ALEXANDER I AND THE
UNOFFICIAL COMMITTEE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * * *

The Ohio State University
1968

Approved by

[Signature]
Charles Morley
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To My Mother and Father,
A Source of Inspiration.
PREFACE

In the transcription of Russian names in this work the spelling most familiar in the West has, in general, been adopted. In most cases this form is equivalent to a simple transliteration of the Cyrillic according to the Library of Congress system. In the nineteenth century the Russian calendar ran twelve days behind that of the West and, unless noted in parentheses, this is the form that is given in the text.

I owe a lasting debt of gratitude for the counsel and support I have received from Professor Charles Morley at every stage in the writing of this dissertation. I have benefited much from his judgments and suggestions. I am particularly indebted to the helpful and efficient staff of the Helsinki University Library, where much of the research for this work was done. I am indebted, also, to the fine staffs of the Ohio State University Library, the Library of Congress, and the Finnish State Archives, Helsinki. My debt to my wife remains the greatest of all. Her assistance, encouragement and endless patience helped immeasurably.

Whatever deficiencies this dissertation may contain are, of course, my responsibility.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. GENESIS AND FORMATION OF THE UNOFFICIAL COMMITTEE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE VORONTSOV PROJECT, SERFDOM</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. EDUCATION</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE SENATE</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE PERMANENT COUNCIL AND THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPRAISAL AND CONCLUSION</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. GENESIS AND FORMATION OF THE UNOFFICIAL COMMITTEE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE VORONTSOV PROJECT, SERFDOM</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. EDUCATION</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE SENATE</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE PERMANENT COUNCIL AND THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPRAISAL AND CONCLUSION</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

A palace conspiracy brought about the assassination of Tsar Paul I on the night of March 11, 1801. On the following day it was announced to the nation that the sovereign had expired from an "apoplectic stroke" and that his son, the twenty-three year old Grand Duke Alexander, had become the Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias. In his proclamation of accession, hastily drawn up by Dmitrii P. Treshchinskii, Alexander I pledged to govern the people entrusted to him "by God" according to the principles of his grandmother, Catherine II. In short, he served notice that he intended to reject the violent methods of the reign of terror of his father.

The news was welcomed throughout the Empire as hopes were raised for better days, for a relaxation of the oppressive and brutal ways of Paul I.¹ The poet Gabriel Derzhavin, for example, wrote the following of the murdered Tsar and

his young successor:

Silenced is the howl of the north wind,
Closed are the awesome and horrible eyes...

It is a new century! The Tsar is young, handsome.
Springlike days have come upon us.\(^2\)

The first steps taken by the new Tsar seemed to justify the poet's optimism. Alexander immediately ordered the release of all victims of Paul's dreaded Secret Dispatch Office, which had imprisoned or exiled offenders without trials. A broad amnesty was declared for all fugitives, with the exception of homicides, and civil servants who had been administratively dismissed were either recalled to service or allowed to go into ordinary retirement. The prohibition of private printing presses was lifted and Russians were once again permitted to travel abroad and to import foreign literature.\(^3\)

At the same time Alexander began a desirable change in personnel, removing his father's devoted servants. Those dismissed included the Procurator-General of the Senate, Obolianinov, who had been something of a "supreme inquisitor" under Paul; the Moscow Chief of Police, Ertel; and the wealthy steel-master, Kutaisaov, Paul's former


barber who had attained the highest rank and distinctions. Several of Catherine II's foremost functionaries were either promoted or brought back into service. Count Nikita Panin, who had been exiled from court by Paul, was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. The important post of Procurator-General went to A.A. Bekleishov, and Troschchinskii was assigned the task of drafting new legislation and decrees.  

Alexander's pledge to return to government by law, in abolishing the Secret Dispatch Office, was very promising. Indeed, the young Tsar promptly established a new Commission on Laws under the chairmanship of another of Catherine's officials, Count P. Zavadovskii. The last codification of Russian laws, the famous Ulozhenie of Tsar Alexis, had been completed one-hundred and fifty years earlier. The need to compile a new code was obvious. During the eighteenth century no less than nine separate commissions (in 1700, 1714, 1720, 1728, 1730, 1754, 1760, 1767, and 1797) had failed to fulfill this task. That the new Tsar recognized the need to clarify and modernize the legal code of Russia was evident in his
rescript of June 5, 1801, to Count Zavadovskii. Alexander stated

Basing the foundation and source of the welfare of the people on a uniformity of law, and believing that while other measures might bring happiness, only the law can affirm them forever, I have realized from the first days of my reign and my first study of the administration the imperative need to investigate the true situation in this field. I have always known that from the publication of the Ulozhenie to our days, i.e. for about one and a half centuries, the laws which the legislative power has issued in a various and frequently contradictory manner...had no connection with each other, no unity of purpose, no permanence in their effect. Thus there has developed a general confusion of the rights and duties of everyone; a darkness which envelops both judge and defendant alike; an impotence in the execution of the laws; and a convenience of changing the laws at the first impulse of whim or arbitrariness.6

Alexander's initial steps and admirable pledges evoked a steady stream of praise from many of his subjects. Even the hardened politician Count Panin informed his wife that if he were to write of the virtues of the new master, he would "never finish" his letter to her.7 Indeed, Alexander inspired confidence in his own person. The same, however, could not be said of the political system which he had inherited. Count Simon Vorontsov, an experienced statesman, very perceptibly recognized that though the

6P.S.Z., no. 19,989.
7"Dva pisma," 715.
young Tsar was of "une disposition si rare, si vertueuse,"
nonetheless, "en un mot il sera à la merci de ses
conseillers et de ses ministres, qui, comme nous l'avons
vu sous le règnes passés ne s'occupant que de leur propre
fortune, ruinaient celle de l'état." What then was
Alexander's political inheritance?

A new epoch in Russian history had begun with the
reign of Peter the Great. Important administrative reforms
were among the sweeping changes initiated by Peter. Before
leaving for the war with Turkey in 1711, he hastily
published two decrees which created the Governing Senate.
The Senate, consisting originally of nine members, was
founded as the highest state institution to act in internal
affairs in the Emperor's absence. Since Peter was absent
frequently, the executive, legislative and judicial
authority of the Senate, and its chief officer the
Procurator-General, was considerable.

As for the organization of a Cabinet, in 1717 Peter
began to replace the traditional Muscovite Prikazy with
ministerial colleges, or Collegia. The Collegia were

8Arkhiy Kniazia Vorontsova, (40 vols., Moscow,
1870-1895), X, 98. S.R. Vorontsov to A.R. Vorontsov,
London, 14 June 1801; hereafter referred to as A.K.V.

9A. Filippov, "Istoricheskiii ocherk obrazovaniia
ministerstv v Rossii," Zhurnal Ministerstva Justitsii,
(Sept.-Oct., 1902), 39-45. V.A. Timiriazev, "Prolog
Aleksandrovoiskoi epochii," Istoricheskii Vestnik, (June-
July, 1897), 773, 881. Pipes, Karamzin, 225-26. Kornilov,
I, 43-45.
based on the Swedish ministerial model and authority was not vested in one individual, as had been the case with the cumbersome and numerous Prikazy. Assuming that many heads would be wiser than one, authority was placed in the hands of a committee of from three to twelve officials. At first, nine colleges were established and they were initially subjected to the supervision of the Senate.10

Peter the Great's immediate successors altered the administrative system which he founded. The Empress Catherine I, an illiterate peasant girl who was Peter's widow, reduced the power of the Senate by transferring its functions to a Supreme Secret Council (Verkhovnyi Tainyi Sovet) in 1726. The Council consisted of six members and was dominated by Prince Alexander P. Menshikov, the former pie vendor who had become Peter's favorite. In 1730 the Empress-Anne disbanded the Supreme Secret Council, whose influential members had offered her the throne on the condition that she accept certain restrictions (Konditsii). Members of Anne's retinue formed a Cabinet which superseded the Supreme Council, and the Senate declined even further. The real power behind the throne, however, was the empress' lover from Courland, Ernst-Johan Biron, who became the symbol of the so-called "reign

of the German party." The Empress Elizabeth, who was indolent and little interested in official duties, reverted to the Petrine system by dissolving the Cabinet and rehabilitating the Senate. The Senate once again assumed a powerful role in the administration of the Empire, but court favorites continued to occupy the main positions.  

By transforming the Senate and abolishing the *Collegia*, Catherine II thoroughly changed the Petrine system. The Empress found the considerable power of the Senate to be incompatible with her desire to rule as a strong monarch, and soon after her accession she took steps to curtail its authority. The Senate was divided into six departments which functioned independently of one another. The Senate as a whole was deprived of its administrative responsibility and became for the most part a judiciary institution, the highest court in the land.  

The Procurator-General, always one of the court favorites, was personally responsible for all important functions of the Senate and became something of a Prime Minister. In brief, Catherine II sought to concentrate

13P.S.Z., no. 17,567.
all authority in the monarchy and its hand-picked taskmaster. The granting of wide administrative importance to the Procurator-General can also be seen as part of the general movement away from the collegiate principle in favor of the establishment of individual responsibility for a particular administrative function. Other steps taken in this direction included, for example, the appointment by Paul I of a Gosudarstvenii Kaznachei (State Treasurer) in 1796, of a Ministr Udelov (Minister of the Appanages or Imperial Court lands) in 1796, and of a Ministr Kommertsii (Minister of Commerce) in 1800.¹⁴

Paul I, with no definite plan of action, indiscriminately dismantled much of what his mother had attempted to construct. As a result, some of the old forms were restored. A few of the Collegia, for instance, were reinstalled; but Paul gave them no real authority. The overall result of Catherine II's incomplete and sometimes inadequate attempts to remake the administrative system, and Paul's desultory meddling was chaos. This was Alexander's inheritance.¹⁵

Prince Adam Czartoryski, one of Alexander's close

¹⁴P.S.Z., nos. 17,609; 17,906; 19,554. See also G.G. Tel'berg, "Proiskhozhdenie komiteta ministrov v Rossii," Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshchenia, (March, 1907), 43.

¹⁵Kornilov, I, 52. Pipes, Karamzin, 226.
friends who later was a member of the Unofficial Committee, presented a good first-hand description of the political situation in Russia. In his memoirs Czartoryski stated:

The government machine was irregular and intermittent in its action, and the administration was a chaos in which nothing was regulated or clearly defined. Moreover, when the reports of the Senate and the various committees were handed to the sovereign by Ministers or other high functionaries of State, they were often put away in a drawer, and after some time had elapsed a decision totally opposed to the one suggested was issued. Thus there was practically no bar to the caprice of the sovereign.16

By the time of Alexander's accession to the throne the need for curbing the despotism of the Russian monarchy as well as streamlining the entire political order of the nation was evident. Most Russians agreed that the chaotic and cumbersome administrative structure had to be changed.17

The new Tsar was aware of the deplorable state of affairs in Russia. In September, 1797, the Grand Duke Alexander wrote a significant letter to his former tutor, Frederic C. Laharpe. Alexander stated that his father did things


that increased administrative confusion and disorder instead of enacting needed reforms. Paul I spent most of his time with military affairs, reviewing the troops and the like. Furthermore, the Tsar followed no general plan whatsoever. According to Alexander, "he decrees today that which he countermands one month later." Alexander concluded by stating that it would be impossible "to list all the madness which has been done...my poor country is in an indescribable condition." In short, political reforms were unavoidable.

Alexander had long considered the problem of reorganizing the obsolete machinery of the Empire and after discussing the matter on May 9, 1801, with one of his young friends, Count Paul Stroganov, he decided to form a special "Unofficial Committee" of personal friends: Paul Stroganov, Adam Czartoryski, Nicholas Novosiltsev and Victor Kochubei. The Emperor planned that the Committee, under his own chairmanship, would consider a general program for state reforms and draft urgent measures of immediate need.

The Unofficial Committee met quite regularly from

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18 Shilder, I, 280-82.

June 24, 1801, to May 5, 1802, and after a pause of nearly one and a half years concluded its work in October and November, 1803. Alexander and his young friends came to grips with the major political and social problems of the day, and their efforts brought forth several significant reform measures with far reaching consequences.

By 1803, however, the Tsar had shifted his attention to foreign affairs and was totally occupied with the maneuverings which led to his first struggle with Napoleon in 1805. The treaty signed at Tilsit in 1807 brought a restless peace to St. Petersburg, a peace which was disturbed only by successful campaigns against the Swedes and the Turks. From 1807 to 1811 Alexander directed his main efforts toward domestic problems. Michael Speransky, the son of an orthodox priest who had literally worked his way up through the Imperial administration, and not Stroganov, Czartoryski, Novosiltsev or Kochubei, was the Tsar's chief assistant in his new program of internal reform.20

Key reforms were enacted in the period 1807-1811 and it seemed that Alexander was on the verge of fulfilling his promise of granting a constitution to his subjects. Indeed, in 1809 he traveled to the ancient city of Borgå (Porvoo) where he sanctioned constitutional rule for the

20Raeff, Speransky, 47. Kornilov, I, 130.
Grand Duchy of Finland. Moreover, he directed Speransky to prepare a draft constitution for the rest of the Empire. Unfortunately, most of Speransky's proposals were not enacted and with the French invasion of 1812 all thoughts of domestic programs vanished.21

After the invasion of 1812 and the burning of Moscow, Alexander's liberal inclinations apparently were replaced by a growing mystical and conservative frame of mind. The Emperor did grant a constitution to his Polish subjects in 1815 and brought Novosiltsev to St. Petersburg in 1818 to draw up a constitution for the entire Empire.22 But the period 1816-1825 was one of mysticism, of reaction in education and censorship, and of violation of the Finnish and Polish constitutions.

This dissertation is an attempt to examine the activities and the historical importance of the Unofficial Committee, as well as the relationship of the Committee era to the reign as a whole. The genesis of the Committee, the problems considered, the fulfillment of goals, and the long range consequences of the Unofficial Committee are the main themes of this study.

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21 Kornilov, I, 66, 136.
22 The plan was not promulgated.
CHAPTER I

GENESIS AND FORMATION OF
THE UNOFFICIAL COMMITTEE

The genesis of the Unofficial Committee is to be found in Alexander's youthful thoughts of reform and in the close circle of friends with whom he shared his ideas and desires. As a young boy Alexander had been indoctrinated with the ideals of the Enlightenment by his grandmother and his tutors, especially the Swiss republican Frederic C. Laharpe. The famous German philosopher Grimm, who frequently corresponded with Catherine II, recommended Laharpe as a traveling companion for the younger brother of one of the empress' favorites. Laharpe, an enthusiastic disciple of Gibbon, Malby, Locke and Rousseau, impressed Catherine and she invited him in 1782 to stay on in Russia and teach French to her grandson Alexander.¹

Two years after beginning his duties, Laharpe presented a memorandum to Catherine concerning the education of Alexander and the general duties and obligations of the monarch to the people. Laharpe proposed that the royal pupil be tutored in logic; moral philosophy; the history of

ancient and modern philosophy; languages; and history:
Russian, Ancient, Germanic, European and Scandinavian. He
stressed the need for the monarch to seek justice and the
common good. Catherine approved of his views and plan, and
appointed him as the future Emperor's tutor, a position
which he held until Alexander's marriage in 1793. 2

Thus during the important formative years of
Alexander's youth, from age seven to sixteen, he was
subjected to the Swiss republican's attempts to fill
him with the ideals of the Enlightenment and the liberal
principles of the day. How successful Laharpe was, how
deep the liberal principles were implanted, how sincerely
Alexander accepted and believed in these principles has
long been the subject of historical debate. No matter
what the correct answer might be, one can state that by
the time of Laharpe's departure the Grand Duke recognized
the need for reform and change in Russia. No doubt much of
the reason for this was the influence of Laharpe on his
royal pupil. In fact, Alexander later in life was fond of
saying that he owed all of his better thoughts to his
former tutor. 3

2 See Sukhomlinov, "Lagarpe," 143-64, for Laharpe's
proposal of June 10, 1784. For pertinent observations on
Alexander's education, including sketches of his other
tutors, see Czartoryski, I, 113-13.

