

MARX KARL

SECRET DIPLOMATIC
HISTORY OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Karl Marx
Secret Diplomatic History
of The Eighteenth Century

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CHAPTER I

No. 1. Mr. Rondeau to Horace Walpole

"Petersburg, 17th August, 1736.¹

" ... I heartily wish ... that the Turks could be brought to condescend to make the first step, for this Court seems resolved to hearken to nothing till that is done, to mortify the Porte, that has on all occasions spoken of the Russians with the greatest contempt, which the Czarina and her present Ministers cannot bear. Instead of being obliged to Sir Everard Fawkner and Mr. Thalman (the former the British, the latter the Dutch Ambassador at Constantinople), for informing them of the good dispositions of the Turks, Count Oestermann will not

¹ This letter relates to the war against Turkey, commenced by the Empress Ann in 1735. The British diplomatist at St. Petersburg is reporting about his endeavours to induce Russia to conclude peace with the Turks. The passages omitted are irrelevant.

be persuaded that the Porte is sincere, and seemed very much surprised that they had written to them (the Russian Cabinet) without order of the King and the States-General, or without being desired by the Grand Vizier, and that their letter had not been concerted with the Emperor's Minister at Constantinople... I have shown Count Biron and Count Oestermann the two letters the Grand Vizier has written to the King, and at the same time told these gentlemen that as there was in them several hard reflections on this Court, I should not have communicated them if they had not been so desirous to see them. Count Biron said that was nothing, for they were used to be treated in this manner by the Turks. I desired their Excellencies not to let the Porte know that they had seen these letters, which would sooner aggravate matters than contribute to make them up..."

No. 2. Sir George Macartney to the Earl of Sandwich

"St. Petersburg, 1st (12th) March, 1765.

"Most Secret.²

" ... Yesterday M. Panin³ and the Vice-Chancellor, together

² England was at that time negotiating a commercial treaty with Russia.

³ To this time it has remained among historians a point of controversy, whether or not Panin was in the pay of Frederick II. of Prussia, and whether he was so behind the back of Catherine, or at her bidding. There can exist no doubt that Catherine II., in order to identify foreign Courts with Russian Ministers, allowed Russian Ministers ostensibly to identify themselves with foreign Courts. As to Panin in particular, the

with M. Osten, the Danish Minister, signed a treaty of alliance between this Court and that of Copenhagen. By one of the articles, a war with Turkey is made a *casus fœderis*; and whenever that event happens, Denmark binds herself to pay Russia a subsidy of 500,000 roubles per annum, by quarterly payments. Denmark also, by a most secret article, promises to disengage herself from all French connections, demanding only a limited time to endeavour to obtain the arrears due to her by the Court of France. At all events, she is immediately to enter into all the views of Russia in Sweden, and to act entirely, though not openly, with her in that kingdom. Either I am deceived or M. Gross⁴ has misunderstood his instructions, when he told your lordship that Russia intended to stop short, and leave all the burden of Sweden upon England. However desirous this Court may be that we should pay a large proportion of every pecuniary engagement, yet, I am assured, she will always choose to take the lead at Stockholm. Her design, her ardent wish, is to make a common cause with England and Denmark, for the total annihilation of the French interest there. This certainly cannot be done without a considerable expense; but Russia, at present, does not seem unreasonable enough to expect that **WE SHOULD PAY THE WHOLE**. It has been hinted to me that £1,500 per annum, on our part, would be sufficient to support our interest, and absolutely

question is, however, decided by an authentic document which we believe has never been published. It proves that, having once become the man of Frederick II., he was forced to remain so at the risk of his honour, fortune and life.

⁴ The Russian Minister at London.

prevent the French from ever getting at Stockholm again.

"The Swedes, highly sensible of, and very much mortified at, the dependent situation they have been in for many years, are extremely jealous of every Power that intermeddles in their affairs, and particularly so of their neighbours the Russians. This is the reason assigned to me for this Court's desiring that we and they should act upon SEPARATE bottoms, still preserving between our respective Ministers a confidence without reserve. That our first care should be, not to establish a faction under the name of a Russian or of an English faction; but, as even the wisest men are imposed upon by a mere name, to endeavour to have OUR friends distinguished as the friends of liberty and independence. At present we have a superiority, and the generality of the nation is persuaded how very ruinous their French connections have been, and, if continued, how very destructive they will be of their true interests. M. Panin does by no means desire that the smallest change should be made in the constitution of Sweden.⁵ He wishes that the royal authority might be preserved without being augmented, and that the privileges of the people should be continued without violation. He was not, however, without his fears of the ambitious and intriguing spirit of the Queen, but the great ministerial vigilance of Count Oestermann has now entirely quieted his apprehensions on that head.

"By this new alliance with Denmark, and by the success in

⁵ The oligarchic Constitution set up by the Senate after the death of Charles XII.

Sweden, which this Court has no doubt of, if properly seconded, M. Panin will, in some measure, have brought to bear his grand scheme of uniting the Powers of the North.⁶ Nothing, then, will be wanted to render it entirely perfect, but the conclusion of a treaty alliance with Great Britain. I am persuaded this Court desires it most ardently. The Empress has expressed herself more than once, in terms that marked it strongly. Her ambition is to form, by such an union, a certain counterpoise to the family compact,⁷ and to disappoint, as much as possible, all the views of the Courts of Vienna and Versailles, against which she is irritated with uncommon resentment. I am not, however, to conceal from your lordship that we can have no hope of any such alliance, unless we agree, by some secret article, to pay a subsidy in case of a Turkish war, for no money will be desired from us, except upon an emergency of that nature. I flatter myself I have persuaded this Court of the unreasonableness of expecting any subsidy in time of peace, and that an alliance upon an equal footing will be more safe and more honourable for both nations. I can assure your lordship that a Turkish war's being a *casus fœderis*, inserted either in the body of the treaty or in a secret article, will be a *sine quâ non* in every negotiation we may have to open with this

⁶ Thus we learn from Sir George Macartney that what is commonly known as Lord Chatham's "grand conception of the Northern Alliance," was, in fact, Panin's "grand scheme of uniting the Powers of the North." Chatham was duped into fathering the Muscovite plan.

⁷ The compact between the Bourbons of France and Spain concluded at Paris on August, 1761.

