARTICLE XXV.

His Majesty the Emperor of the French, King of Italy, and his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russians, mutually ensure to each other the integrity of their possessions, and of those of the powers included in this present treaty, in the state in which they are now settled, or further to be settled, pursuant to the above stipulations.

ARTICLE XXVI.

The prisoners made by the contracting parties, or those included in the present treaty, shall be restored in a mass, and without any cartel of exchange on both sides.

ARTICLE XXVII.

The commercial relations between the French

empire, the kingdom of Italy, the kingdoms of Naples and Holland, and the Confederated States of the Rhine, on the one side; and the Empire of Russia on the other, shall be replaced on the same footing as before the war.

ARTICLE XXVIII.

The ceremonial between the two Courts of the Thuilleries and Petersburgh, with respect to each other, and also their respective Ambassadors, Ministers, and Envoys, mutually accredited to each other, shall be placed on the footing of complete equality and reciprocity.

ARTICLE XXIX.

The present Treaty shall be ratified by his Majesty the Emperor of the French, King of Italy, and his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, the Ratifications shall be exchanged in his city within the space of four days.

Done at Tilsit, 7th July, (25th June), 1807,

(Signed) C. MAURICE TALLEYRAND, Prince of Benevento.

Prince ALEXANDER KOURAKIN.

Prince DIMITRY LABANOFF VAN ROSTOFF.

A true Copy.

(Signed) C.M. TALLEYRAND, Prince of Benevento.

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