3 Czartoryski, I, 95-97.
After the departure of Laharpe, a close friendship between Alexander and Prince Adam Czartoryski developed. Czartoryski, the well-educated son of a Polish nobleman, had traveled and studied in western Europe. Late in 1789 he departed for his first visit to England and while in Scotland he met some of the remarkable men, such as Hume, Clark and Robertson, then teaching at Edinburgh. He continued on to London where he met the provocative Genevan jurist Louis Dumont and where he studied the English constitution and political organization.

Czartoryski returned to his native Poland in 1791, but managed to visit western Europe one more time before he was brought to Russia as a hostage by Catherine II in 1795. After the failure of the Kosciuszko insurrection, which Czartoryski's parents passionately supported, Adam and his younger brother Constantine were sent to St. Petersburg as a pledge of the family's future good behavior. This course was taken with the advice of Prince Repnin, the Russian commander-in-chief in Lithuania and old friend of the family, who had interceded with the Empress on behalf of

the Czartoryskis.⁵

While in St. Petersburg, Prince Adam befriended the Grand Duke Alexander who was seven years his junior. Gradually the relationship between the two young men grew intimate. In the spring of 1796, according to Czartoryski's memoirs, the future Emperor revealed for the first time his innermost thoughts concerning reforms for his native land, and his social and political attitudes. Alexander indicated that he "detested despotism" and loved "liberty" which was equally due to all men. Furthermore, he had a "keen interest" in the French Revolution and, despite some of its terrible consequences, hoped for the success of the Republic.

The Grand Duke disclosed that his young wife, Elizabeth, a Princess of Baden, shared his opinions and that, with the exception of her, Czartoryski was the first one he had spoken to of his sentiments since the departure of his tutor Laharpe. Czartoryski was pledged to secrecy, but was allowed to inform his brother of their conversation.⁶


The friendship blossomed and during the spring and summer of 1796 the Czartoryski brothers frequently visited Tsarskoye-Selo, where the Empress had built a palace adjacent to her own for her favorite grandson and his young wife. The future Emperor and his wife, and the two Polish brothers enjoyed discussing the failings of absolutism under the very nose of the Russian autocrat and this drew them even closer together. In addition, Constantine Czartoryski at this time befriended Alexander's younger brother Constantine. Interestingly enough, Alexander insisted that the Grand Duke Constantine not find out about his political opinions.7

During the months spent in St. Petersburg, Adam Czartoryski often frequented the home of Count Alexander Stroganov, one of the wealthiest Russian landlords. Czartoryski grew attached to the old man and had vivid memories of his visits which in his words "me sera toujours cher." At this time he also developed close ties with Alexander Stroganov's young son, Paul Stroganov, and Nicholas Novosiltsev, the nephew of the elder Stroganov.8

Paul Stroganov was a vibrant young man who had received a western education. His tutor was the French mathematician and staunch republican Gilbert Romme. In

8Czartoryski, I, 151-53.
1790 the two departed from St. Petersburg for a tour of the continent. While in Switzerland, Stroganov met the Genevan jurisconsult Louis Dumont. Dumont was familiar with Russia; his mother and sisters had settled in St. Petersburg and were engaged in "some line of trade," and he had lived there several years himself. Dumont had devoted a great deal of his life to translating the works, and giving legislative effect to the opinions of his close friend Jeremy Bentham. The famous Mirabeau was one of his collaborators and, in some ways, his pupil.9

Stroganov and Romme continued on to France, arriving in Paris during the revolution. The two were carried away with the spirit of the times and both joined the Jacobin Club; the young Russian later became librarian of the club. Novosiltsev was quickly dispatched to France by the family to pry his young cousin away from the tantalizing atmosphere before it was too late. He was successful and, therefore, rendered a great service to the Stroganov family. Catherine II agreed to allow the young Stroganov to return to Russia with the proviso that

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9 Stroganov, I, 59-60. A. Pypin, Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii pri Aleksandre I, (St. Petersburg, 1871), 70. Shilder, II, 39-40. Biographie Universelle, (Paris, 1855), XXII, 528. Bentham, X, 185, 407. In a letter dated April 5, 1791, Bentham noted the following about Dumont: "By-the-by, he has a mother and sisters, or other near relations, settled at Petersburg, in some line of trade, and was in Russia as bearleader [Pastor] for many years." Bentham, X, 249.
he return to his village under his mother's supervision. Thus Stroganov reluctantly returned from Paris and the activities of the Jacobin Club. Soon he was allowed to return to St. Petersburg where, thanks to Adam Czartoryski, he became a friend of the Grand Duke Alexander. 10

Nicholas Novosiltsev was the son of the sister of Count Alexander Stroganov and was raised in the home of his uncle. He was rather bright, methodical and well-educated. Novosiltsev saw front line action with the Russian Army during the war with Sweden, 1788-1790, and served well in several posts in the College of Foreign Affairs. During Paul I's reign, he spent four years in England. In London, Novosiltsev attended university lectures in physics, mathematics, and medicine. Among the important Englishmen whom he met at this time was Jeremy Bentham. He also began a stimulating and useful relationship with two of his fellow countrymen then living in England, the Vorontsov brothers. 11

At the recommendation of Alexander Stroganov, Novosiltsev spent much time at the home of Simon Vorontsov.


11 Alexander Vorontsov, the eldest of the two brothers, held various important posts during the reigns of Peter III and Catherine II, and served as Alexander I's Imperial Chancellor and Foreign Minister from 1802 to 1804. Simon Vorontsov was a career diplomat who served as Russian ambassador at the Court of St. James from 1785 to 1809, and from 1801 to 1806.
and soon became an intimate friend of the household. He developed great respect for Simon's older brother, Alexander Vorontsov, and eventually spoke quite openly and frankly with him about his ideas. Like the Vorontsovs, Novosiltsev was captivated by English life and institutions and this contributed to their long lasting friendship.\textsuperscript{12}

In his memoirs Adam Czartoryski described an extraordinary meeting that took place between the Grand Duke Alexander, Paul Stroganov, Novosiltsev, and himself. Czartoryski had spoken to the future Emperor about his "deux amis" and convinced him that they were the kind of Russians he would need some day to help him fulfill his ideals. Alexander had already met and been impressed with Novosiltsev and Stroganov, but was not sure of their opinions. Czartoryski assured him that he could rely on their sentiments and sense of discretion, and suggested a meeting with them. Thus Alexander consented to admit them into his secrets and to include them in his plans. The four met in Moscow during the proceedings of Paul's coronation in April, 1797. This secret meeting at a "secluded spot" was of particular significance as it proved to be the antecedent of the Unofficial Committee.\textsuperscript{13}

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\textsuperscript{13}Czartoryski, I, 156.
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Novosiltsev prepared well for the meeting. He translated into Russian a fragment of a French work which was very stimulating. It dealt with the subject of a young prince who was about to take his throne and who, wishing to do what was best for his country, had sought the assistance of friends. The fragment was not a complete work dealing with all the branches of government, but was more of an introduction to the subject. It did, however, contain a general and succinct list of obligations of the chief of state and the work which was before him. Alexander received Novosiltsev's translation with much attention and curiosity. 14

The French author had addressed himself to the generous and patriotic sentiments of his prince, calling on him to secure the welfare of his nation in eloquent terms. Novosiltsev wrote Russian with elegance and his clear and harmonious translation was appealing. All of this, according to Czartoryski, played on Alexander's sentiments and won him over. The future Emperor decided to adopt the principles expressed in the work. This marked the beginning of Alexander's friendship with Novosiltsev and Stroganov; the two were fully admitted to

14 Ibid., 156-58. Unfortunately, Czartoryski was not able to recall the author's name or the title of the work.
the secrets shared by Alexander and Czartoryski. Furthermore, Novosiltsev so impressed Alexander that after this day he enjoyed the same confidence with the Tsar that had been reserved earlier only for Czartoryski.  

The rapport reached by the four young men in Moscow at the time of the coronation of Paul flourished. They soon grew very close to one another and met daily at the home of Count Alexander Stroganov. Moreover, Alexander appreciated immensely the circle of friends of the young Countess Sophia Stroganov, the wife of Paul Stroganov and the daughter of Count Vladimir Golitsyn. The Grand Duke's wife Elizabeth also admired and liked the countess. Sophia was described by one author as being "one of the most clever, cultured and virtuous" women in Russia. The young countess, though she was not beautiful, struck Czartoryski as a person of great kindness, intelligence and charm.

The Grand Duke Alexander was amused by the old Count Stroganov and felt comfortable in his presence. Stroganov

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15 Ibid. In a letter dated September 27, 1797, Alexander informed Laharpe of the formation of the close circle of young men. The letter was delivered by Novosiltsev who was on his way to England. Shilder, I, 280-82.

16 Novosiltsev apparently participated in the meetings at the Stroganov palace until his departure for England which was probably late in September, 1797; see note 15.

17 Bogdanovich, I, 8. See also Stroganov, I, 54.

18 Czartoryski, I, 151-54.
gathered together at his home persons who suited Alexander and who comprehended the modern and liberal ideas that were then something of a secret passion for the future Emperor. The old Count, who had spent a long period of time in Paris, had certain western attitudes which contrasted vividly with his Muscovite heritage. The Stroganov salon indeed presented an interesting variety of themes. According to Czartoryski, the house had always been "libéral et un peu frondeur." One could hear there criticism of the caprices of the court, as well as discourses on Voltaire, on Diderot, on the Parisian theater. Count Stroganov had a good library and a rich collection of Italian, Dutch, Spanish and other masterpieces. Between stimulating and provocative conversations, one could enjoy refreshments from an immense buffet table that was always in service, manned by a host of servants. Needless to say, the Stroganov salon became one of the most extraordinary and luxurious in St. Petersburg.  

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Czartoryski, I, 45-46, 151-53, 299. Apparently a catalogue of the Stroganov collection was drawn up: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux qui composent la collection du Comte Stroganoff, (St. Petersburg, 1793), 74 pages. Alexander Stroganov was a man of immense wealth and, therefore, was able to found a picture gallery, a library, a gallery of sculpture, as well as form a collection of objets d'art without rival in Russia. All of these were open to students and to the public at large. One of Stroganov's serfs, Voronikhin, became the architect of St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg, which was built partly at Stroganov's expense. Kyril Fitzlyon (ed. and trans.), The Memoirs of Princess Dashkov, (London, 1958), 318.
Another Russian very prominent in the Grand Duke Alexander's plans was Victor Kochubei, the nephew of the Chancellor and Foreign Minister, Alexander Bezborodko. Kochubei was an experienced diplomat who, in 1784 at the age of sixteen, was appointed as adjunct to the Russian mission in Sweden. While in Stockholm he attended the university where, among other things, he wrote a paper on "The Rights of Man." Kochubei then enjoyed an extensive stay in Europe (from 1788 to 1792) at which time he was introduced to the western ideas of reform. He studied political science in London where he formed a lifetime friendship with the Vorontsov brothers. In Paris he studied Voltaire and Montesquieu while attending university lectures. Though he was following a program mapped out by his uncle, Bezborodko feared that Kochubei might hinder his career by staying on in revolutionary France. Kochubei, therefore, returned to St. Petersburg in July, 1792.  

At the age of twenty-four Kochubei was appointed Russian ambassador at Constantinople by Catherine II. Before departing for his post, however, he befriended the Grand Duke Alexander. After Kochubei arrived in Turkey, the two men corresponded on intimate terms and in a letter

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dated May 10, 1796, Alexander revealed the following to his friend:

Voila, mon cher ami, le grand secret, qu'il me tardait depuis si longtemps de vous communiquer et dont je n'ai pas besoin de vous recommander le silence, car vous sentez que c'est une chose qui peut me casser la tête...Mon plan est, qu'ayant une fois renoncé à cette place scabreuse (je ne peux pas fixer l'époque d'une telle renonciation) j'irai m'établir avec ma femme aux bords du Rhin, où je vivrai tranquille en simple particulier, faisant consister mon bonheur dans la société de mes amis et l'étude de la nature.21

Alexander, of course, did not follow his impulse to retire and partake of the beauties of nature. But he did form a committee of young friends to assist him in formulating reforms for his domain. Victor Kochubei was the fourth and final member of that committee, and his involvement in the innermost secrets of the future Emperor dates from the above correspondence. Kochubei later spoke of how several times the Grand Duke informed him of his desire to see that the government be "put in order" based on the principles of "sane reason."22

Before discussing the actual formation of the Unofficial Committee, it would be worthwhile to offer some additional observations concerning the Vorontsov brothers.

21 Shilder, I, 276-78. See also S.P. Mel'gunov, Dela i liudi Aleksandrovskogo vremeni, (Berlin, 1923), 39.

22 Stroganov, II, 6, "Résultat d'une conversation avec le Comte Kotchoubey, le 22 Avril 1801."
One noteworthy thing about them has already been mentioned: their home in England seemed to be a haven for two of the future Emperor's young friends, Novosiltsev and Kochubei. Perhaps equally striking is an unique situation that in part accounts for the favorable position which the Vorontsovs enjoyed with several of the Russian monarchs. One of the Vorontsov sisters, Elizabeth, was Peter III's favorite mistress. Catherine Vorontsov (the Princess Dashkov), on the other hand, was a confidant of the Empress Catherine II. Paul I was very sympathetic to the Vorontsov family because of his father's "liaisons" with Elizabeth.23

Alexander Vorontsov, the eldest of the two Vorontsov brothers, held various important posts during the reigns of Peter III and Catherine II. He was "cité en Russie comme un

23Elizabeth Vorontsov had been described "by various authorities as quite exceptionally dull-witted, small, squat, fat and startlingly ugly, with a dark, sallow complexion, a puffy, pock-marked face, a very noticeable squint and an irritating habit of spitting, using obscene language and starting brawls especially when drunk." Elizabeth, nevertheless, "was deeply loved by Peter III, who apparently had the intention of marrying her and proclaiming her Empress after divorcing Catherine." Diderot stated that Catherine Vorontsov (the Princess Dashkov) was "by no means pretty...with a high and broad forehead, fat cheeks, rather deep-set eyes neither large nor small, black hair and eyebrows, a flat nose, big mouth, thick lips, bad teeth, thick neck typical of her nation, convex bosom, no waist, quick in her movements, no elegance or distinction whatsoever, very affable; the general effect of her features is one of character...At the present time, December 1770, her age is twenty-seven and she looks like forty." Fitzlyon, Dashkov, 16, 312. See also Czartoryski, I, 300-01.
homme d'État consommé," according to Czartoryski. Vorontsov had influential friends in St. Petersburg and Moscow, maintaining close ties with Peter Zavadovskii and Alexander Bezborodko, and numbering Dmitrii Troshchinski and Alexander Stroganov among his associates. He did, however, have powerful enemies, such as Count Nikita Panin. When the Empress Catherine II failed to promote him as rapidly as he desired, Vorontsov resigned and retired to live in England with his brother Simon, who was the Russian ambassador at the Court of St. James.24

Simon Vorontsov was a strong man who held fast to his opinions and sentiments. He was a very faithful and loyal person to ideals and men that he decided to support. Simon respected his brother Alexander and they always had a warm relationship. He was captivated by England and greatly admired William Pitt. In fact, a long-standing friendship and confidence existed between Pitt and Vorontsov. "Les opinions tories du comte Simon," according to Czartoryski, "étaient d'un libéralisme extrême pour la

24Czartoryski, I, 300-02
As a young officer, Simon Vorontsov had shown sympathy for Peter III and this endeared him to Paul I. While he was serving as ambassador in London, Paul offered him the post of head of foreign affairs, but Simon preferred to stay on in England. When, however, Vorontsov attempted to prevent Paul's rupture with England, he fell out of grace with the Tsar. In April, 1800, he received an official reprimand. When Anglo-Russian hostilities began, Simon elected to resign his post and remain in London. As a result, his property in Russia was seized and he was banned from reentering his native land.26

On the accession of Alexander I to the throne of Russia, all of his young friends, with the exception of Paul Stroganov, were abroad: Czartoryski was in Naples,

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25 A.K.V., XVIII, 299-300. Czartoryski, I, 301-02. Stroganov, I, xxxiv-xxxix. Simon was appointed Russian Minister to Venice in 1783 and in 1784 was offered the choice of going to Paris or London as Russian ambassador. He chose England and served as ambassador from 1785 to 1800, and from 1801 to 1806. He retired in 1806 upon the death of Pitt and continued to live in England. Fitzlyon, Dashkov, 321, has noted that "the street where he had his house in St. John's Wood now bears his name (Woronzow Road—to conform to the spelling of the time). His daughter married the 11th Earl of Pembroke and was the mother of Sydney Herbert, the British War Secretary during the Crimean War."