Court. The obstinacy of M. Panin upon that point is owing to the accident I am going to mention. When the treaty between the Emperor and the King of Prussia was in agitation, the Count Bestoucheff, who is a mortal enemy to the latter, proposed the Turkish clause, persuaded that the King of Prussia would never submit to it, and flattering himself with the hopes of blowing up that negotiation by his refusal. But this old politician, it seemed, was mistaken in his conjecture, for his Majesty immediately consented to the proposal on condition that Russia should make no alliance with any other Power but on the same terms.⁸ This is the real fact, and to confirm it, a few days since, Count Solme, the Prussian Minister, came to visit me, and told me that if this Court had any intention of concluding an alliance with ours without such a clause, he had orders to oppose it in the strongest manner. Hints have been given me that if Great Britain were less inflexible in that article, Russia will be less inflexible in the article of export duties in the Treaty of Commerce, which M. Gross told your lordship this Court would never depart from. I was assured at the same time, by a person in the highest degree of confidence with M. Panin, that if we entered upon the Treaty of Alliance the Treaty of Commerce would go on with it *passibus æquis*; that then the latter would be entirely taken out of the hands

⁸ This was a subterfuge on the part of Frederick II. The manner in which Frederick was forced into the arms of the Russian Alliance is plainly told by M. Koch, the French professor of diplomacy and teacher of Talleyrand. "Frederick II.," he says, "having been abandoned by the Cabinet of London, could not but attach himself to Russia." (See his *History of the Revolutions in Europe*.)

of the College of Trade, where so many cavils and altercations had been made, and would be settled only between the Minister and myself, and that he was sure it would be concluded to our satisfaction, provided the Turkish clause was admitted into the Treaty of Alliance. I was told, also, that in case the Spaniards attacked Portugal, we might have 15,000 Russians in our pay to send upon that service. I must entreat your lordship on no account to mention to M. Gross the secret article of the Danish Treaty... That gentleman, I am afraid, is no well-wisher to England."⁹

⁹ Horace Walpole characterises his epoch by the words – "*It was the mode of the times to be paid by one favour for receiving another.*" At all events, it will be seen from the text that such was the mode of Russia in transacting business with England. The Earl of Sandwich, to whom Sir George Macartney could dare to address the above despatch, distinguished himself, ten years later, in 1775, as First Lord of the Admiralty, in the North Administration, by the vehement opposition he made to Lord Chatham's motion for an equitable *adjustment of the American difficulties*. "He could not believe it (Chatham's motion) *the production of a British peer*; it appeared to him rather *the work of some American.*" In 1777, we find Sandwich again blustering: "he would hazard every drop of blood, as well as the last shilling of the national treasure, rather than allow Great Britain to be defied, bullied, and dictated to, by her disobedient and rebellious subjects." Foremost as the Earl of Sandwich was in entangling England in war with her North American colonies, with France, Spain, and Holland, we behold him constantly accused in Parliament by Fox, Burke, Pitt, etc., "of keeping the naval force inadequate to the defence of the country; of intentionally opposing small English forces where he knew the enemy to have concentrated large ones; of utter mismanagement of the service in all its departments," etc. (See debates of the House of Commons of 11th March, 1778; 31st March, 1778; February, 1779; Fox's motion of censure on Lord Sandwich; 9th April, 1779, address to the King for the dismissal of Lord Sandwich from his service, on account of misconduct in service; 7th February, 1782, Fox's motion that there had been gross mismanagement in the administration of naval affairs during the year 1781.) On this occasion Pitt imputed

No. 3. – Sir James Harris to Lord Grantham

"Petersburg, 16 (27 August), 1782.

"(Private.)

" ... On my arrival here I found the Court very different from what it had been described to me. So far from any partiality to England, its bearings were entirely French. The King of Prussia (then in possession of the Empress' ear) was exerting his influence against us. Count Panin assisted him powerfully; Lacy and Corberon, the Bourbon Ministers, were artful and intriguing; Prince Potemkin had been wrought upon by them; and the whole tribe which surrounded the Empress – the Schuwaloffs, Stroganoffs, and Chernicheffs – were what they still are, *garçons perruquiers de Paris*. Events seconded their endeavours. The assistance the French affected to afford Russia in settling its

to Lord Sandwich "all our naval disasters and disgraces." The ministerial majority against the motion amounted to only 22 in a House of 388. On the 22nd February, 1782, a similar motion against Lord Sandwich was only negated by a majority of 19 in a House of 453. Such, indeed, was the character of the Earl of Sandwich's Administration that more than thirty distinguished officers quitted the naval service, or declared they could not act under the existing system. In point of fact, during his whole tenure of office, serious apprehensions were entertained of the consequences of the dissensions then prevalent in the navy. Besides, the Earl of Sandwich was openly accused, and, as far as circumstantial evidence goes, convicted of Peculation. (See debates of the House of Lords, 31st March, 1778; 9th April, 1779, and *seq.*) When the motion for his removal from office was negated on April 9th 1779, thirty-nine peers entered their protest.

disputes with the Porte, and the two Courts being immediately after united as mediators at the Peace of Teschen, contributed not a little to reconcile them to each other. I was, therefore, not surprised that all my negotiations with Count Panin, *from February, 1778, to July, 1779*, should be unsuccessful, as he meant to prevent, not to promote, an alliance. It was in vain we made concessions to obtain it. He ever started fresh difficulties; had ever fresh obstacles ready. A very serious evil resulted, in the meanwhile, from my apparent confidence in him. He availed himself of it to convey in his reports to the Empress, not the language I employed, and the sentiments I actually expressed, but the language and sentiments he wished I should employ and express. He was equally careful to conceal her opinions and feelings from me; and while he described England to her as obstinate, and overbearing, and reserved, he described the Empress to me as displeased, disgusted, and indifferent to our concerns; and he was so convinced that, by this double misrepresentation, he had shut up every avenue of success that, at the time when I presented to him the Spanish declaration, he ventured to say to me, ministerially, '*That Great Britain had, by its own haughty conduct, brought down all its misfortunes on itself; that they were now at their height; that we must consent to any concession to obtain peace; and that we could expect neither assistance from our friends nor forbearance from our enemies.*' I had temper enough not to give way to my feelings on this occasion... I applied, without loss of time, to Prince