26 A.K.V., X, 94. V.V. Ogarkov et al., "Vorontsov," Zhizn zamechatel'nykh liudei, (St. Petersburg, 1892), 60. Czartoryski, I, 301. Shilder, II, 28. Simon's property was returned by Alexander I who reappointed him as ambassador in 1801.
Novosiltsev was in England and Kochubei was in Dresden. The Emperor Paul I had suspicions of the liberal tendencies of Alexander and his friends, and this was one of the reasons for his antipathy toward Adam Czartoryski. But there was also a dramatic personal reason for this feeling. Czartoryski's friendship with Alexander was shared by the Grand Duke's young and charming wife. Apparently, however, Elizabeth fell in love with their mutual friend. Thus Paul I acted and removed Czartoryski by sending him as his representative to the Court of Sardinia.27

As for Kochubei, he returned to St. Petersburg in 1798 from Constantinople to serve with his uncle in the College of Foreign Affairs as Vice Counselor. Paul I, however, soon turned cool to Bezborodko and his nephew. Therefore, in August, 1799, Kochubei resigned his post, recognizing that this was the prudent thing to do considering the Emperor's enmity toward him. He was married in November, 1799, and traveled in Europe with his bride, arriving in Dresden in March, 1801.28

27 Shilder, II, 24. Kukieli, 21. M. Paléologue, The Enigmatic Czar, (New York, 1938), 28-29, states that on May 18, 1799, Elizabeth "gave birth to a daughter, Marie Alexandrova, whose resemblance to Czartoryski was all too striking. As soon as he was told, the Emperor Paul burst into one of his furies. His first impulse was to send the Pole to Siberia. Yet as he had a certain affection for his daughter-in-law, he altered his first decision and charged Czartoryski with a diplomatic mission to the Court of Sardinia, with the command to leave at once. And the newly-made diplomat left that very evening."

28 Biograficheskii slovar', VI, 368-70.
Novosiltsev had acquired the reputation of supporting liberal principles and at the secret meeting held in Moscow, at the time of Paul's coronation, his friends decided that it would be too perilous for him to remain in Russia. Since it was very difficult at that time for Russians to obtain permission to travel abroad, it was the Grand Duke Alexander who personally secured a passport for his new friend. Novosiltsev apparently departed for England in September, 1797, pausing in Paris to deliver a letter to Laharpe from the future Emperor. 29

Stroganov, who remained in St. Petersburg, was the first of Alexander's friends to have the honor of hearing his thoughts of imminent reforms. 30 Their first tête-à-tête took place on April 23, 1801, and consisted of two main subjects: the Emperor's daily work schedule and the question of reforms. Alexander first informed Stroganov of his manner of working and sought his opinion. Stroganov suggested that His Majesty promptly make all decisions on substantial matters which required his personal choice. As for governmental affairs which required consultation with several members of different branches of the

29 Czartoryski, I, 158-59.

30 The first of the Tsar's friends to return to St. Petersburg from abroad was Kochubei. In fact, he was on hand at the time of the Emperor's first recorded conversation with Stroganov. See e.g. Stroganov, II, 6, "Résultat d'une conversation avec le Comte Kotchoubey, le 22 Avril 1801."
administration, Stroganov advised the sovereign to handle them in the Imperial (State) Council in the presence of all interested parties. This would conserve time. Alexander agreed, but added that he did not have the time to sift through all the important matters before him. The Emperor found it necessary, therefore, to await the return of Novosiltsev who would assist him in this essential task. The Tsars's decision certainly was indicative that Novosiltsev was held in high esteem by Alexander.  

In regard to reforms, Stroganov indicated to the sovereign that he believed it would be correct to consider a reorganization of the administration before drawing up a comprehensive document such as a constitution. Moreover, the latter would be somewhat a result of the former. Alexander approved of Stroganov's reasoning and added that it was his view that one of the fundamental bases of a constitution was the establishment of the rights of the citizens. Stroganov responded that this entire question should be the subject of the work of a committee and that it seemed to him that "these rights were contained in the maxim that every citizen ought to be guaranteed his property and have the unlimited ability to do anything that did not injure another." Alexander agreed with both of these points.  

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31 Stroganov, II, 1-3, "Résultat d'une conversation avec l'Empereur, le 23 Avril 1801."

32 Ibid.
During this and subsequent conversations with Stroganov, Alexander repeatedly wanted to know who, among the functionaries of the preceding regimes, were likely to support the cause of reform. If the Emperor were to reorganize the administrative system he had inherited, he would need able and loyal officials. Stroganov recommended especially Dmitrii Troshchinskii and Alexander Vorontsov. The sovereign was familiar with the talents of the former, but suspected Vorontsov of being senile and having obsolete ideas. It was Czartorysky who later, in a meeting of the Unofficial Committee, indicated that though Vorontsov was old his "ideas" were young and he had no prejudices. He was the type of person Alexander needed. As will be indicated later, one of Russia's greatest ills at this time was a lack of capable officials.

At the conclusion of the first parley it was decided that Stroganov would prepare a more precise definition of the principles, objectives and methods to follow in initiating reforms. The result was a series of memoranda presented to the Tsar on May 9, 1801, which are of special historical interest. For Stroganov the first principle to establish was that for all intents and purposes the reforms had emanated from the throne. This was important for several reasons. Such measures, for example, would have

33Stroganov, II, 1, 38.
more authority and be assured of a better reception throughout Russian society. Furthermore, if the monarchy were to win true national confidence, which Stroganov thought was necessary for lasting peace and progress in Russia, it would have to appear that the monarch himself had reorganized his administrative system. In short, he wished for the nation and the world to witness the construction of a healthy and enlightened monarchy, a creation effected by the sovereign himself. Stroganov realized that for the monarchy to be accepted and deserving of respect, the person of the monarch would have to be accepted and deserving of respect. This was the image he desired Alexander to fashion.  

The overall goal Stroganov would seek was not one of innovation, such as the removal of the monarchy itself, but a renovation of the traditional foundations of the Russian political structure. He wanted a strong monarchy which would guarantee the property and rights of its citizens. The rights of the citizens, the right to do anything which did not injure another, had to be defined by law. Once such a body of law was established, a barrier which would prevent any arbitrary power from destroying this order had

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"Stroganov, II, 3-11, "Plan général du travail avec l'Empereur pour la réforme;" "Développement du principe que la réforme doit être l'ouvrage de l'Empereur;" "Essai sur le système à suivre dans la réformation de l'administration de l'Empire;" "Principes de l'Empereur relativement à la réforme."
to be found. In short, pertinent reforms were necessary. The monarchy could secure the welfare of all Russians, but limits would have to be placed on it to prohibit any recurrence of the caprices of former regimes. If all the above were done, Stroganov thought that Russia would indeed have a constitutional form of government, a constitutional monarchy.\footnote{Ibid.}

As for immediate concerns, Stroganov found it necessary to define final objectives as soon as possible. This would enable the reformers to pursue their assignment with a great deal of consistency. Moreover, he suggested that it was necessary to approach the task systematically: to appoint a committee or commission to assist the Emperor; to adopt a general plan of action; and to proceed with reforms. Stroganov maintained that the sovereign's time was poorly organized and that he busied himself too much with nonessential details. There was hardly enough time for him to consider essential reforms. Stroganov suggested that the Tsar establish a council which would enable him to deal with his ministers simultaneously, rather than granting individual audiences for each of them.\footnote{Ibid.}

But most significant was Stroganov's recommendation that Alexander form a secret committee of collaborators to help him fulfill his honorable mission of reform. The
Emperor approved of the suggestion and appointed his four young friends (Novosiltsev, Czartoryski, Kochubei and Stroganov) to an "Unofficial Committee." The sovereign agreed to meet regularly with the Committee and to commence work upon the arrival of Novosiltsev, without waiting for Czartoryski. 37

Alexander had recalled Czartoryski from Naples in a personal letter of March 17, 1801. Czartoryski arrived in St. Petersburg in June, 1801. 38 Novosiltsev found out about Alexander's accession from Stroganov who wrote and summoned him to St. Petersburg. Novosiltsev immediately departed from England by ship, accompanied by Michael S. Vorontsov, the son of Simon Vorontsov. 39 As for Kochubei, his discovery of the events of March 11, 1801, and his reactions were described in his letter to Simon Vorontsov dated April 8, 1801. He wrote that he had been informed of Paul's "coup d'apoplexie" by a courier who had been sent by Alexander, three hours after the death of his father, to Paris. The courier had paused in Dresden and had disclosed his message to Kochubei. Kochubei, therefore, immediately prepared to depart for St. Petersburg. He told Vorontsov that he was returning to Russia because he thought

37 Ibid., 12-13, "Résultat de ce travail fait le 9 Mai." In fact, however, the Committee did not assemble until the return of both Czartoryski and Novosiltsev.


that all loyal Russians should rally around the new Emperor and help Alexander "heal the endless wounds" inflicted by Paul I on Russia. Furthermore, if Alexander wished to make use of his services, Kochubei insisted that he would perform his duties to the best of his abilities. Kochubei promptly departed from Dresden and was in St. Petersburg at the time of Alexander's discussions with Stroganov.

A strong friendship soon united the four young advisers, but Kochubei was very busy with other duties. The remaining three members of the Committee, the three who had met with Alexander in Moscow in April, 1797, formed a so-called "triumverate." Kochubei had hoped that the Emperor would appoint him as head of one of the departments of the interior. But in August, 1801, Alexander decided to drop Count Panin as Foreign Minister and to replace him with Kochubei. Kochubei was not overjoyed with the news of his appointment and wrote to his friend Simon Vorontsov

40 A.K.V., XVIII, 236, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, Dresden, 8 April 1801.

41 M.A. Korf, Zhizn grafa Speranskogo, (2 vols., St. Petersburg, 1861), I, 93. On November 9, 1801, Kochubei wrote to Simon Vorontsov, "Je suis tellement occupé que je n'ai pas le temps de voir l'Empereur aussi souvent que je le voudrais..." A.K.V., XVIII, 254.

42 A.K.V., XVIII, 240, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 12 May 1801. In fact, Alexander wanted to send Kochubei on a special mission to Paris, but because of Kochubei's reluctance the Tsar sent Count Markov instead; see A.K.V., XVIII, 238, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 1 May 1801.
of his "repugnance" at being named to a diplomatic post. Nonetheless, the other members of the Committee and Kochubei's friends were quite pleased with the Emperor's choice. In Simon Vorontsov's words, Kochubei was the "most worthy" person His Majesty could have chosen. Vorontsov maintained that Kochubei would overcome his "aversion" to a diplomatic office because of his "personal attachment" to the Emperor, and would sacrifice his own desires for the "welfare of the state."

A fifth member of the Unofficial Committee, who did not actually take part in the meetings was Laharpe. Alexander's warm correspondence with Laharpe after his accession induced his former tutor to return to Russia. He arrived in St. Petersburg in August, 1801. Before Laharpe crossed the Russian frontier, however, an amusing incident took place. In the words of one of his biographers, "M. La Harpe was almost unable to go to Russia. Count Panin, then the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, had already ordered the Russian legation that they were to refuse him

43 A.K.V., XVIII, 244, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 6 October 1801.


the necessary passport for his trip. The sovereign was unaware of Panin's circular."

The arrival of Laharpe disturbed certain people in the government who regarded him as a dangerous man. But this was not the republican Laharpe of earlier times. His attitudes had changed with time as had the situation of his former pupil. Laharpe advised that "Alexander" could be "amiable and friendly," but the "Emperor had to be grave, severe, a friend of order, inaccessible to petty considerations, undaunted in his determination, the man of the entire nation and not that of the ministers or courtisans." He warned the sovereign not to take hasty or untimely steps, and to guard his position and his supreme authority. Prussian enlightened despotism was pointed out as the model to follow in reforming Russia. The best system, in Laharpe's opinion, would be one founded on a union of absolutism with law and order.

47. Monnard, La Harpe, (Lausanne, 1838), 10, quoted by Shilder, II, 269.
48. Simon Vorontsov informed Kochubei of a correspondence he had with Count Panin in which Panin maintained that Laharpe was "un homme dangereux." A.K.V., XI, 359, S. Vorontsov to Kochubei, London, 3 January 1802.
Though he did not attend the meetings of the Unofficial Committee, Laharpe had ample opportunity to present his views. Alexander visited his old tutor as frequently as two times per week, often meeting with him on quite casual terms while clad only in his dressing-gown. Laharpe also presented several lengthy memoranda to the Emperor reviewing all the branches of the administration. But Laharpe was not popular with the Tsar's young friends. In Czartoryski's words,

We were all of the opinion that he did not merit his high reputation and the esteem in which Alexander held him...M. de la Harpe had his own particular panacea for Russia, and he explained it in such diffuse papers that Alexander himself had not the courage to read them. One of his favorite phrases was organisation réglementaire; an important idea no doubt, but he used to repeat it so often and with such emphasis that it was at last attached to him as a sort of nickname.

51 Shilder, II, 48.

52 Czartoryski, I, 271-72; this passage is presented in Walsh, II, 284.
CHAPTER II
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE VORONTSOV PROJECT, SERFDOM

With the arrival of Novosiltsev and Czartoryski in St. Petersburg, the Unofficial Committee was assembled and Alexander and his friends met to consider the important matter of reforms. Frequently the young advisers were privileged to dine with the Emperor without a formal invitation. On occasion they met more than one time a week, usually in Alexander's private chambers in the Winter Palace. According to Czartoryski, a curious mode of procedure was adopted. Following dinner, coffee was served and the guests engaged in small talk. After the Imperial couple retired the guests left the palace. The members of the Unofficial Committee, however, entered the private rooms of their Majesties by way of a special corridor and dressing room. In such a manner, the five young friends met to decide the future course of the Russian Empire.¹

The Unofficial Committee convened for the first time on June 24, 1801. The members promptly decided

¹Czartoryski, I, 269. At the time of Alexander's accession he was 23 years old. His friends were also very young: Stroganov (29), Czartoryski (31), Kochubei (33), and Novosiltsev (39).
first to take up the subject of the chaotic structure of the administration; then to enact measures to bring order and efficiency to the government; and finally to proceed to the crowning task, the establishment of a constitution embodying the true spirit of the nation which would insure the continued existence of the reformed institutions. This was the format Stroganov had suggested to the Emperor on May 9, 1801.

Alexander agreed that, in approaching the first task, it made sense to examine the actual condition of the Empire. This would enable them to judge the nature of the "illness," so to speak, before determining the kind of "treatment" to use for the cure. Novosiltsev was assigned the duty of gathering information on the actual state of affairs and submitting reports and memoranda on his findings. Since this huge task would require considerable time, Alexander consented to a further division of Novosiltsev's work. His assignment, and in a sense the assignment of the entire Committee, was divided into three basic units: a study of national defense, foreign affairs, and internal affairs.²

²Stroganov, II, 30-32, "Résultat d'une conférence avec l'Empereur, le 24 Juin 1801."

Novosiltsev and his colleagues immediately began their examination of the first point of the program, national defense, during the initial meeting of the Unofficial Committee. They addressed themselves to the question of the Russian Navy. The importance of sea power had been demonstrated vividly to the Russians with Lord Nelson's bombardment of Copenhagen and destruction of the Danish fleet. Furthermore, the Russians were aware that Nelson had sailed to Reval and had been prepared to assault Kronstadt and St. Petersburg. Thanks to Alexander's cessation of his father's belligerent policy toward England, St. Petersburg was saved from such a fate. But the thought of such a course of events still haunted many, including Alexander and his friends. This explains why the navy, and the report on its "poor state" which was circulated during the first session of the Committee, was of so much interest to them.3

The Emperor asserted that the feebleness of the navy was due to its commander-in-chief, Admiral Grigoriil Kushelev. Alexander stated that Kushelev owed his appointment not to merit, but to his friendly relationship with Paul I. He added that in his opinion it would not be too difficult to renovate the navy, but a prerequisite would be the removal of Kushelev. Alexander

3Ibid.
appointed Admiral Nicholas S. Mordvinov to gather as much information as possible concerning the renovation of the navy. Mordvinov performed his duties quite well and eventually, with the formation of the Committee of Ministers in 1802, was rewarded with the post of Minister of the Navy.  

One author maintained that of all the personalities of the reign of Catherine II, Mordvinov was perhaps the most qualified to untangle the complicated affairs of the Unofficial Committee and to give a sense of direction to the spirit of its members. Though Mordvinov never participated in the sittings of the Committee, he did present several important memoranda for its consideration. His proposal for serf reform, for example, was extensively discussed and formed the basis of the decree that was adopted.

At the session of July 1, 1801, the Committee considered the problem of the deterioration of the morale and effectiveness of the Russian Army. This subject was handled quite rapidly as the Tsar decided to name several commissions to examine the question. Such commissions would offer suggestions to correct the

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4 Ibid. See also A.K.V., XIV, 169, Kochubei to A. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 8 September 1801.

maladies and improve the various "service branches" of the Army.

The meeting was more occupied with the second point of Novosiltsev's program, foreign relations. More particularly, the discussion centered on the question of a coalition against England. Amazingly enough the Emperor, who had just signed a treaty of friendship with Great Britain, was strongly in favor of such a coalition. Alexander's uneasy advisers pointed out to him that, since they had just begun their study of foreign relations, it was impossible as yet to decide what was really in the true interests of Russia. It would require more study and reflection. Moreover, the members of the Committee recognized the flaws in Alexander's reasoning and recommended that His Majesty consult those more versed on the subject, such as Count Simon Vorontsov, before making a decision. Though Alexander seemed to grasp the meaning of this suggestion, he doubted the value of consulting Vorontsov who was so pro-English.

At the next session of the Committee, July 10, 1801, Novosiltsev presented a major discourse on foreign relations. According to Stroganov, who kept the minutes of all the meetings, "he demonstrated how until the

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6 Ibid., II, 32-34, "Conférence du 1 Juillet 1801."
7 Ibid.
present [Russia's foreign policies] had been absurd, how they had been guided by the intrigues of small groups, intrigues where...our interests were totally ignored."

One thing that contributed to this sorry state was the influence and easy access of foreign representatives to Paul I. The members of the Committee were particularly anxious over Alexander's inclination to converse personally with foreign representatives. Thus Novosiltsev suggested that the Emperor adopt some kind of master-plan for Russian foreign policy. The plan would be flexible of course, but if adhered to, it would reduce personal interest and foster a cabinet form of administration. Some doors would be closed to foreign representatives who, forced to deal with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, would be unable to play upon the Emperor's personal sentiments. The true interest of the nation then would be insured. 8

The Emperor was very much in favor of Novosiltsev's suggestion and told all of the members of the Committee to collect their thoughts on a master plan. Count Kochubei was put in charge of the project. He immediately requested that Alexander give him a few guidelines to follow in his work, some words on the sovereign's attitudes concerning foreign affairs. After briefly commenting on the state of relations with Sweden and Denmark, His Majesty promised to

8Ibid., II, 34-36, "Conférence du 10 Juillet 1801."
forward all papers which were available on Anglo-Russian relations. 9

These remarks elicited an exchange of views. Czartoryski asserted that the best policy in regard to France would be to gain her confidence by some "démarches franches," while indicating that Russia would not hesitate to resort to armed resistance against any of France's over-ambitious intentions. The point was generally accepted and Alexander strongly approved. Kochubei then presented his opinion that good relations with England were essential because of the close commercial interests of the two nations. Great Britain received most of Russia's exports and, according to Kochubei, it was imperative to spare no effort to conclude a trade agreement with her. Alexander, in a virtual volte-face, agreed that England was Russia's "amie naturelle." But, he was "contre toute espèce de traité." In short, His Majesty wanted peaceful relations with Britain as well as France, and was not interested in entangling alliances. 10

Though the question of foreign relations came up periodically in the remaining sessions of the Unofficial Committee, it was not until Kochubei presented his master plan that extensive discussions on the subject took place. Kochubei handed over his project to the Emperor on December

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
27, 1801, but it was nearly a month before it was examined by the Committee. Kochubei, who had been appointed Foreign Minister in August, 1801, adopted a plan which largely conformed to Alexander's views. He proposed to hold Russia aloof from the morass of European affairs, to maintain friendly relations with all of the nations of Europe. This would enable the Emperor to devote full-time to the pressing problem of internal reforms and reorganization. Some of the specific terms of Kochubei's proposal were questioned, but Alexander and the other members of the Committee heartily supported its basic premise; they sincerely desired the peace and tranquility of neutrality. In the long run, however, the course of events in Europe prevented this from becoming a reality. Soon all of Europe was ablaze with the onset of war and Russia moved toward collaboration with her "amie naturelle," Great Britain.\(^\text{11}\)

Alexander's consultations with the members of the Unofficial Committee had brought about an immediate reversal of Paul I's anti-British policies which led to a growing friendship with Great Britain. This friendship came to fruition during the coalitions against Napoleon. In fact, Alexander dispatched Novosiltsev to London in 1804 with

\(^{11}\text{A.K.V., XVIII, 226, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 3 February 1801. Stroganov, II, 99-100, "Séance du 22 Janvier 1802." Czartoryski, I, 292-93. For a more thorough examination of foreign affairs and the Unofficial Committee see e.g. M.A. Aldanov, Turost Pavla Stroganova i drugiia kharakteristikii, (Belgrade, 1934).}
instructions to explain the objectives of an Anglo-Russian alliance and to persuade the Pitt ministry to accept them. The Tsar and his new Foreign Minister, Adam Czartoryski, hoped that the British would participate in the liberation of Europe, in forcing France to return to her pre-Revolutionary boundaries, and in the creation of a league of European states.  

The results of Novosiltsev's talks with the British were less grandiose than Alexander's lofty plan. But the Pitt ministry was willing to subsidize a Russian campaign against the French. The Anglo-Russian agreement of 1804, with an Austro-Russian treaty, produced the Third Coalition against the French. Napoleon, however, administered a crushing defeat to the Austro-Russian forces in December, 1805, at Austerlitz. Though the Austrians accepted the terms of the Treaty of Pressburg and dropped out of the conflict, the Tsar spurned the French offer of peace. Alexander won over the Prussians to a new coalition against Bonaparte and sent Paul Stroganov to London in 1806 as "plénipotentiaire extraordinaire." Stroganov's task was "to explain to the English government the political situation

\[12\] C. Morley, "Czartoryski's Attempt at a New Foreign Policy Under Alexander I," American Slavic and East European Review, (1953), XII, 477-78. The Russian attempt to form a league of European states might be regarded as the antecedent of the Holy Alliance, without the latter's religious overtones.
in Europe," to explain the Tsar's determination to continue the struggle.  

The Tsar's determination, however, faded with the defeat of his Prussian ally at Jena in October, 1806, and with the costly Franco-Russian stalemate at Eylau in January, 1807. The defeat of the Russian armies at the Battle of Friedland brought peace with the French. The two protagonists, Napoleon and Alexander I, met on a raft moored in the middle of the Niemen river and concluded the peace treaty signed at Tilsit on June 25 (July 7), 1807. The Peace of Tilsit and Russia's participation in Napoleon's "Continental System" brought a temporary halt to Anglo-Russian friendship and cooperation.

Significantly, the rupture of Anglo-Russian relations corresponded with the termination of the influence of Novosiltsev, Stroganov, Czartoryski and Kochubei on the Tsar.  

Czartoryski had resigned as Foreign Minister on June 17, 1806, and devoted his energies to his position as Curator of Vilna University and school district. One year later, in June, 1807, Kochubei retired as Minister

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13 Stroganov, I, xxxiv, 77-78.

14 G. Vernadsky, "Reforms Under Czar Alexander I: French and American Influences," Review of Politics, (1947), IX, 52, has noted that "with the war over, Alexander took up his projects for reform. Now, however, he was obliged to find new advisors, for the members of the Intimate Committee, which had ceased functioning during the war, did not wish to accept the new francophile policy of their sovereign..."
of the Interior and remained only as a member of the Senate. Novosiltsev served as Curator of the St. Petersburg school district until 1809, and then retired completely and lived in Vienna until 1812. Stroganov withdrew from participation in domestic affairs and plunged into a military career.

2. The Vorontsov Project.

The main concern of Alexander and the Unofficial Committee was not foreign relations, but internal problems. One of the first questions the Committee examined was the so-called "Project for a Charter to the Russian People." The exact authorship of the Charter is not known, but Count Alexander Vorontsov is generally credited with being its guiding spirit. In fact, the members of the Committee called it the "Vorontsov Project." The initial draft apparently was prepared by Alexander Radishchev, the Russian author who had been exiled to Siberia by Catherine II because of his famous book, *A Journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg*. The final text of the Charter, however, was in the hand of Michael Speransky. This fact has led many to believe that Speransky was one of the authors of


16 Speransky had a distinctive handwriting style that is easily recognized. See e.g. Raeff, *Speransky*, 12-13.
the Charter, but recent scholarship has shown that Speransky's participation was very slight, limited only to some stylistic improvements. 17

The coronation of Alexander was fixed for September 12, 1801, and the Tsar hoped to publish at that time a guarantee of the basic rights of his subjects. Alexander Vorontsov, therefore, submitted his "project" to the Emperor in July, 1801. The Charter was thoroughly discussed in the Committee during the sessions of July 15, 1801, and July 23, 1801. Responding to Alexander's request for observations, Novosiltsev announced that even after a brief examination of the document he found things that he could not accept. For one thing, he called for a thorough revision of the sections dealing with the position of the nobility. The Charter included several articles which guaranteed the rights and privileges of the nobility. In Novosiltsev's opinion, the government should compel the nobility to "sortir de l'ignorance dans laquelle elle croupit" by cancelling the rights in the noble assemblies of all those who did not know how to read or write, and all those who had no idea of the rights and duties of a "gentilhomme." 18

17 Raeff, Speransky, 23n., indicates that Speransky's participation was "very small."

18 The complete text of the Charter can be found in V.P. Semennikov, Radishchev, ocherki i issledovannia, (Moscow, 1925), 180-94. For translated excerpts see M. Raeff, Plans for Political Reform in Imperial Russia, 1730-1905, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966), 76-84. Stroganov, II, 36-37, "Conférence du 23 Juillet 1801."
This response was particularly meaningful to Alexander I who thought it necessary to distinguish between those nobles who served the state and those who led an idle life. To him, it was not fair for the latter to enjoy the same prerogatives as the former. Furthermore, he did not see the necessity of granting special favors to a group. It was more in his thinking to allow individual privileges in return for individual services. According to Stroganov, the prospect of "droits exclusifs" was always repugnant to the sovereign. The concept of class privilege was offensive to his principles. 19

The members of the Committee brought to Alexander's attention several interesting factors. On the one hand, it was true that he could grant special favors to the nobility and later, when the proper circumstances permitted it, give these same privileges to the other classes. Because of various problems, it would not be practical for the Tsar at this time to extend such prerogatives to all classes. This being the case, the committeemen suggested that it would be better for Alexander to refrain from granting special favors to the nobility. If His Majesty were not in a position to allow privileges for all of his subjects, then he should not alienate the majority by showing

favoritism toward a few. Alexander strongly supported this position.\footnote{Ibid.}

Next the discussion on the Vorontsov Project centered on the article relative to the freedom of movement into the interior for all free Russians. The members of the Committee indicated to the Emperor that this "excellent article" contradicted existing procedures. The diverse formalities observed in obtaining passports for travel into the interior of the Empire at this time were serious inconveniences for all Russians. Alexander defended these procedures by stating why such precautions were taken. They centered mainly on the fact that the crown wished to make it easy for creditors to prevent their debtors from fleeing.\footnote{Ibid., II, 39-41, "Conférence du 23 Juillet 1801."}

It was pointed out to the Tsar that such barriers of paperwork were illusory because none of them could keep a really furtive debtor from finding a way to elude the law. Alexander responded that he thought that such barriers also discouraged insidious characters from going out to the provincial villages and engaging in deceitful practices. The members of the Committee replied that to be effective such a system needed a "bonne police" instead of troublesome formalities that any dishonest man "un peu adroit" could evade. Nevertheless, the Tsar remained stubborn and soon
tired of the subject. His advisers did not press him further. 22

The Committee then turned to Vorontsov's articles concerning the judicial order and the drawing up of a habeas corpus act for Russia. Novosiltsev observed that before adopting such an act it was necessary to determine first if it would be lasting in Russia. If it had to be annulled later, it would be best not to enact it at all. In fact, he doubted that such a measure could be granted under existing conditions (viz. the chaos of Russian laws and the serf problem). Furthermore, he feared that if such an act were proclaimed it would have to be withdrawn later. Alexander replied that this had been his exact comment to Vorontsov, and the discussion of this point ended. The members of the Committee then asked the Emperor if he wished to take advantage of Vorontsov's talents by having him work with Novosiltsev and Kochubei in drawing up a revised draft that incorporated the views presented during their meetings. Alexander consented, but the new draft, like the old one, was never promulgated. 23

3. Serfdom.

Before the Committee terminated its discussion of the Charter, however, Vorontsov's proposals relative to

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
serfdom in Russia were examined. Vorontsov suggested, among other things, that the free peasants ought to be given the legal right to own their communes (villages) and property. The Emperor, though approving of the spirit of Vorontsov's point, doubted that such an act would have the desired results. The landowners would in any case remain the same; they would always find ways of extorting the property of the free peasants, either by threat or other means. It was pointed out to Alexander that, though he was correct, the Vorontsov proposal represented only a first step. Furthermore, it had no drawbacks since the free peasants already acquired communes and property through "prête-noms" who often cheated them in the process. Such a measure would do away with this abuse of the free peasants.24