Potemkin, and, by his means, the Empress *condescended* to see me alone at Peterhoff. I was so fortunate in this interview, as not only to efface all bad impressions she had against us, but by stating in its true light, our situation, and the inseparable interests of Great Britain and Russia, to raise in her mind a decided resolution to assist us. *This resolution she declared to me in express words.* When this transpired – and Count Panin was the first who knew it – he became my implacable and inveterate enemy. He not only thwarted by falsehoods and by a most undue exertion of his influence my public negotiations, but employed every means the lowest and most vindictive malice could suggest to depreciate and injure me personally; and from the very infamous accusations with which he charged me, had I been prone to fear, I might have apprehended the most infamous attacks at his hands. This relentless persecution still continues; it has outlived his Ministry. *Notwithstanding the positive assurances I had received from the Empress herself,* he found means, first to stagger, and afterwards to alter her resolutions. He was, indeed, very officiously assisted by his Prussian Majesty, who, at the time, was as much bent on oversetting our interest as he now seems eager to restore it. I was not, however, disheartened by this first disappointment, and, by redoubling my efforts, *I have twice more, during the course of my mission, brought the Empress to the verge (!) of standing forth our professed friend,* and, each time, *my expectations were grounded on assurances from her own mouth.* The first was when *our enemies conjured up the armed*

neutrality;¹⁰ the other when Minorca was offered her. Although, on the first of these occasions, I found the same opposition from the same quarter I had experienced before, yet I am compelled to say that the principal cause of my failure was attributable to the very awkward manner in which we replied to the famous neutral declaration of February, 1780. As I well knew from what quarter the blow would come, I was prepared to parry it. *My opinion was: 'If England feels itself strong enough to do without Russia, let it reject at once these new-fangled doctrines; but if its situation is such as to want assistance, let it yield to the necessity of the hour, recognise them as far as they relate to Russia alone, and by a well-timed act of complaisance insure itself a powerful friend.'*¹¹ My opinion was *not* received; an ambiguous and trimming answer was given; *we seemed equally afraid to accept or dismiss them. I was instructed secretly to oppose, but avowedly to acquiesce in them,* and some unguarded expressions of one of its then confidential servants, made use of in speaking to Mr. Simolin, in

¹⁰ Sir James Harris affects to believe that Catherine II. was not the author of, but a convert to, the armed neutrality of 1780. It is one of the grand stratagems of the Court of St. Petersburg to give to its own schemes the form of proposals suggested to and pressed on itself by foreign Courts. Russian diplomacy delights in those *quæ pro quo*. Thus the Court of Florida Bianca was made the responsible editor of the armed neutrality, and, from a report that vain-glorious Spaniard addressed to Carlos III., one may see how immensely he felt flattered at the idea of having not only hatched the armed neutrality but allured Russia into abetting it.

¹¹ This same Sir James Harris, perhaps more familiar to the reader under the name of the Earl of Malmesbury, is extolled by English historians as the man who prevented England from surrendering the right of search in the Peace Negotiations of 1782-83.

direct contradiction to the temperate and cordial language that Minister had heard from Lord Stormont, *irritated* the Empress to the last degree, and completed the *dislike* and *bad opinion* she entertained of that Administration.¹² Our enemies took

¹² It might be inferred from this passage and similar ones occurring in the text, that Catherine II. had caught a real Tartar in Lord North, whose Administration Sir James Harris is pointing at. Any such delusion will disappear before the simple statement that the first partition of Poland took place under Lord North's Administration, without any protest on his part. In 1773 Catherine's war against Turkey still continuing, and her conflicts with Sweden growing serious, France made preparations to send a powerful fleet into the Baltic. D'Aiguillon, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, communicated this plan to Lord Stormont, the then English Ambassador at Paris. In a long conversation, D'Aiguillon dwelt largely on the ambitious designs of Russia, and the common interest that ought to blend France and England into a joint resistance against them. In answer to this confidential communication, he was informed by the English Ambassador that, "if France sent her ships into the Baltic, they would instantly be followed by a British fleet; that the presence of two fleets would have no more effect than a neutrality; and however the British Court might desire to preserve the harmony now subsisting between England and France, it was impossible to foresee the contingencies that might arise from accidental collision." In consequence of these representations, D'Aiguillon countermanded the squadron at Brest, but gave new orders for the equipment of an armament at Toulon. "On receiving intelligence of these renewed preparations, the British Cabinet made instant and vigorous demonstrations of resistance; Lord Stormont was ordered to declare that every argument used respecting the Baltic applied equally to the Mediterranean. A memorial also was presented to the French Minister, accompanied by a demand that it should be laid before the King and Council. This produced the desired effect; the armament was countermanded, the sailors disbanded, and the chances of an extensive warfare avoided." "*Lord North*," says the complacent writer from whom we have borrowed the last lines, "*thus effectually served the cause of his ally (Catherine II.), and facilitated the treaty of peace (of Kutchuk-Kainardji) between Russia and the Porte.*" Catherine II. rewarded Lord North's good services, first by withholding the aid she had promised him in case of a war between England and the North American Colonies, and in the second place, by

advantage of these *circumstances*. . . I suggested the idea of giving up Minorca to the Empress, *because, as it was evident to me we should at the peace be compelled to make sacrifices, it seemed to me wiser to make them to our friends than to our enemies*. The idea was adopted at home in its whole extent,¹³ *and nothing could*

conjuring up and leading the armed neutrality against England. Lord North DARED NOT *repay, as he was advised by Sir James Harris*, this treacherous breach of faith by giving up to Russia, and to *Russia alone*, the maritime rights of Great Britain. Hence the irritation in the nervous system of the Czarina; the hysterical fancy she caught all at once of "entertaining a bad opinion" of Lord North, of "disliking" him, of feeling a "rooted aversion" against him, of being afflicted with "a total want of confidence," etc. In order to give the Shelburne Administration a warning example, Sir James Harris draws up a minute psychological picture of the feelings of the Czarina, and the disgrace incurred by the North Administration, for having wounded these same feelings. His prescription is very simple: surrender to Russia, as our friend, everything for asking which we would consider every other Power our enemy.

¹³ It is then a fact that the English Government, not satisfied with having made Russia a Baltic power, strove hard to make her a Mediterranean power too. The offer of the surrender of Minorca appears to have been made to Catherine II. at the end of 1779, or the beginning of 1780, shortly after Lord Stormont's entrance into the North Cabinet – the same Lord Stormont we have seen thwarting the French attempts at resistance against Russia, and whom even Sir James Harris cannot deny the merit of having written "*instructions perfectly calculated to the meridian of the Court of St. Petersburg*." While Lord North's Cabinet, at the suggestion of Sir James Harris, offered Minorca to the *Muscovites*, the English Commoners and people were still trembling for fear lest the *Hanoverians* (?) should wrest out of their hands "one of the keys of the Mediterranean." On the 26th of October, 1775, the King, in his opening speech, had informed Parliament, amongst other things, that he had Sir James Graham's own words, when asked why they should not have kept up some blockade pending the settlement of the "plan," "*They did not take that responsibility upon themselves*." The responsibility of executing their orders! The despatch we have quoted is the only despatch read, except one of a later date. The despatch, said to be sent on the 5th of April, in which "the Admiral is ordered to use the *largest discretionary power* in

be more perfectly calculated to the meridian of this Court than the judicious instructions I received on this occasion from Lord Stormont. Why this project failed I am still at a loss to learn. I never knew the Empress incline so strongly to any one measure as she did to this, before I had my full powers to treat, nor was I ever more astonished than when I found her shrink from her purpose when they arrived. I imputed it at the same time, in my own mind, to the rooted aversion she had for our Ministry, and her total want of confidence in them; but I since am more strongly disposed to believe that she consulted the Emperor (of Austria) on the subject, and that he not only prevailed on her to decline the offer, but betrayed the secret to France, and that it thus became public. I cannot otherwise account for this rapid change of sentiment in the Empress, particularly as Prince Potemkin (whatever he might

blockading the Russian ports in the Black Sea," is not read, nor any replies from Admiral Dundas. The Admiralty sent *Hanoverian* troops to Gibraltar and Port Mahon (Minorca), to replace such British regiments as should be drawn from those garrisons for service in America. An amendment to the address was proposed by Lord John Cavendish, strongly condemning "the confiding *such important fortresses as Gibraltar and Port Mahon to foreigners.*" After very stormy debates, in which the measure of entrusting Gibraltar and Minorca, "*the keys of the Mediterranean,*" as they were called, to *foreigners*, was furiously attacked; Lord North, acknowledging himself the adviser of the measure, felt obliged to bring in a *bill of indemnity*. However, these foreigners, these Hanoverians, were the English King's own subjects. Having virtually surrendered Minorca to Russia in 1780, Lord North was, of course, quite justified in treating, on November 22, 1781, in the House of Commons, "with utter scorn the insinuation that *Ministers were in the pay of France.*" Let us remark, *en passant*, that Lord North, one of the most base and mischievous Ministers England can boast of, perfectly mastered the art of keeping the House in perpetual laughter. So had Lord Sunderland. So has Lord Palmerston.

be in other transactions) was certainly in this *cordial and sincere* in his support, and both from what I saw at the time, and from what has since come to my knowledge, *had its success at heart as much as myself*. You will observe, my lord, that *the idea of bringing the Empress forward as a friendly mediatrix went hand-in-hand with the proposed cession of Minorca*. As this idea has given rise to what has since followed, and involved us in all the dilemmas of the present mediation, it will be necessary for me to explain what my views then were, and to exculpate myself from the blame of having placed my Court in so embarrassing a situation, *my wish and intention was that she should be sole mediatrix without an adjoint*; if you have perused what passed between her and me, in December, 1780, your lordship will readily perceive how very potent reasons I had to imagine she would be a friendly and even a partial one.¹⁴ I knew, indeed, she was unequal to the task; but I knew, too, how greatly *her vanity* would be flattered by this distinction, and was well aware

¹⁴ Lord North having been supplanted by the Rockingham Administration, on March 27, 1782, the celebrated Fox forwarded peace proposals to Holland through the mediation of the *Russian* Minister. Now what were the consequences of the *Russian mediation* so much vaunted by this Sir James Harris, the servile account keeper of the Czarina's sentiments, humours, and feelings? While preliminary articles of peace had been convened with France, Spain, and the American States, it was found impossible to arrive at any such preliminary agreement with Holland. Nothing but a simple cessation of hostilities was to be obtained from it. So powerful proved the *Russian mediation*, that on the 2nd September, 1783, just one day before the conclusion of *definitive treaties* with America, France, and Spain, Holland condescended to accede to *preliminaries of peace*, and this not in consequence of the *Russian mediation*, but through the influence of *France*.

that when once engaged she would persist, and be inevitably involved in our quarrel, particularly when it should appear (and appear it would) that we had *gratified* her with Minorca. The annexing to the mediation the other (Austrian) Imperial Court entirely overthrew this plan. It not only afforded her a pretence for not keeping her word, but piqued and mortified her; and it was under this impression that she made over the whole business to the colleague we had given her, and ordered her Minister at Vienna to subscribe implicitly to whatever the Court proposed. Hence all the evils which have since arisen, and hence those we at this moment experience. I myself could never be brought to believe that the Court of Vienna, as long as Prince Kaunitz directs its measures, can mean England any good or France any harm. It was not with that view that I endeavoured to promote its influence here, but because *I found that of Prussia in constant opposition to me*; and because I thought that if I could by any means smite this, I should get rid of my greatest obstacle. I was mistaken, and, by a singular fatality, the Courts of Vienna and Berlin seem never to have agreed in anything but in the disposition to prejudice us here by turns.¹⁵ The proposal relative to Minorca was the last attempt I made to induce the Empress to stand forth. I had exhausted my strength and resources; the freedom with which I had spoken in my last interview with her,

¹⁵ How much was England not prejudiced by the Courts of Vienna and Paris thwarting the plan of the British Cabinet of ceding Minorca to Russia, and by Frederick of Prussia's resistance against the great Chatham's scheme of a Northern Alliance under Muscovite auspices.