The Tsar agreed with his advisers and indicated his willingness to discuss further the general peasant problem. He presented for the consideration of the Committee a project that Prince P.A. Zubov had given him. Zubov proposed that the government forbid the sale of serfs without land and the ownership of household serfs. He suggested that the state transfer all household serfs into "corps de métiers" or guilds, and compensate their owners for the loss they sustained. As members of guilds, such serfs would be

24Ibid.
permanently assigned laborers, and not the property of landowners or the crown. 25

In addition to Zubov's proposal, the Committee at the same time examined a plan submitted by Admiral Mordvinov. He considered it necessary to do something for the peasants, while correcting the deplorable inefficiency of Russian agriculture. He called attention to the fact that in several remote provinces there were large blocks of land that lay idle and untilled. There were fertile tracts which required only a fair amount of work and little cost to be productive, but were never cultivated because of a lack of manpower. Mordvinov also indicated that there was much inefficiency and unworked land even in the outskirts of many of the provincial capitals. In his opinion, this was a terrible waste and misuse of a vast potential source of wealth for Russia. 26

Mordvinov suggested that the government extend the


26Arkhiv grafov Mordvinov, (10 vols., St. Petersburg, 1901-1903), III, 142-47. It is interesting to note that Mordvinov was apparently influenced considerably by the writings of Jeremy Bentham. He wrote: "I long to settle in England, and, settling there, to be acquainted with your brother. He is, in my eyes, one of the four geniuses who have done, and will do most for the happiness of the human race---Bacon, Newton, Smith and Bentham; each the founder of a new science; each a creator. I am laying up a certain sum for the purpose of spreading the light which emanates from the writings of Bentham." Admiral Mordvinov to General Samuel Bentham, 5 May 1806, Bentham, X, 419.
right of land ownership, heretofore reserved for the crown and the nobility, to all Russians except the landowner serfs. In his plan, merchants and other townsmen, and state-owned serfs would be allowed to purchase land. He saw this as something of a first step in a process which would result in the destruction of the institution of serfdom. It would lead more immediately to a better utilization of Russia's farmland. Land which hitherto lay in fallow or disuse would yield good harvests thanks to the efforts of the new owners. General prosperity would follow and this would have a healthy impact on the economic and social structure of Russia. Mordvinov envisaged that the landowners would eventually recognize that serf labor was unprofitable and they themselves would sponsor the liberation of their serfs. The end result would be a strong and wholesome Russia, divested of the pernicious institution of serfdom.27

In the discussion of the two projects in the Committee a significant clash of views took place. Alexander asked Kochubei to draw up draft decrees and when they were presented an extraordinary debate ensued. Novosiltsev said that he was in favor of emphasizing the strictly economic reasons for passing reform legislation in order not to alienate the nobility. This was in contrast with Kochubei's

27 Ibid. See also Ibid., II, 56-57, "Conférence du 4 Novembre 1801."
position which was to announce that the Tsar was about to fulfill his promises to do something for the peasants. Hence, basic differences concerning the approach to the problem appeared from the very beginning of the discussions: the one calling for a discreet and indirect serf reform, announcing it as an economic measure designed for the improvement of Russian agriculture; and the other calling for a measure designated as a social reform.  

As the conversation continued, Alexander commissioned Novosiltsev to seek the opinion of Laharpe and Mordvinov on the merits of the two proposals. Laharpe recommended the adoption of Mordvinov's plan. He warned, however, against a simultaneous enactment of the Zubov proposal. Such a course of action, he reasoned, would create additional discontent which might ruin the effectiveness of Mordvinov's scheme. Mordvinov of course was completely absorbed with the possibilities of his project. He thought of it as a panacea for Russia's ills. Consequently, he was willing to sacrifice any other measure, including Zubov's, in order to insure the best possible reception for his plan.  

Novosiltsev shared Laharpe's and Mordvinov's opinion, but more precisely stated the reasons for fearing the discontent which would be stirred up by a concurrent

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enactment of both measures. He warned that uprisings were distinct possibilities. In any case, the resistance might be so great that the government would have to resort to severe and unpleasant steps. Furthermore, Novosiltsev dreaded the discouragement that would be produced among the nobility. He suggested that the Emperor act prudently in order not to alienate unduly this group which the state relied upon for so many things. Specifically, he did not want to give them the impression that "cette mesure fut le signal de la liberté qu'on donnerait aux serfs." The Emperor's well known reputation among the conservative nobility of being too inclined to move toward "liberté" for the peasants had to be considered. The promulgation of both measures would confirm their suspicions and lead to the danger of active resistance on their part. For all of these reasons, Novosiltsev was in favor of postponing the enactment of Zubov's proposal.30

Czartoryski, to the contrary, spoke fervently in favor of a more comprehensive serf reform. According to Stroganov, "toutes les craintes qu'on pourrait avoir lui [Czartoryski] paraissaient aussi illusoire." To Czartoryski the institution of serfdom was so despicable that it was not necessary to hesitate to take important steps to bring about its demise. As for Kochubei, he was more

30 Ibid.
concerned about the alienation and discontent among the peasantry than among the nobility. To him it was clear that the acceptance of only Mordvinov's project would create much resentment among the serfs. Furthermore, he "fallait le faire tout à fois et ne pas la morceler par parties." If something were to be done for the peasantry, Kochubei was in favor of a single comprehensive blow. The opponents of course would grumble, but they would grudgingly accept the eventuality and matters would soon settle down. On the other hand, if plagued by a series of measures, they might not accept so gracefully and might indeed turn to active resistance. Thus, according to his reasoning, it would be better to enact a comprehensive measure, endure the inevitable grumbling, and have it done with.\footnote{Ibid.}

Kochubei revealed his opinions most candidly in a confidential letter to his friend Simon Vorontsov. On November 9, 1801, he wrote,

I request that you keep all of this, for the time being, for your own information ...For me, I think...that one can enact the following without inconvenience: 1) a prohibition of individual sales [of serfs];
2) a prohibition of the acquisition of peasants for domestic servants; 3) permission for the merchants, bourgeois and crown peasants to purchase land; as for the peasants of the nobles, permission to buy land collectively (obshchestvom)
...4) leave the dvoroyye [household serfs] in their existing situation for
the time being in order not to provoke complaints from the nobles who would perhaps think themselves injured.32

Stroganov was not as guarded about his innermost thoughts. Of all the counselors of Alexander, he came out in the strongest possible manner in favor of the amelioration of the conditions of the peasants. He drew up a thesis in opposition to the views of Laharpe, Mordvinov and Novosiltsev (and eventually the Emperor himself). He attempted to show that finding a solution for the question of serfdom would provoke no disturbances. He maintained that the government had nothing to fear on the part of the nobles who had demonstrated during the past regime that they were incapable of serious opposition, or on the part of the peasantry who stood to benefit from a comprehensive reform measure. Concerning the nobility, Stroganov merely asked "où sont les éléments d'un mécontentement dangereux?" It was evident to him that resistance would not spring from the members of the nobility who were courtiers, powerful landlords, or in the service of the state. They all owed their favored position to the monarch, and though they might grumble, he held that they would not support active resistance to the throne. Only the backward provincial nobility remained to be considered, and they so thoroughly

32 A.K.V., XVIII, 254-55, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 9 November 1801.
disgusted Stroganov that he stated during the discussions, "ni droit, ni justice, rien ne peut leur faire naître l'idée de la plus petite résistance! C'est la classe la plus ignorante, le plus carpuleuse, et dont l'esprit est le plus bouché."33

Reflecting on the history of serf uprisings in Russia, Stroganov concluded that if there were any danger in the question of serfdom, it resided not in the liberation of the serfs, but in the maintenance of the institution of serfdom. As for the peasants themselves, he had an opinion which resembled something of a combination of the Slavophile reverence of the peasantry with the optimism of the early disciples of laissez-faire as a panacea. Stroganov referred to the peasantry as a class composed of some individuals who, to a large degree, were endowed with a great native intelligence and an enterprising spirit. But since they enjoyed no rights and no fixed state, they were condemned to stagnation and produced in no degree near their potential. Stroganov added that occasionally, however, manifestations of the spirit of the peasants were astonishing and one could speculate how well they would do if their conditions

33 Stroganov, II, 59-68, "Conférence du 18 Novembre 1801." Kornilov, I, 89. Viz. Pypin, Obshchestvennoe, 96, maintains that Stroganov's description of the state of political and intellectual decline of the majority of the Russian nobility was accurate.
were significantly ameliorated.  

The Tsar, having been the first author of the cautious stance, reinforced his position with the line of reasoning offered by Novosiltsev, Laharpe and Mordvinov. He decided that it would be better to separate the two reform measures and to move more gradually, "diminishing the dose" so to speak. Stroganov, Kochubei and Czartoryski believed that such a course of action would accomplish nothing. Since one was obliged to bring about a certain amount of disapproval, they thought that it would be better to enact serf reforms in one quick thrust, rather than give the uneasy nobility successive reasons for discontent. The Emperor rejected this and chose "aller par de petits coups."

Alexander adopted the principles of the Mordvinov proposal and instructed Novosiltsev to prepare a draft decree accordingly. Novosiltsev presented his draft to the Committee on November 25, 1801. Stylistic changes were adopted during this and one additional session. The final version was published as the Senate ukase of December 12, 1801. The law, in following Mordvinov's principles, gave

34 Stroganov, II, 19-21, "De la fixation de l'état des paysans."

35 Stroganov, II, 57-68, "Conférence du 11 Novembre 1801;" "Conférence du 18 Novembre 1801."
merchants and other townsmen, and state peasants the right to purchase unsettled land.\textsuperscript{36}

This has led many to conclude that the Unofficial Committee failed to come to grips with the major social problem in Russia, serfdom.\textsuperscript{37} As has been shown in this account, such a conclusion is false and unwarranted. The Committee did come to grips with the problem, indeed it elicited a passionate exchange of views. In fact, the majority of the Committee favored a more comprehensive measure. Unfortunately, majority rule was not the procedure observed. The Tsar made the final decision and the majority had no choice but to acquiesce.

Though Alexander was not willing to move as far or as fast as his friends, he nonetheless had come to the conclusion that steps to ameliorate the conditions of the serfs were absolutely essential. This rather progressive attitude toward serfdom led to the promulgation of a series of significant measures during the remainder of his reign.

Alexander issued a decree in February, 1803, that certainly was a direct consequence of the work of the


\textsuperscript{37}Raeff, Plans, 86, for example, maintains that the "Committee also most gingerly skirted two major pillars of the existing social and political order: serfdom and autocracy."
Unofficial Committee. Count S.P. Rumiantsev, one of Alexander's counselors, had determined a way to use the law of December 12, 1801, that he believed would promote emancipation. In a memorandum to the Emperor in 1802, Rumiantsev pointed out that since the new law allowed commoners to own land, the government should permit serfs to purchase their freedom and holdings from their masters. The price and terms of payment would be worked out by a voluntary agreement between the serfs and the owners. In short, Rumiantsev desired to set free some of the peasants on his estate and was sure that many others would follow his example. He claimed that his plan would prove so economically advantageous to all concerned that it would lead to the gradual disappearance of serfdom.38

The Tsar was attracted by the voluntary character of Rumiantsev's scheme, and made it the basis for a decree he issued on February 20, 1803. The so-called "Law of Free Agriculturalists" permitted landowners to manumit their serfs, individually or by whole villages, on the condition that the peasants be granted an allotment of land as their property. Such agreements were subject to

the approval of the Ministry of the Interior and the Emperor. 39

The measure evoked sharp reactions from the conservative gentry. Derzhavin, the Minister of Justice, maintained that Rumiantsev had "come to an agreement... with the Jacobin band of Czartoryski, Novosiltsev and the rest." Derzhavin hampered the execution of the decree in every way possible. 40 Karamzin criticized the law in his famous article "Letter of a Country Dweller." 41 But the law had a limited effect and led to the conclusion of only 160 agreements during the reign of Alexander I involving 47,153 male serfs. Basically, there was little willingness on the part of the landowners to part with their land, and little money in the purses of the peasants to pay for it. 42 Alexander nonetheless had taken a monumental first step in the direction of emancipation.

Alexander I maintained his progressive attitude toward serfdom throughout the remainder of his reign. A series of decrees (1804, 1805, 1816, 1817, 1819) promulgated by the Tsar and supported by the Baltic nobility brought freedom for over 400,000 male serfs and their families in

39 P.S.Z., no. 20,620.

40 Nechkina, 28.

41 N.M. Karamzin, "Pismo sel'skogo zhitelia," Vestnik Evropy, 1803, no. 17.

42 Blum, 541. Kornilov, I, 102.
the Baltic provinces (Estonia, Livonia, Courland).

Furthermore, there is some evidence that the Emperor viewed the Baltic reforms as "a model for the rest of the empire and as a beginning of a nationwide abolition of serfdom."43

43Blum, 542-44.
CHAPTER III

EDUCATION

The subject of the vast number of uneducated Russians came up in the discussions of the Unofficial Committee concerning serfdom and it drew attention to the fact that no reform movement could be successful in Russia until the educational system was reorganized. It was apparent that unless the state had the services of capable and educated administrators, all efforts at reform would be ineffective. Kochubei, for example, informed Simon Vorontsov in a letter dated November 9, 1801, that the "internal reforms" were progressing "quite slowly" because of a lack of "qualified men." This fact was also evident to foreign visitors as well as Russians. Louis Dumont wrote to one of his friends in June, 1803,

But, in a word, there is no government more essentially well-disposed, more occupied with the public weal, than this one...if anything is wanting, it is the instruments for doing the good they are desirous to do. Men must be déterré or created; and here is the true difficulty. It seems astonishing, at the first glance, that there should be so many establishments for public instructions, and so few instructed. In all the departments [of the government], it is necessary to
employ strangers [foreigners], which is a great evil, but it is an inevitable evil.¹

In fact, the infant Russian educational system was very inadequate and influential Russians hired private tutors for their children. A mediocre Academy of Sciences, which consisted mainly of foreign scholars, existed in St. Petersburg. Its transactions were recorded generally in either French or German, and it was more or less isolated from the nation and the people. Russia had three universities at the turn of the century: Vilna, essentially for Polish students; Dorpat, essentially for Baltic Germans; and Moscow, essentially for Russians. Moscow University enrolled approximately one hundred students who were maintained at the expense of the state. In addition to the universities, there existed in St. Petersburg a Glavnoe Uchilishche which was something of a teacher's institute.²

The balance of the educational system consisted of "public schools" which had been created by Catherine II, and the so-called "peasant schools." The public schools, higher and elementary, numbered about three hundred and had a total enrollment of nearly twenty thousand in 1800. They were concentrated in the towns and were staffed by

¹A.K.V., XVIII, 254, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 9 November 1801. Bentham, X, 407-08, Dumont to Romilly, 10 June 1803.
²Czartoryski, I, 325.
individuals described as idle wretches and drunkards. Czartoryski, for example, stated that no respectable person would send his children to such schools. The peasant schools, which owed their existence to private philanthropy and meager government subsidies, were even more deplorable.3

On December 23, 1801, Alexander introduced for discussion in the Committee a memorandum relative to public education which he had received from Laharpe. Basically, Laharpe proposed the establishment of a highly systematic and centralized educational program under the direct supervision of a Ministry of Public Education.4 Stroganov stated that he was quite pleased that Laharpe had directed Alexander's attention to the question of public education. He had been working for some time on a project on this subject himself. Novosiltsev and Czartoryski had shared their ideas with him and the three came to the conclusion that the Russian "instruction publique formait un tableau d'une bigarrure extrême." What was particularly distressing