though respectful, had *displeased*; and *from this period to the removal of the late Administration*, I have been reduced to act on the defensive... I have had more difficulty in preventing the Empress from doing harm than I ever had in attempting to engage her to do us good. It was to prevent evil, that I inclined strongly for the acceptation of *her single mediation between us and Holland, when her Imperial Majesty first offered it*. The *extreme dissatisfaction* she expressed *at our refusal* justified my opinion; and I TOOK UPON ME, when it was proposed a second time, *to urge the necessity of its being agreed to* (ALTHOUGH I KNEW IT TO BE IN CONTRADICTION OF THE SENTIMENTS OF MY PRINCIPAL), since I firmly believed, had we again declined it, the Empress would, in a *moment of anger*, have joined the Dutch against us. As it is, *all has gone on well*; our *judicious* conduct has transferred to them the *ill-humour* she originally was in with us, and she now is as partial to our cause as she was before partial to theirs. *Since the new Ministry in England, my road has been made smoother*; the great and new path struck out by *your predecessor*,¹⁶ *and which you, my*

¹⁶ The predecessor is Fox. Sir James Harris establishes a complete scale of British Administrations, according to the degree in which they enjoyed the favour of his almighty Czarina. In spite of Lord Stormont, the Earl of Sandwich, Lord North, and Sir James Harris himself; in spite of the partition of Poland, the bullying of D'Aiguillon, the treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji, and the intended cession of Minorca – Lord North's Administration is relegated to the bottom of the heavenly ladder; far above it has climbed the Rockingham Administration, whose soul was Fox, notorious for his subsequent intrigues with Catherine; but at the top we behold the Shelburne Administration, whose Chancellor of the Exchequer was the celebrated William Pitt.

lord, pursue, has operated a most advantageous change in our favour upon the Continent. Nothing, indeed, but events which come home to her, will, I believe, ever induce her Imperial Majesty to take an active part; but there is now a *strong glow of friendship* in our favour; she approves our measures; she *trusts* our Ministry, and *she gives way to that predilection she certainly has for our nation*. Our enemies know and feel this; it keeps them in awe. This is a succinct but accurate sketch of what has passed at this Court from the day of my arrival at Petersburg to the present hour. Several inferences may be deduced from it.¹⁷ That the Empress is led by her passions, not by reason and argument; that her prejudices are very strong, easily acquired, and, when once fixed, irremovable; while, on the contrary, there is no sure road to her good opinion; that even when obtained, it is subject to perpetual fluctuation, and liable to be biassed by the most trifling incidents; that till she is fairly embarked in a plan, no assurances can be depended on; but that when once fairly embarked, she never retracts, and may be carried any length; that with very bright parts, an elevated mind, an uncommon sagacity, she wants *judgment, precision of idea, reflection, and L'ESPRIT DE COMBINAISON*(!!) That her Ministers are either ignorant of, or indifferent to, the welfare of the State, and act from a

As to Lord Shelburne himself, Burke exclaimed in the House of Commons, that "if he was not a Catalina or Borgia in morals, it must not be ascribed to anything but his understanding."

¹⁷ Sir James Harris forgets deducing the main inference, that the Ambassador of England is the agent of Russia.

passive submission to her will, or from motives of party and private interests."¹⁸

4. (Manuscript) Account of Russia during the commencement of the Reign of the Emperor Paul, drawn up by the Rev. L. K. Pitt, Chaplain to the Factory of St. Petersburg, and a near Relative of William Pitt.¹⁹

Extract

"There can scarcely exist a doubt concerning the real sentiments of the late Empress of Russia on the great points which have, within the last few years, convulsed the whole system of European politics. She certainly felt from the beginning the fatal tendency of the new principles, but was not, perhaps, displeased to see every European Power exhausting itself in a struggle which raised, in proportion to its violence, her own importance. It is more than probable that the state of the newly acquired provinces in Poland was likewise a point which had considerable influence over the political conduct of Catherine. The fatal effects resulting from an apprehension of revolt in

¹⁸ In the 18th century, English diplomatists' despatches, bearing on their front the sacramental inscription, "Private," are despatches to be withheld from the King by the Minister to whom they are addressed. That such was the case may be seen from Lord Mahon's *History of England*.

¹⁹ "To be burnt after my death." Such are the words prefixed to the manuscript by the gentleman whom it was addressed to.

the late seat of conquest seem to have been felt in a very great degree by the combined Powers, who in the early period of the Revolution were so near reinstating the regular Government in France. The same dread of revolt in Poland, which divided the attention of the combined Powers and hastened their retreat, deterred likewise the late Empress of Russia from entering on the great theatre of war, until a combination of circumstances rendered the progress of the French armies a more dangerous evil than any which could possibly result to the Russian Empire from active operations... The last words which the Empress was known to utter were addressed to her Secretary when she dismissed him on the morning on which she was seized: 'Tell Prince' (Zuboff), she said, 'to come to me at twelve, and to remind me of signing the Treaty of Alliance with England.'"

Having entered into ample considerations on the Emperor Paul's acts and extravagances, the Rev. Mr. Pitt continues as follows:

"When these considerations are impressed on the mind, the nature of the late secession from the coalition, and of the incalculable indignities offered to the Government of Great Britain, can alone be fairly estimated... But the ties which bind her (Great Britain) to the Russian Empire are formed by nature, and inviolable. United, these nations might almost brave the united world; divided, the strength and importance of each is FUNDAMENTALLY impaired. England has reason to regret with Russia that the imperial

sceptre should be thus inconsistently wielded, but it is the sovereign of Russia alone who divides the Empires."

The reverend gentleman concludes his account by the words:

"As far as human foresight can at this moment penetrate, the despair of an enraged individual seems a more probable means to terminate the present scene of oppression than any more systematic combination of measures to restore the throne of Russia to its dignity and importance."