4Arkivet Armfeltska. To this author's knowledge, the only complete copy of Laharpe's original memorandum is preserved in the Finnish State Archives, Helsinki. Apparently the copy preserved in the Central State Archives, Leningrad, is a poor Russian translation of the original French. See e.g. A. Predtechenskii, Ocherki Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoi istorii Rossii v pervom chetverti XIX veka, (Moscow, 1957), 78-79.
to them was the lack of unity and the lack of common standards or procedures.5

Stroganov suggested that Russia could profit from the experience of other nations; in particular, he thought of the French educational system as a model for the Russians to follow. The systematic approach in France was very attractive to him. He proposed that the Tsar initiate an extensive reform of the Russian system. He was in favor of a unified and comprehensive program that would include a common preliminary education for all Russians, the creation of specialized higher schools (e.g. for marine, artillery, mines, engineering, law, medicine), and the foundation of more universities.6

Alexander was quite impressed with Stroganov's presentation and, though he was opposed to a wholesale adoption of the French system in Russia, he felt that the Russians could supplement their "old and useful" institutions with some of the French program. Therefore, when the Tsar formed the Committee of Ministers in September, 1802, he established for the first time in Russia a Ministry of Public Education. In addition, he reorganized the Commission for Educational Matters, originally formed by Catherine II in 1782. He was dissatisfied with its

5Stroganov, II, 84-89, "Séance du 23 Décembre 1801."
6Ibid.
performance and thus appointed new members to revitalize the old commission. 7

The chairman of the commission was the newly appointed Minister of Public Education, Count Peter Zavadovskii. Zavadovskii, who was a lifetime friend of Alexander Vorontsov and Prince Bezborodko, was a long-standing participant in earlier educational commissions. According to Czartoryski, he owed his appointment as Minister of Public Education to the influence of Vorontsov and because he "avait la réputation d'écrire le russe avec une grande pureté, certains manifestes du temps de l'Impératrice [Catherine II] ayant été dus à sa plume." 8 Laharpe, however, regarded him as an arrogant, greedy, vain and intolerant individual. His appointment was very distressing to Alexander's former tutor who considered the question of the development of Russian education too crucial to be in the hands of such a person. Laharpe informed Alexander of his misgivings, but in a letter dated July 7, 1803, the Tsar assured his former tutor that

vos regrets sur nomination de Zavadovski à la place de ministre de l'instruction publique seraient diminués, si vous étiez au fait de l'organisation de son Ministère. Il est nul. C'est un Conseil, composé de Mouravief, Klinger, Czartoryski, Novosiltzef etc., qui règit tout; il n'y a pas un papier, qui ne soit travaillé par eux, pas un homme qui

7 Ibid.
ne soit placé par eux...Il est nul et n'est dans le Ministère que pour ne pas crier, s'il en fut exclu.\textsuperscript{9}

In fact, Zavadovskii was very stubborn and intensely disliked the innovations and pace of the reorganized commission. He admitted that he was often so irritated that he became "mute" and "ceased all dealings" with the innovators.\textsuperscript{10} Others, however, suggested that his inactivity was due more to his laziness and desire for drink. In a letter to Novosiltsev dated October 28, 1804, Stroganov rather amusingly proclaimed,

Our public education progresses rather slowly. God, after having created the world in six days, rested on the seventh. But our Minister [Zavadovskii]\textsuperscript{11} has found something even better; he does absolutely nothing for six days and, none the less, rests on the seventh.\textsuperscript{11}

Zavadovskii drank too much and became something of a crank in old age, complaining about nearly everything. He had old-fashioned and obsolete manners, and an irritable drawl and twang in his voice. According to one eyewitness, when he resigned in 1804 due to ill health, the Emperor was "as happy as a child."\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{10}Stroganov, I, 68.

\textsuperscript{11}Pypin, Obshchestvennoe, 116. Stroganov, I, 68.

\textsuperscript{12}Shilder, II, 29-30.
In addition to Zavadovskii, the commission consisted of several well qualified professional scholars, statesmen, military officers and sincere supporters of education. They included M.N. Muraviev, Czartoryski, S. Potocki, General Klinger, F.I. Iakovich de-Mirievo, Stroganov, N.I. Fus and N.I. Ozeretskovskii. M.N. Muraviev had served as tutor in Russian language and history for the Grand Duke Alexander and his brother Constantine. All of his life the Emperor maintained a sense of respect and admiration for this mild-mannered scholar. Muraviev, one of the better Russian authors of the eighteenth century, was noted for his excellent Russian translations of various Latin, English and German works. He was interested, among other things, in ancient philology and collaborated with Karamzin in his research in Russian history. With the creation of the Ministry of Public Education, Muraviev was appointed Vice Minister and special assistant to Count Zavadovskii.13

Two of the non-Russians appointed to the commission were Severin Potocki and Theodore Klinger. Potocki was one of several Polish citizens, including the Czartoryski brothers, who were brought to Russia by Catherine II following the failure of the Kosciuszko uprising. Potocki later was named a Senator of the Russian Empire by

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Alexander I. His interest in educational matters culminated with his appointment as Curator of the University of Kharkov. General Klinger, a distinguished Baltic German, was the commandant of one of the Russian army cadet corps. He was an author who held liberal views which were nearly utopian, and was quite interested in the promotion of science and education. The Emperor was impressed with his firm appearance, personal energy and unusual candor.

Among the professional scholars appointed to the commission were Iakovitch de-Mirievo, Fus and Ozeretskovskii. F.I. Iakovitch de-Mirievo was a noted Croatian educator whom Catherine II had invited to Russia. He was a distinguished pedagogue, an expert on Russian language and a member of the Greek-Russian Orthodox Church. During Catherine's reign he translated various textbooks and adapted them to Russian conditions. He was especially known for his participation, at the invitation of the Empress, in the organization of the so-called Narodnykh (Public) schools.

N.I. Fus was also a trained scholar. He was born in Basel and studied mathematics at the University of Basel. The famous Bernulli was his mentor. He was eventually appointed to the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg where, among

other things, he did research in mathematics and science.\textsuperscript{17} N.I. Ozeretskovskii was a native Russian scholar, born in Dmitrovskii uezd (district) in the Moscow gubernia (province). He studied in St. Petersburg before moving on to Strasbourg and Leyden, and eventually received a Doctor of Medicine degree. Ozeretskovskii returned to his homeland and became a member of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, concentrating mainly on research in physics.\textsuperscript{18}

The reorganized Commission for Educational Matters was assigned the task of preparing a plan for a comprehensive educational reform. In this respect, the question of the universities and their function and general responsibility in the entire system was particularly important. At the first meeting of the commission after the establishment of the Ministry of Public Education, Ozeretskovskii and Pus were given the assignment of drawing up a general program for a national school system which would be uniform and closely integrated throughout the Russian Empire. One of their major concerns was the role of the universities.\textsuperscript{19}

The proposal made by Pus, notwithstanding the claims

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17]Ibid., 27.
\item[18]Ibid., 26.
\end{footnotes}
of other members of the commission and various authors, proved to be the basis of the system eventually established. Pus proposed that the Russian Empire be divided into six administrative units (okrug). Each of these units would have at its apex a university. They would include the existing university centers at Moscow, Vilna and Dorpat, and three new universities to be created at St. Petersburg, Kazan and Kharkov. The chief official in each unit (or region) would be the Curator of the university. In short, the Curator would be responsible for administering educational matters throughout the region. 20

Pus also suggested a detailed and integral subdivision of each region. In each provincial capital he proposed the construction and maintenance of a gymnasium or high academy which would be classified as a school of the third order (uchilishche tretiago razriada). In each district capital he would have a district school or school of the second order (uchilishche vtorago razriada). And for each village or parish he was in favor of the establishment of a local school or school of the first order (uchilishche pervago razriada). In the structure which Pus outlined, the administrators on the local level would be subordinate to the district director. The district administrators, in turn, would be dependent on the six regional directors.

These six university curators would answer directly to the Minister of Public Education.\(^{21}\)

Other programs and modifications were offered for the consideration of the commission. Iakovich de-Mirievo, for example, proposed that the state establish regional administrative units at the three existing universities and create three new university centers at St. Petersburg, Kazan and Kiev (instead of Kharkov). Czartoryski, after consulting with the Unofficial Committee, gave what amounted to Imperial approval of the program presented by Fus. He introduced a plan which was very similar (i.e. with only slight modifications) and in close harmony with the Fus proposal. For this reason, many have claimed that Czartoryski and the members of the Unofficial Committee were the authors of the educational system that was established at this time. But, as has been indicated above, the views and proposals of Fus proved to be the basis of the changes adopted.\(^{22}\)

In any case, the Commission for Educational Matters made its initial recommendation on January 24, 1803. The schema presented, prompted by the discussions of the Unofficial Committee and based mainly on the Fus plan, was


accepted. The final educational program was put into effect by a series of decrees issued in 1803 and 1804. The initial ukase of January 26, 1803, established six school regions with a public university in each. The University Statute of 1804 granted a good deal of autonomy to the governing bodies of the University Councils. A faculty council, in cooperation with the Curator of the university, administered university life and was responsible for all the schools and measures of censorship in its particular region.

Curators of the six universities formed an Educational Council, with the Minister of Public Education as its chairman. They included Muraviev at Moscow University, Czartoryski at Vilna, Klinger at Dorpat, Potocki at Kharkov, Novosiltsev at St. Petersburg and S.I. Rumovskii at Kazan.

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Rumovskii, the son of a clergyman, was born in the village of Starom Pogost in Vladimir province. He was a mathematician and astronomer, and completed several works on these subjects. The great Lomonosov considered him as one of his favorite pupils. Rumovskii served as Vice President of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences and, from 1810 to 1816, as Minister of Public Education.24

In addition to six universities, the decree provided for public gymnasiums or high academies in each of the forty-two provincial capitals. Students were to attend such schools for four years. A two year program was established for the nearly four hundred public uezd (district) schools which were to be founded under the new schema. The ukase also proposed the construction of an undetermined number of local schools, at least one for every two parishes (prikhod). Such elementary schools were to have a one year program. The Glavnoe Uchilishche in St. Petersburg was reorganized into the Glavnii Pedagogicheskii Institut with the specific task of preparing more and better qualified teachers.25

Other steps taken included the decision to publish


educational reports in the form of a journal, the *Periodicheskoe sochinenie o uspekhakh narodnago prosveshchenia*. The journal was to be published by the Commission on Educational Matters under the editorship of Ozeretskovskii. This measure favorably impressed many foreign observers. Louis Dumont, for example, wrote in June, 1802: "An account will be given of the various establishments, so that one may be compared with another, and the progress of each exhibited. This publicity—which is here a new idea—will do more for their success than any positive laws." 26

In general, the state desired a highly centralized and efficient system of public education with the administrative officials of the lower units subordinate and dependent upon the director of the next higher unit. It was hoped that, in time, such a system would provide Russia with a trained corps of native administrators as well as a literate populace. One measure of the determination of the government to support education was the amount of funds allotted for this purpose. In 1804, for example, a sum more than three times greater than the highest amount assigned during Catherine II's reign was provided. 27

The educational measures enacted in this period

27 Kornilov, I, 112. P.S.Z., no. 21,504.
elicited warm support among Russian intellectuals. Karamzin, for example, wrote in 1803 that "all our new laws are wise and humanitarian...but this edict on popular education is the strongest proof of the Monarch's divine goodness."28 "The creation of the Ministry of Public Education," according to Czartoryski, "was a remarkable innovation in Russia which was fruitful of great and salutary results." Furthermore, he maintained that "posterity will owe gratitude to Alexander and to the young men [the Unofficial Committee] then so much criticized who supported him in his plans and gave them practical shape by dividing into special branches the confused organization which was then in existence."29 In fact, Novosiltsev, Stroganov and Czartoryski played a vital role in the arduous task of chartering the new universities and bringing them into operation, a task which was not completed until 1819.

Despite the fact that the Napoleonic wars diverted attention and resources from education, a remarkable qualitative improvement of Russian education progressed until 1816. Indeed, one observer maintains that "on the whole we may consider those years as the best and most productive in the history of Russian education."30

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28 Pipes, Karamzin, 235.
29 Czartoryski, I, 324-25.
30 Kornilov, I, 113.
The year 1816, however, marked the beginning of a reactionary period in domestic affairs which greatly affected the course of educational development. The Tsar appointed Prince Alexander Golitsyn, who like the Emperor had become something of a religious mystic, as Minister of Public Education and gradually replaced the more liberal and enlightened educational officials. In 1817 the Ministry of Public Education was merged with the Ministry of Public Worship. The much more conservative Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and Public Education, in the hands of Golitsyn, repeatedly violated education statutes and conducted something of a purge in the universities.\(^{31}\)

In general, upon the accession of Nicholas I the educational system was far more developed than it had been in 1801. The system was in a state of decline in 1825, but there were far more Russian students, schools and teachers than ever before in Russian history.\(^{32}\) Moreover, uniform standards had been adopted and a masterplan for education had been established.\(^{33}\) All of these accomplishments to a

\(^{31}\)P.S.Z., no. 21,106.

\(^{32}\)In 1800 there were 19,915 students in all Russian schools and in 1825 there were over 200,000 students. In 1800 there were 315 schools of all types and in 1825 there were 1,095 schools. W. Johnson, Russia's Educational Heritage, (Pittsburgh, 1950), 82, 263, 290.

\(^{33}\)One Soviet critic, N.V. Chekhov, Tipy russkoï shkoly, (Moscow, 1923), 28, stated that Alexander's plan was "the most complete and satisfactory plan for the organization of public education that the Russian government was to offer until 1917." Cited in Johnson, 65.
large degree stemmed from the efforts of the Unofficial Committee to persuade Alexander I to adopt significant educational reforms, and from the activities of the reorganized Educational Commission.
CHAPTER IV
THE SENATE

The members of the Unofficial Committee busied themselves with the questions of the rights of citizens, the peasantry and the educational system. But they were most concerned about the reorganization of the chaotic administrative structure of Russia and they devoted a major portion of their time to this problem. One of the crucial issues involved in this respect was the future role of the Senate. On May 9, 1801, the very day that Alexander had his first "recorded" conversation with Stroganov, Count Troshchinskii presented his views on the weaknesses of the Senate to the Emperor. He maintained that the ills of that body were brought about by the fact that the Senate in the past had to deal through overly ambitious and unscrupulous officials who had too much influence on the sovereign. Therefore, he suggested that the Tsar immediately take steps to restore the Senate to a position of authority and prevent any recurrence of the process which led to its decay.¹

How much Troshchinskii's plea moved Alexander has not

¹Shilder, II, 268, note 43.
been determined, but it is known that on June 5, 1801, the Tsar issued a decree ordering the Senate to submit a report on its rights and duties. The Emperor promised to restore the Senate to its former importance, to give it a significant role in the future administrative structure. But, as the very need to issue such a decree suggests, it was necessary first to determine exactly what were the existing rights and duties of that institution.2

From the first days of Alexander's reign a very vocal group of old functionaries and dignitaries expressed their views on the political structure of Russia. These elder statesmen formed a very loosely-knit, heterogeneous group. They were by no means united. In fact, in many cases they despised one another. Between A.A. Bekleshov, the new Procurator-General of the Senate, and Troshchinskii, there existed a great animosity and jealousy. According to one of their contemporaries, they quarreled constantly with one another.3 As a result, both of them declined in the eyes of the Tsar. Count Zavadovskii had very few friends and Gabriel Derzhavin, the eminent poet, frequently attacked Troshchinskii as well as Bekleshov. Count Rostopchin

2P.S.Z., no. 19,908. Sbornik Arkheologicheskago Instituta, (St. Petersburg, 1873), I, 69; hereafter cited as Sbornik A.I.