CHAPTER II

The documents published in the first chapter extend from the reign of the Empress Ann to the commencement of the reign of the Emperor Paul, thus encompassing the greater part of the 18th century. At the end of that century it had become, as stated by the Rev. Mr. Pitt, the openly professed and orthodox dogma of English diplomacy, "*that the ties which bind Great Britain to the Russian Empire are formed by nature, and inviolable.*"

In perusing these documents, there is something that startles us even more than their contents – viz., their form. All these letters are "confidential," "private," "secret," "most secret"; but in spite of secrecy, privacy, and confidence, the English statesmen converse among each other about Russia and her rulers in a tone of awful reserve, abject servility, and cynical submission, which would strike us even in the public despatches of Russian statesmen. To conceal intrigues against foreign nations secrecy is resorted to by Russian diplomatists. The same method is adopted by English diplomatists freely to express their devotion to a foreign Court. The secret despatches of Russian diplomatists are fumigated with some equivocal perfume. It is one part the *fumée de fausseté*, as the Duke of St. Simon has it, and the other part that coquettish display of one's own superiority and cunning which stamps upon the reports of the French Secret Police their indelible character. Even the master

despatches of Pozzo di Borgo are tainted with this common blot of the *littérature de mauvais lieu*. In this point the English secret despatches prove much superior. They do not affect superiority but silliness. For instance, can there be anything more silly than Mr. Rondeau informing Horace Walpole that he has betrayed to the Russian Minister the letters addressed by the Turkish Grand Vizier to the King of England, but that he had told "at the same time those gentlemen that as there were several hard reflections on the Russian Court he should not have communicated them, *if they had not been so anxious to see them,*" and then told their excellencies not to tell the Porte that they had seen them (those letters)! At first view the infamy of the act is drowned in the silliness of the man. Or, take Sir George Macartney. Can there be anything more silly than his happiness that Russia seemed "reasonable" enough not to expect that England "should pay the **WHOLE EXPENSES**" for Russia's "choosing to take the lead at Stockholm"; or his "flattering himself" that he had "persuaded the Russian Court" not to be so "unreasonable" as to ask from England, in a time of peace, subsidies for a time of war against Turkey (then the ally of England); or his warning the Earl of Sandwich "not to mention" to the Russian Ambassador at London the secrets mentioned to himself by the Russian Chancellor at St. Petersburg? Or can there be anything more silly than Sir James Harris confidentially whispering into the ear of Lord Grantham that Catherine II. was devoid of "judgment,

precision of idea, reflection, and *l'esprit de combinaison*"?²⁰

On the other hand, take the cool impudence with which Sir George Macartney informs his minister that because the Swedes were extremely jealous of, and mortified at, their dependence on Russia, England was directed by the Court of St. Petersburg to do its work at Stockholm, under the British colours of liberty and independence! Or Sir James Harris advising England to surrender to Russia Minorca and the right of search, and the monopoly of mediation in the affairs of the world – not in order to gain any material advantage, or even a formal engagement on the part of Russia, but only "a strong glow of friendship" from the Empress, and the transfer to France of her "ill humour."

The secret Russian despatches proceed on the very plain line that Russia knows herself to have no common interests whatever with other nations, but that every nation must be persuaded separately to have common interests with Russia to the exclusion of every other nation. The English despatches, on the contrary, never dare so much as hint that Russia has common interests with England, but only endeavour to convince England that she has Russian interests. The English diplomatists themselves tell us that this was the single argument they pleaded, when placed face to face with Russian potentates.

If the English despatches we have laid before the public were

²⁰ Or, to follow this affectation of silliness into more recent times, is there anything in diplomatic history that could match Lord Palmerston's proposal made to Marshal Soult (in 1839), to storm the Dardanelles, in order to afford the Sultan the support of the Anglo-French fleet against Russia?

addressed to private friends, they would only brand with infamy the ambassadors who wrote them. Secretly addressed as they are to the British Government itself, they nail it for ever to the pillory of history; and, instinctively, this seems to have been felt, even by Whig writers, because none has dared to publish them.

The question naturally arises from which epoch this Russian character of English diplomacy, become traditionary in the course of the 18th century, does date its origin. To clear up this point we must go back to the time of Peter the Great, which, consequently, will form the principal subject of our researches. We propose to enter upon this task by reprinting some English pamphlets, written at the time of Peter I., and which have either escaped the attention of modern historians, or appeared to them to merit none. However, they will suffice for refuting the prejudice common to Continental and English writers, that the designs of Russia were not understood or suspected in England until at a later, and too late, epoch; that the diplomatic relations between England and Russia were but the natural offspring of the mutual material interests of the two countries; and that, therefore, in accusing the British statesmen of the 18th century of Russianism we should commit an unpardonable hysteron-proteron. If we have shown by the English despatches that, at the time of the Empress Ann, England already betrayed her own allies to Russia, it will be seen from the pamphlets we are now about to reprint that, even before the epoch of Ann, at the very epoch of Russian ascendancy in Europe, springing up at the

time of Peter I., the plans of Russia were understood, and the connivance of British statesmen at these plans was denounced by English writers.

The first pamphlet we lay before the public is called *The Northern Crisis*. It was printed in London in 1716, and relates to the intended Dano-Anglo-Russian *invasion of Skana* (Schonen).

During the year 1715 a northern alliance for the partition, not of Sweden proper, but of what we may call the Swedish Empire, had been concluded between Russia, Denmark, Poland, Prussia, and Hanover. That partition forms the first grand act of modern diplomacy – the logical premiss to the partition of Poland. The partition treaties relating to Spain have engrossed the interest of posterity because they were the forerunners of the War of Succession, and the partition of Poland drew even a larger audience because its last act was played upon a contemporary stage. However, it cannot be denied that it was the partition of the Swedish Empire which inaugurated the modern era of international policy. The partition treaty not even pretended to have a pretext, save the misfortune of its intended victim. For the first time in Europe the violation of all treaties was not only made, but proclaimed the common basis of a new treaty. Poland herself, in the drag of Russia, and personated by that commonplace of immorality, Augustus II., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, was pushed into the foreground of the conspiracy, thus signing her own death-warrant, and not even enjoying the privilege reserved by Polyphemus to Odysseus – to

be last eaten. Charles XII. predicted her fate in the manifesto flung against King Augustus and the Czar, from his voluntary exile at Bender. The manifesto is dated January 28, 1711.

The participation in this partition treaty threw England within the orbit of Russia, towards whom, since the days of the "Glorious Revolution," she had more and more gravitated. George I., as King of England, was bound to a defensive alliance with Sweden by the treaty of 1700. Not only as King of England, but as Elector of Hanover, he was one of the guarantees, and even of the direct parties to the treaty of Travendal, which secured to Sweden what the partition treaty intended stripping her of. Even his German electoral dignity he partly owed to that treaty. However, as Elector of Hanover he declared war against Sweden, which he waged as King of England.