3"Zapiski grafa Evgrafova Fedotovicha Komarovskago," Russkii Arkhiv, (1867), 562; cited by Shilder, II, 30.
remained in Moscow\textsuperscript{4} where he spent his time writing virulent letters criticizing nearly everything.\textsuperscript{5}

This rather inchoate group of elder statesmen, many of whom were Senators, centered its political observations around the idea of a revitalized Senate. Hence they are commonly referred to as the "senatorial party" or "senatorial group." Their origins have long fascinated many commentators. Some have found them reminiscent of the stubborn aristocrats of the old Muscovite boyar class, the heirs of the spirit of the konditsii presented to the Empress Anne. This line of reasoning looks back to the endless struggle of the Russian aristocracy in the eighteenth century to maintain or enhance its position vis-à-vis the monarchy. It views the stand of

\textsuperscript{4}Count Fedor Rostopchin owed his career and his title to the favor of Paul I who made him his adviser on foreign affairs. He was implicated in the assassination of Paul I and was exiled to his estates by Alexander I who forbade him to return to St. Petersburg. Rostopchin then made his home in Moscow. He was very anti-French and was appointed Governor-General of Moscow on the eve of Napoleon's invasion in 1812. Rostopchin was held to be responsible for the decision to set fire to Moscow. Fitzlyon, Dashkov, 315. Raeff, Speransky, 173.

\textsuperscript{5}Raeff, Speransky, 34, erroneously refers to this group as a "rather homogeneous group..." For the evidence cited above see Strogonov, I, 62; Shilder, II, 30; Dovnar-Zapolskii, "Epokha," 7; "Zarozhdenie ministerstv v Rossii i ukaz o pravakh Senata," Iz Istori\'i obshchestvennykh techenii v Rossii, (Kiev, 1910), 57; A.K.V., XVIII, 239, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, 12 May 1801; Ia.Grot (ed.), Sochineniya Derzhavina, (9 vols., St. Petersburg, 1864-1883), VI, 759. Pypin, "Bentama," 806-07, reached the conclusion that since the senatorial group argued so much among themselves, no one could blame Alexander for losing faith in them and eventually dismissing them. For a similar view see Dumont to Romilly, 10 June 1803, Bentham, X, 407.
the senatorial group in 1801-1802 on the questions of the Senate and the establishment of the Committee of Ministers as being a manifestation of this general political phenomenon. In short, the outlook of the senatorial group is seen as an outgrowth of a political process which took place throughout the eighteenth century.  

Basically the old fuctionaries and dignitaries wished to secure more firmly their privileges and to prevent any recurrence of the abuses perpetrated during the reign of Paul I. They thought that the principles of the Enlightenment (e.g. the rights of the citizens) should be put into practice for their benefit and security. The term "constitution" does not quite symbolize their aspirations. More accurately, they sought "fundamental laws" or "fundamental institutions" to insure their rights. They were essentially conservative in their general outlook, but were not dogmatic, reactionary conservatives with a narrow view of the monarchy. In fact, they rejected the concept of "absolutism."  

6Semevskii, "Iz Istorii," 45. Dovnar-Zapolskii, "Epokha," 7, "Zarozhdienie," 69. G. Tel'berg, "Senat i pravo predstavleniia na vysochaishie ukazy," Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshcheniia, (January, 1910), 1-6. Raeff, Plans, 28, offers the following comment on such a line of reasoning: "...the proposals of those who have often been called the Senatorial party...have no real antecedents...It would be possible, though perhaps a little far-fetched, to link the arguments and plans of the Senatorial party with the notions of Prince Kurbiskii, the 'sworn charter' exacted from Basile Shuiskii, and the 'conditions' of the Supreme Privy Council in 1730."

7Raeff, Speransky, 32. Tel'berg, "Senat," 1-6.
The senatorial group was in favor of a monarchy, and
autocracy (samoderzhavie) for Russia. But they also recog-
nized the tyranny of despotism. Their position would be
summed up in the maxim "Russia is an autocratic state, but
she must not be a despotic state." The senatorial group
sought to prevent despotism by the establishment of
"fundamental laws" and a special "guardian of the laws"
(khranilshcha zakonov). Such a guardian for Russia they
all agreed should be the Senate.8

According to their beliefs, the Tsar was indeed the
ultimate source of all laws. But the Senate should be the
"highest executive authority" (vysshoi ispolnitelnoi vlasti) and the "guardian of the laws." They wanted the Senate to be
what Montesquieu described as a "pouvoirs intermédiaires"
(vlastei posredstvuiushchikh). The Senate should also have
the "droit de remontrance" in order to protest to the Emperor
whenever any violation of the "fundamental laws" occurred.
In short, they desired a powerful Senate which would
reconcile the principles of autocracy with those of govern-
ment by law.9

Responding to the Tsar's order of June 5, 1801,
several Senators drafted replies explaining the "true" rights
and duties of the Senate. Eventually these papers were

8 Tel'berg, "Senat," 1-9.
combined into a single report which was under the editorship of Count Zavadovskii. The final draft was presented to the Emperor late in July, 1801. The Senators requested that their institution become something of a "corps législatif" and that their members be selected among the important dignitaries of the nation. They hoped that eventually a certain number of nobles from each of the provinces might be appointed to the Senate upon the recommendation of the provincial governors. The Senators suggested that their major function be that of supervising the activities of the government. In such a manner, the Senate would prevent bureaucratic abuses. Furthermore, if granted the "right of remonstrance," it would also preserve the "fundamental laws" of the Empire; that is, the rights and privileges of the Russian nobility.10

At first glance, the attitude of the senatorial group seems to have been motivated by a selfish class interest. Their proposals all manifested a desire to protect their social class with special legislation and privileges. They of course did not stand for egalitarian ideals and their sympathy was for an oligarchic form of government. Their understanding of the important problems of the day and

their anxieties were based on personal concern over the narrow bounds of their position. Yet one should not be too hasty in condemning them. After all, several of the major proposals for serf reform (Mordvinov, Zubov, Rumiantsev) sprang from their ranks. Admiral Mordvinov, for example, also clearly recognized that it was indispensable to have a strict enumeration of the functions of the various organs of the government. The senatorial group did maintain certain aristocratic tendencies, but they did not believe in "absolutism." In many cases they were practical and experienced men who sincerely believed in the justness of their stand. 11

But there was a clear difference in the position of the senatorial group and that of the Tsar's young friends. The former did not seek a comprehensive administrative reform. They hoped that the Senate would be established as the highest organ of the government and would itself conduct a program to remove administrative deficiencies. The members of the Unofficial Committee, to the contrary, sought to reform the entire "disorganized" governmental structure. They wanted a comprehensive reform, an application of the principles of legality of western European

institutions to the historical forms of Russian government.  

The Tsar was impatient and anxious to discuss the topic of the Senate in the Unofficial Committee. As early as the session of June 24, 1801, Alexander expressed a fear that his order of June 5, 1801, might not lead to the desired results. He informed his friends that he thought that the reorganization of the Senate on sound principles would probably require personal action on his part. Thus, he sought the assistance of the members of the Committee. They in turn indicated that it would be quite easy for His Majesty discreetly to inform Count Zavadovskii of his views. Zavadovskii then could incorporate Alexander's opinions into the Senate report. The Tsar also mentioned the need of naming only capable persons as Senators. He added that it was difficult to make such choices and that he had considered having the nobility of each province nominate two candidates from which the sovereign would make his choice. Novosiltsev, however, pointed out that such a method of selection might produce honest men who simply lacked the understanding required for such an important post. Alexander accepted Novosiltsev's view and the discussion was terminated.  

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12 Shcheglov, I, 158-59.

13 Stroganov, II, 30-32, "Résultat d'une Conférence avec l'Empereur le 24 Juin 1801."
On August 5, 1801, the Committee began a discussion of the report which the senators presented concerning the rights and duties of the Senate. Novosiltsev, having prepared a paper on the subject, was the first to speak. He reviewed the principles which guided the Committee members in the formulation of their opinion. Then he noted the points in the Senate report which the Committee considered as most useful. He suggested that the Emperor combine the two in order to have an orderly body of information to guide him in his decision.14

The basis of the principles enunciated by Novosiltsev was that the Senate simply could not be considered as a "corps législatif." He maintained that from its inception the Senate had been granted only the authority to act with the consent of the sovereign. Indeed, the Senate was the monarchy's creation and as such the relationship was always meant to be that of "master to steward." Basically it was preposterous that the Senate should think of itself as a body with the authority to create laws for the nation; it had never merited the confidence of the nation and its members owed their nomination solely to the Emperor. Moreover, if Alexander granted too much power to the Senate he might bind his hands in such a manner that he would be unable to execute projects for the common good. Since

14 Stroganov, II, 44-48, "Conférence du 5 Août 1801."
several Senators might be incapable or ignorant, a dangerous hinderance to progress and a constant struggle between the sovereign and this inferior authority might develop. If Alexander were personally to enact much needed reforms for Russia, it was imperative that he do nothing which might restrict his determination. Thus Novosiltsev proposed that the Senate be granted only significant judicial powers, that it become something of a supreme court of justice.\textsuperscript{15}

His Majesty confirmed Novosiltsev's views, but wondered if some of the opinions of Derzhavin and Alexander Vorontsov were valid. Thus the discussion turned to the major question concerning the Senate, what was its administrative role to be? Derzhavin proposed that the organization of the Senate be coordinated with the institutions of the provinces. Catherine II had broken down the latter into three basic units dealing with executive, legislative and judiciary functions. Derzhavin would do likewise with the Senate, thereby creating a more efficient bureaucracy. The entire Imperial administration, with the Senate at its apex, would be divided into three sections (executive, legislative, judiciary). In the Senate, Derzhavin would add one additional section to serve as something of a "guardian" of the fundamental laws of the

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
In Derzhavin's proposal these units would be independent and separate from one another, with each answering directly to the will of the monarch. But since rulers are not at all times saintly, nor at all times completely just (i.e. they are sometimes tyrannical), it would be best to place at the head of all of the four sections a small but powerful Council of Senators. The members of this Council would consist of the chiefs of the four units, being designated as Minister of Instruction and Laws, Minister of Justice, Minister of Internal Affairs and the Procurator-General. Such a Council would have a consultative voice as well as limited powers of initiative in the legislative process.  

The members of the Unofficial Committee, however, convinced the Tsar that Derzhavin's ideas added nothing that could supplement Novosiltsev's observations. They persuaded him not to waste his time considering Derzhavin's proposal in detail. Stroganov, for example, maintained

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that "considering the written opinion which he has presented to the Senate, one can expect nothing from the warped ideas of Derzhavin." Novosiltsev was calling for the true "separation of powers," according to Stroganov, while Derzhavin thought of consolidating and expanding the powers of the senatorial clique, of creating an oligarchy. 18

Next the conversation turned to a memorandum on the Senate which A.R. Vorontsov had prepared. Vorontsov has been identified as a member of the "senatorial group" by many authors. 19 They link him to this group because he was the guiding spirit of the so-called "Project for a Charter to the Russian People." Actually, some of his contemporaries classified him quite differently. Derzhavin, for example, thought that Vorontsov was something of a Jacobin. He wrote the following: "all those who then surrounded him [Alexander] were obsessed with French and Polish constitutional ideas, that is Prince Czartoryski, Novosiltsev, Kochubei, Stroganov, and most of all and as their leader, Count [Alexander] Vorontsov." 20

Czartoryski, however, thought that Vorontsov's situation was unique; Vorontsov was the "conciliateur entre

18 Stroganov, I, 76; II, 45, "Conférence du 5 Août 1801."


Vorontsov sought to be something of a moderate influence on reforms which he knew would come from Alexander I, and not a reactionary member of the "old guard." He knew that change was coming, looked forward to it, and as a result won favor and respect for himself. Vorontsov usually sided with the Tsar's young friends and left the old functionaries to their own inclinations, which he realized would lead to their decline. In fact, he allowed himself to be so charmed by the members of the Unofficial Committee that he became an assiduous assistant in their work. This brought harsh criticism upon him from his brother Simon. 22

But, according to Czartoryski, it was on the question of the Senate that the spirit of the old Russian aristocracy of Alexander Vorontsov and the pure "Toryism" of Simon Vorontsov coalesced. The Senate represented to them the means, the basis, the source for a restriction of the caprices of the autocracy. In a letter dated August 24, 1801, Simon wrote to his brother, "J'avais toujours l'idée que c'est par le Sénat que devait s'opérer la réforme salutaire du pays; qu'il fallait lui donner plus

21Czartoryski, I, 300-01.
22Stroganov, I, 62.
consideration, plus d'autorité et moins de dépendance."23

Simon had the opportunity to present his views personally to the Tsar at a dinner party at the home of Paul Stroganov in St. Petersburg. After dinner the Emperor strolled in the garden and, upon meeting the Vorontsov brothers and some of the other guests, he initiated a stimulating discussion. Since Simon, who was noted for his eloquence, had just returned from England and had not been directly involved in the maneuverings of the capital for some time, His Majesty asked him to give his frank and candid views on the political situation. Simon attempted to prove to the Emperor that he ought to do something to reduce the harshness of the Russian governmental system. The Tsar, however, was very alert and offered clever objections which several times succeeded in flustering Vorontsov. Simon had spoken in very general terms and His Majesty pressed him to suggest something specific. Whereupon Vorontsov prescribed the elevation of the Senate as a panacea for Russia's ills. This institution, if given all the rights and dignity due it, would furnish all the means and guarantees necessary to bring about significant improvements in the administrative system. Each phrase he began and ended with "le Senat." Simon repeated it so

often that, according to Czartoryski who was in attendance, "nous supposâmes que l'Empereur même, pendant son sommeil, devait encore entendre des voix qui lui crient à l'oreille: Le Senat! Le Senat!"24

Earlier, Alexander Vorontsov had presented a line of reasoning similar to that of his brother. In a memorandum that he gave to the Tsar he argued that it was not possible for a huge state such as the Russian Empire to acquire tranquility and the personal security of its inhabitants under a sovereign with absolute power. With such a vast and diverse realm, the monarch needed the services of powerful institutions and had to delegate some of his authority. The Emperor should not attempt complete control and direction of the ship of state. Therefore, Vorontsov would have the sovereign establish a strong Senate and an effective Council of State. But, as far as the Tsar was concerned, Vorontsov had merely fallen into the general shortcoming of wishing to grant too much power to the Senate. Thus the Unofficial Committee rejected his proposal.25

Upon arriving in Moscow for Alexander's coronation, the members of the Committee on September 11, 1801, turned to the question of the "separation of powers."