In 1715 the confederates had divested Sweden of her German provinces, and to effect that end introduced the Muscovite on the German soil. In 1716 they agreed to invade Sweden Proper – to attempt an armed descent upon Schonen – the southern extremity of Sweden now constituting the districts of Malmoe and Christianstadt. Consequently Peter of Russia brought with him from Germany a Muscovite army, which was scattered over Zealand, thence to be conveyed to Schonen, under the protection of the English and Dutch fleets sent into the Baltic, on the false pretext of protecting trade and navigation. Already in 1715, when Charles XII. was besieged in Stralsund, eight English men-of-war, lent by England to Hanover, and by Hanover to Denmark,

had openly reinforced the Danish navy, and even hoisted the Danish flag. In 1716 the British navy was commanded by his Czarish Majesty in person.

Everything being ready for the invasion of Schonen, there arose a difficulty from a side where it was least expected. Although the treaty stipulated only for 30,000 Muscovites, Peter, in his magnanimity, had landed 40,000 on Zealand; but now that he was to send them on the errand to Schonen, he all at once discovered that out of the 40,000 he could spare but 15,000. This declaration not only paralysed the military plan of the confederates, it seemed to threaten the security of Denmark and of Frederick IV., its king, as great part of the Muscovite army, supported by the Russian fleet, occupied Copenhagen. One of the generals of Frederick proposed suddenly to fall with the Danish cavalry upon the Muscovites and to exterminate them, while the English men-of-war should burn the Russian fleet. Averse to any perfidy which required some greatness of will, some force of character, and some contempt of personal danger, Frederick IV. rejected the bold proposal, and limited himself to assuming an attitude of defence. He then wrote a begging letter to the Czar, intimating that he had given up his Schonen fancy, and requested the Czar to do the same and find his way home: a request the latter could not but comply with. When Peter at last left Denmark with his army, the Danish Court thought fit to communicate to the Courts of Europe a public account of the incidents and transactions which had frustrated the intended

descent upon Schonen – and this document forms the starting point of *The Northern Crisis*.

In a letter addressed to Baron Görtz, dated from London, January 23, 1717, by Count Gyllenborg, there occur some passages in which the latter, the then Swedish ambassador at the Court of St. James's, seems to profess himself the author of *The Northern Crisis*, the title of which he does not, however, quote. Yet any idea of his having written that powerful pamphlet will disappear before the slightest perusal of the Count's authenticated writings, such as his letters to Görtz.

"The Northern Crisis; or Impartial Reflections on the Policies of the Czar; occasioned by Mynheer Von Stocken's Reasons for delaying the descent upon Schonen. A true copy of which is prefixed, verbally translated after the tenor of that in the German Secretary's Office in Copenhagen, October 10, 1716. London, 1716.

1. —*Preface*— ... 'Tis (the present pamphlet) not fit for lawyers' clerks, but it is highly convenient to be read by those who are proper students in the laws of nations; 'twill be but lost time for any stock-jobbing, trifling dealer in Exchange-Alley to look beyond the preface on't, but every merchant in England (more especially those who trade to the Baltic) will find his account in it. The Dutch (as the courants and postboys have more than once told us) are about to mend their hands, if they can, in several articles of trade with the Czar, and they have been a long time about it to little purpose. Inasmuch as they are such a

frugal people, they are good examples for the imitation of our traders; but if we can outdo them for once, in the means of projecting a better and more expeditious footing to go upon, for the emolument of us both, let us, for once, be wise enough to set the example, and let them, for once, be our imitators. This little treatise will show a pretty plain way how we may do it, as to our trade in the Baltic, at this juncture. I desire no little *coffee-house politician* to meddle with it; but to give him even a disrelish for my company. I must let him know that he is not fit for mine. Those who are even proficient in state science, will find in it matter highly fit to employ all their powers of speculation, which they ever before past negligently by, and thought (too cursorily) were not worth the regarding. No outrageous party-man will find it at all for his purpose; but every *honest Whig* and every *honest Tory* may each of them read it, not only without either of their disgusts, but with the satisfaction of them both... 'Tis not fit, in fine, for a mad, hectoring, Presbyterian Whig, or a raving, fretful, dissatisfied, Jacobite Tory."

2. – The reasons handed about by Mynheer Von Stocken for delaying the descent upon Schonen.

"There being no doubt, but most courts will be surprised that the descent upon Schonen has not been put into execution, notwithstanding the great preparations made for that purpose; and that all his Czarish Majesty's troops, who were in Germany, were transported to Zealand, not without great trouble and danger, partly by his own gallies, and partly by his Danish

Majesty's and other vessels; and that the said descent is deferred till another time. His Danish Majesty hath therefore, in order to clear himself of all imputation and reproach, thought fit to order, that the following true account of this affair should be given to all impartial persons. Since the Swedes were entirely driven out of their *German* dominions, there was, according to all the rules of policy, and reasons of war, no other way left, than vigorously to attack the still obstinate King of Sweden, in the very heart of his country; thereby, with God's assistance, to force him to a lasting, good and advantageous peace for the allies. The King of Denmark and his Czarish Majesty were both of this opinion, and did, in order to put so good a design in execution, agree upon an interview, which at last (notwithstanding his Danish Majesty's presence, upon the account of Norway's being invaded, was most necessary in his own capital, and that the Muscovite ambassador, M. Dolgorouky, had given quite other assurances) was held at Ham and Horn, near Hamburgh, after his Danish Majesty had stayed there six weeks for the Czar. In this conference it was, on the 3rd of June, agreed between both their Majesties, after several debates, that the descent upon Schonen should positively be undertaken this year, and everything relating to the forwarding the same was entirely consented to. Hereupon his Danish Majesty made all haste for his return to his dominions, and gave orders to work day and night to get his fleet ready to put to sea. The transport ships were also gathered from all parts of his dominions, both with inexpressible charges and

great prejudice to his subjects' trade. Thus, his Majesty (as the Czar himself upon his arrival at Copenhagen owned) did his utmost to provide all necessaries, and to forward the descent, upon whose success everything depended. It happened, however, in the meanwhile, and before the descent was agreed upon in the conference at Ham and Horn, that his Danish Majesty was obliged to secure his invaded and much oppressed kingdom of Norway, by sending thither a considerable squadron out of his fleet, under the command of Vice-Admiral Gabel, which squadron could not be recalled before the enemy had left that kingdom, without endangering a great part thereof; so that out of necessity the said Vice-Admiral was forced to tarry there till the 12th of July, when his Danish Majesty sent him express orders to return with all possible speed, wind and weather permitting; but this blowing for some time contrary, he was detained... The Swedes were all the while powerful at sea, and his Czarish Majesty himself did not think it advisable that the remainder of the Danish, in conjunction with the men-of-war then at Copenhagen, should go to convoy the Russian troops from Rostock, before the above-mentioned squadron under Vice-Admiral Gabel was arrived. This happening at last in the month of August, the confederate fleet put to sea; and the transporting of the said troops hither to Zealand was put in execution, though with a great deal of trouble and danger, but it took up so much time that the descent could not be ready till September following. Now, when all these preparations, as well for the

descent as the embarking the armies, were entirely ready, his Danish Majesty assured himself that the descent should be made within a few days, at farthest by the 21st of September. The Russian Generals and Ministers first raised some difficulties to those of Denmark, and afterwards, on the 17th September, declared in an appointed conference, that his Czarish Majesty, considering the present situation of affairs, was of opinion that neither forage nor provision could be had in Schonen, and that consequently the descent was not advisable to be attempted this year, but ought to be put off till next spring. It may easily be imagined how much his Danish Majesty was surprised at this; especially seeing the Czar, if he had altered his opinion, as to this design so solemnly concerted, might have declared it sooner, and thereby saved his Danish Majesty several tons of gold, spent upon the necessary preparations. His Danish Majesty did, however, in a letter dated the 20th of September, amply represent to the Czar, that although the season was very much advanced, the descent might, nevertheless, easily be undertaken with such a superior force, as to get a footing in Schonen, where being assured there had been a very plentiful harvest, he did not doubt but subsistence might be found; besides, that having an open communication with his own countries, it might easily be transported from thence. His Danish Majesty alleged also several weighty reasons why the descent was either to be made this year, or the thoughts of making it next spring entirely be laid aside. *Nor did he alone make these moving remonstrances*

to the Czar; but his British Majesty's Minister residing here, as well as Admiral Norris, *seconded the same also in a very pressing manner*; and by express order of the King, their master, *endeavoured to bring the Czar into their opinion, and to persuade him to go on with the descent*; but his Czarish Majesty declared by his answer, that he would adhere to the resolution that he had once taken concerning this delay of making the descent; but if his Danish Majesty was resolved to venture on the descent, that he then, according to the treaty made near Straelsund, would assist him only with the 15 battalions and 1,000 horse therein stipulated; that next spring he would comply with everything else, and neither could or would declare himself farther in this affair. Since then, his Danish Majesty could not, without running so great a hazard, undertake so great a work alone with his own army and the said 15 battalions; he desired, in another letter of the 23rd September, his Czarish Majesty would be pleased to add 13 battalions of his troops, in which case his Danish Majesty would still this year attempt the descent; but even this could not be obtained from his Czarish Majesty, who absolutely refused it by his ambassador on the 24th ditto: whereupon his Danish Majesty, in his letter of the 26th, declared to the Czar, that since things stood thus, he desired none of his troops, but that they might be all speedily transported out of his dominions; that so the transport, whose freight stood him in 40,000 rix dollars per month, might be discharged, and his subjects eased of the intolerable contributions they now underwent. This he could not

do less than agree to; and accordingly, all the Russian troops are already embarked, and intend for certain to go from here with the first favourable wind. It must be left to Providence and time, to discover what may have induced the Czar to a resolution so prejudicial to the Northern Alliance, and most advantageous to the common enemy.

If we would take a true survey of men, and lay them open in a proper light to the eye of our intellects, *we must first consider their natures* and then *their ends*; and by this method of examination, though their conduct is, seemingly, full of intricate mazes and perplexities, and winding round with infinite meanders of state-craft, we shall be able to dive into the deepest recesses, make our way through the most puzzling labyrinths, and at length come to the most abstruse means of bringing about the master secrets of their minds, and to unriddle their utmost mysteries... The Czar ... is, by nature, of a great and enterprising spirit, and of a genius thoroughly politic; and as for his ends, the manner of his own Government, where he sways arbitrary lord over the estates and honours of his people, must make him, if all the policies in the world could by far-distant aims promise him accession and accumulation of empire and wealth, be everlastingly laying schemes for the achieving of both with the extremest cupidity and ambition. Whatever ends an insatiate desire of opulency, and a boundless thirst for dominion, can ever put him upon, to satisfy their craving and voracious appetites, those must, most undoubtedly, be his.

The next questions we are to put to ourselves are these three:

1. By what means can he gain these ends?

2. How far from him, and in what place, can these ends be best obtained?

3. And by what time, using all proper methods and succeeding in them, may he obtain these ends?

The possessions of the Czar were prodigious, vast in extent; the people all at his nod, all his downright arrant slaves, and all the wealth of the country his own at a word's command. But then the country, though large in ground, was not quite so in produce. Every vassal had his gun, and was to be a soldier upon call; but there was never a soldier among them, nor a man that understood the calling; and though he had all their wealth, they had no commerce of consequence, and little ready money; and consequently his treasury, when he had amassed all he could, very bare and empty. He was then but in an indifferent condition to satisfy those two natural appetites, when he had neither wealth to support a soldiery, nor a soldiery trained in the art of war. The first token this Prince gave of an aspiring genius, and of an ambition that is noble and necessary in a monarch who has a mind to flourish, was to believe none of his subjects more wise than himself, or more fit to govern. He did so, and looked upon his own proper person as the most fit to travel out among the other realms of the world and study politics for the advancing of his dominions. He then seldom pretended to any warlike dispositions against those who were instructed in the science of arms; his

military dealings lay mostly with the Turks and Tartars, who, as they had numbers as well as he, had them likewise composed, as well as his, of a rude, uncultivated mob, and they appeared in the field like a raw, undisciplined militia. In this his Christian neighbours liked him well, insomuch as he was a kind of stay or stopgap to the infidels. But when he came to look into the more polished parts of the Christian world, he set out towards it, from the very threshold, like a natural-born politician. He was not for learning the game by trying chances and venturing losses in the field so soon; no, he went upon the maxim *that it was, at that time of day, expedient and necessary for him to carry, like Samson, his strength in his head, and not in his arms*

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