24Czartoryski, I, 304-05. A.K.V., XXXII, 75.
Prince Platon Zubov had proposed the conversion of the Senate, composed of the upper nobility and high government officials, into a separate and independent legislative branch for the Russian Empire. The Senate would have complete legislative responsibility, while the Tsar would remain the head of the executive branch. The question of the division of powers was of concern to the Unofficial Committee and Zubov's proposals were recognized as a sincere effort to find a solution. As such, the Emperor thought that Zubov should be given praise. But at the same time Alexander found it necessary to inform him tactfully that such a complete separation of powers, the granting of full legislative authority to the Senate, was out of the question. Thus it was decided to inform Zubov that his general principle (the necessity of a division of powers) was valid, but that in his application there were certain harmful consequences (the granting of too much authority to the Senate).26

A temporary halt to the sessions of the Unofficial Committee took place as the Tsar and his young friends busied themselves with the festivities of the coronation. No meetings were held for nearly two months, from September 11, 1801, to November 4, 1801, and the discussion concerning the Senate did not continue until December 9, 1801. At that

time Stroganov presented a resumé of their conversations: the Tsar, desiring to elevate the Senate from the sad state it had fallen into, issued the decree of June 5, 1801. The Senators presented their report, but the Emperor was not pleased and considered further suggestions by Derzhavin, Vorontsov, Zubov and others. Finally, Alexander charged Stroganov with the responsibility of drawing up a synthesis of the views of the Senators and the members of the Unofficial Committee. 27

Stroganov then proceeded to his main task. He informed the Tsar of the principles which had guided the Committee in its work. First, the Committee sought to maintain flexibility in determining the role of the Senate. His Majesty's friends did not wish to restrict Alexander's maneuverability. Since it might prove necessary at a later date to make adjustments, the Emperor had to keep a free hand in his dealings. For this reason, it was recommended that for the time being the Tsar adhere as much as possible to existing forms. The second goal was to place the judicial functions of the Senate on a footing independent of the other judiciary organs and to establish it as something of a supreme court. With these two principles in mind, the Committee had eliminated all opinions which were disruptive and accepted those which might be compatible and useful.

27Stroganov, II, 79-84, "Séance du 9 Decembre 1801."
This had been done and Stroganov turned to the presentation of a synthesis of the views of the Senators and the Committee members. His observations were particularly significant since they proved to be the basis of the measure eventually enacted.28

The report was divided into chapters and articles in the manner of Zubov's proposal, but with a different distribution of the material. First there was a definition of the Senate and its rights and duties. A division of the Senate into departments and an enumeration of the powers of each department followed. All of this was done in a manner of distinctly separating the administrative functions of the Senate (which were placed in the hands of the first and second departments) from the judicial functions (which were assigned to the remaining four departments). In the last chapter, Stroganov presented a proposal for the establishment of a "registry of judicial affairs." Such a registry would contain the judicial affairs of state in the order in which they arrived in the Senate, would always be open to the Senators, and would be published each month along with all final decisions. Certain fine points, such as the requirement of all decisions within the departments to be by unanimous vote and the decisions of the plenum (the whole Senate) by a

28 Ibid.
simple majority, were further clarified. But Stroganov's report consisted mainly of general statements which obviously would require some amplification.29

At the Committee session of December 30, 1801, the Emperor read Stroganov's report, article by article, making observations as he proceeded. There was little substance to his comments and he approved of most of the report. He adopted Stroganov's suggestion of a strict separation of the administrative and judicial functions of the Senate. But he was opposed to allowing the Senate any authority over "affaires de la guerre" or "l'instruction publique." He thought that it would be best for these two functions to be administered under separate units and this principle was adopted. Concerning the chapter on procedure, all the articles were accepted without any significant discussion. Stroganov's proposal that Senators accused of abusing their privileges be judged only by the Senate (i.e. by their peers) was rejected by Alexander.30

In regard to the Senate's old privileges, Novosiltsev and Kochubei called for a simple and general acknowledgement (ordinance) on the part of the Tsar. According to them, the Senate decrees should contain only the new features and privileges to be adopted. But Alexander insisted on

29Ibid.
30Stroganov, II, 89-92, "Séance du 30 Decembre 1801."
incorporating a reaffirmation of all the old privileges into a grand ukase proclaiming the new features. He wished to include in this ukase citations of the original decrees that had established the rights and privileges of the Senate. Stroganov suggested a compromise wherein a single decree would be issued: the first part or preamble containing a general confirmation of the old rights of the Senate; the second part being the new division of the Senate, with a strict separation of functions, and the new "classification des affaires." The Emperor accepted this and appointed Novosiltsev to draw up a comprehensive report on the preamble. He commissioned Stroganov to continue his work, to expand his initial findings, and to present detailed observations on the new organization of the Senate.31

On January 3, 1802, Novosiltsev presented his draft which consisted of a general reaffirmation of the privileges granted to the Senate from the time of Peter the Great to Paul I. The Tsar was very satisfied and his only remarks concerned a few lines which, in his opinion, exaggerated too much in favor of the Senate.32 Three days later Stroganov made his report. He had sought the assistance of the head of the first department of the Senate, Dmitrii

31 Ibid.
32 Stroganov, II, 94–95, "Sénace du 3 Janvier 1802."
Resanov. Resanov, a very knowledgeable and experienced functionary, helped Stroganov formulate a clear and detailed division of the Senate which was adopted by Alexander I.  

In addition to his report, Stroganov presented some of Resanov's other suggestions. Resanov, for example, proposed the division of the Senate into two basic units. The first unit or several departments of the Senate would handle all the "most important" affairs of state. Such departments would consist only of Senators who were members of the Council of State. The second unit would deal with "less important" matters. Alexander rejected this proposal and insisted on "un système plus raisonné." He preferred Stroganov's suggestion of dividing the departments of the Senate into two clear and distinct parts consisting of those involved in administrative functions, and those concerned with judicial functions.

Resanov did present some suggestions which the Emperor welcomed. He proposed, for example, the establishment of three judiciary departments in order to bring about more efficient and prompt judicial rulings. For those areas of the Russian Empire judged by non-Russian laws he would create one department. For those governed by Russian laws

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33 Stroganov, II, 95-96, "Séance du 6 Janvier 1802."
34 Ibid.
he would form two separate (based on geographical location) departments. Alexander accepted these principles and decided to base the new classification of the Senate's judicial functions on them.35

Stroganov's report, supplemented by the work of Novosiltsev and Resanov, formed the basis of the ukase of September 8, 1802, on "The Senate Administering the Empire." The position of the reorganized Senate was decreed in the following terms: (1) the Senate was the highest administrative and judicial organ of the Empire; (2) the powers of the Senate were restricted only by the sovereign; (3) the sovereign himself was the chairman of the Senate; (4) the Senate had the right of issuing decrees of its own based on those of the sovereign and, when necessary, of explaining and expanding the sovereign's decrees (subject to his approval); (5) the Senate was allowed to present objections to Imperial decrees which were at variance with existing laws, unclear, or impossible to execute (viz. this was something of a "droit de remontrance"); (6) the members of the Committee of Ministers were to submit annual reports to the Senate and the Senate was to report any abuses on the part of that body to the sovereign; (7) all disputes within the Senate were to be settled by the sovereign himself; (8) the departments of the Senate were to try on final appeal the criminal and

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35 Ibid.
civil cases of the Empire; (9) Senators accused of a crime were to be judged by the general assembly of the Senate (subject to the will of the sovereign); and (10) the provincial governors and officials were to be under the direct supervision of the Senate. 36

At first reading it seems that the new organization of the Senate represented a significant triumph for the members of the so-called "senatorial group." A strong Senate, the highest administrative and judicial institution with the right of remonstrance and other important privileges had been proclaimed. But one must view this proclamation in context with the other steps taken by Alexander I, in particular the concurrent decree which set up a Committee of Ministers. Moreover, when the Senate had the occasion to exercise its new privilege of the "droit de remonstrance," the results were especially illuminating as well as significant. 37

Most of the members of the Russian nobility served in the armed forces at one time or another, though they were not obliged to do so and could retire when they saw fit. This prerogative had been granted to the nobility with the

36 P.S.Z., no. 20,405. Czartoryski, I, 306-07. Bogdanovich, I, 93-94. Kornilov, I, 91-93. For the comments of various dignitaries and officials relative to the decree see e.g. Arkhiv Gosudarstvennago Soveta, St. Petersburg, III, Part 1, 15-50; hereafter referred to as Arkhiv G.S.

37 P.S.Z., no. 20,405.
Charter of 1785. Alexander I, however, attempted to restrict this privilege only to the nobles who were commissioned officers. Responding to a request of the Minister of War, the Emperor decreed that all nobles below the rank of officer were obliged to serve twelve years. One of the Senators, Count Severin Potocki, found that this law infringed on the right of the nobility to serve or not to serve. Since it "contradicted" an existing law, Potocki suggested that the Senate exercise its "droit de remontrance" by protesting to the Tsar. His motion was presented to the general assembly of the Senate. Since Potocki was one of the confidants of the court and was warmly supported in his proposal by Count Alexander Stroganov, the Senators were convinced that they could vote in favor of his resolution. They did so and the following day the new Procurator-General, Derzhavin, informed the Emperor that the Senate unanimously opposed the new law. Alexander replied that the Senate should send him a deputation with a report on its position.38

Count Alexander Stroganov, along with two other Senators, took the representations of the Senate to the Emperor. Stroganov set out on his mission with great confidence and zeal, but to his surprise the deputation

was received very coldly. The Tsar stiffly accepted the written report and promised to consider its findings. In March, 1803, he sharply reprimanded the Senate. He issued a clarification (raziasmenie) which declared that the Senate had misinterpreted its privileges. The Senators were informed that the "droit de remontrance" was extended only to decrees which had previously been published and not to new ones issued by the government.\(^{39}\) This was only the first expression of the Tsar's dissatisfaction with the Senate. Eventually the Senate was totally emasculated and declined into impotence. In the words of Czartoryski,

> Those foreigners who think that the Senate of St. Petersburg can ever be of any importance for the destinies of Russia are entirely mistaken... The Russian Senate in its present form is less able than any political body in the world to make itself respected or to act on its own initiative. It can neither give an impulse nor even receive one, it is a marionette which one can move about as one pleases, but which has no motive power of its own. Those who are tired of official life and wish to retire and live quietly in idleness are the sort of people who seek the appointment of Senators. The Senate thus becomes a receptacle for the indolent and the superannuated.\(^{40}\)


\(^{40}\) Czartoryski, I, 108; this passage is cited in Walsh, II, 286.
CHAPTER V

THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
AND THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

The central problem of the reorganization of the administrative structure in Russia was the question of the definition of the authority of the various government organs. The attempt to establish the rights and duties of the Senate was one aspect of this problem. The need for an effective executive organ to direct the over-all executive functions of state was another. As might be expected, discussions relative to this aspect were conducted simultaneously with those concerning the role of the Senate. Alexander's first step was the dissolution of the old Imperial Council, which had come into being under Catherine II and had degenerated into a central censorship committee under Paul I.¹

The law of March 30, 1801, drawn up by Dmitrii Troshchinskii, established a Permanent Council (Nepremennyi Sovet) to consider state affairs and to act as an advisory body to the Tsar.² The Council was given instructions

²P.S.Z., no. 19,806.
concerning its responsibility in which it was emphasized that the Permanent Council was to be strictly an advisory body.\(^3\) In the words of the instructions to the Nepremennyi Soviet,

The Council is established near Us and it has, therefore, no outside action; it does not enter into any decisions on executive matters, and has no other power in the state other than the power of deliberation (soobrazhenie). From this it follows that the Council can issue no orders in its own name.\(^4\)

The Council was divided into four sections: foreign and commercial affairs, military and naval affairs, civil and religious affairs, and financial affairs. Troshchinskii was named Privy Councilor and moderator of the new Permanent Council. Others named to the Council included the Procurator-General of the Senate, Count Bekleshov; the military governor of St. Petersburg, Count P. Palen; the highest ranking military officer in the country, General Lamb; the State Treasurer, Baron Vasil'ev; the Minister of Commerce, Count Gagarin; and six others. Later the Tsar named additional members. Alexander Vorontsov and Count Zavadovskii, for example, were added to the Council in


\(^4\)Raeff, Speransky, 157-58. See also N.M. Korkunov, Russkoe gosudarstvennoe pravo, (2 vols., St. Petersburg, 1909), II, 63-64.
April, 1801.  

Soon after its establishment the Permanent Council degenerated into an organ of the judiciary and never really directed or unified the broad policies of the government. Several persons, however, prevailed upon the Emperor to allow the Council to deal with all important state affairs in the manner of the Cabinets of other countries. Simon Vorontsov, in writing often from London, cited the example of England where all measures of any significance were always the result of the resolution of all the Cabinet, and not merely the result of one minister working in collaboration with the monarch. Vorontsov maintained that this was a wise procedure to follow since it averted all chance for a single misinformed minister to convince the sovereign to take a false step. He, therefore, suggested that such a system be adopted in Russia with regard to the Permanent Council.  

Vorontsov's proposal was discussed by the Unofficial Committee on November 18, 1801. Novosiltsev had prepared

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a thorough memorandum on the subject and presented it at this meeting. First he examined the question in general, and then he described the principles which one could draw from this practice of discussing the important affairs of state in a Cabinet. Among the advantages he found was the fact that decisions were based on the collective wisdom of the sovereign and several of his counselors. Among the disadvantages was the lack of secrecy. This defect was particularly critical if the Cabinet procedure were applied in the Permanent Council. Those who made up the Council held differing political principles, were partial and prejudiced, and did not get along with one another. In short, they were "le centre chacun d'un système séparé."  

Novosiltsev pointed out that the English cabinet, which Vorontsov had praised, was one composed of men of the same political beliefs in which the holding of views in contrast to the "maximes générales" was a reason for exclusion or resignation. The wisdom and advantage of an advisory body organized in such a manner was obvious. But this was not the situation with the Permanent Council in Russia. The disjointed nature of that body made it imprudent to consult with it on really important matters. One result of Novosiltsev's presentation was the decision to search for a means of dealing with the Council in such a way as to make use of its advantages (i.e. obtaining __[7Stroganov, II, 65-66, "Conférence du 18 Novembre 1801."]__
the advice of its capable members) while avoiding its disadvantages (i.e. the petty squabbles and disunity). 8

In their initial discussion, the members of the Unofficial Committee found no real solution for the problem of the operation of the Permanent Council. They did suggest that His Majesty use Troshchinskii and Bekleshov as middle-men in his dealings with the Council. Thus he would give the illusion of working directly through and with the advice of the Council, without becoming embroiled in its intrigues. As for very important matters, they recommended that the Tsar rely on various ad hoc secret committees of two or three knowledgeable and qualified men. Alexander approved of this suggestion, but called upon the members of the Committee to draw up a more precise distribution of affairs — those which he would consult the Council on, and those which he would reserve for his own consideration. He wished to have something of a "guide" for his future use so that he might be able to act with precision and consistency, and avoid embarrassments. To assist the members of the Committee in their task, the sovereign promised to present to them a rough listing of his occupations. 9

A special session of the Unofficial Committee concerning the Tsar's dealings with the Council was held on

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
November 21, 1801. Since Alexander's listing of his daily work schedule was incomplete, the results of the discussion were incomplete. The Committee members, however, did recommend that the Council hold its meetings regularly (once a week). They also suggested that all general state affairs (such as the reports of the Senate, the Holy Synod, etc.), the course of foreign and commercial affairs, and the general administration of the Empire be presented to the Council for its consideration. For particularly important or sensitive matters in any field, they prevailed upon the Tsar to name select commissions and not to consult the Council. In addition, Kochubei reported on a project that Laharpe had drawn up relative to the subject. His principle suggestion was that Alexander name a vice-chairman of the Council (viz. the sovereign was the chairman) who would act in the Emperor's absence to maintain order, prevent casual conversations, pose questions and insure that proper procedure was followed.  

The Emperor approved of the proposals of Laharpe and the Unofficial Committee. He decided to have the Council meet once a week and to appoint a vice-chairman.

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10Ibid., II, 68-71, "Conférence du 21 Novembre 1801."

The disorderly conduct of the Council was pointed out in Stroganov, II, 69, in the following terms: "Au Conseil,ainsi que dans tous nos endroits publics, il ne règne aucun ordre dans les discussions. Chacun parle quand il veut, interrompt celui qui parlait avant; ordinairement, on parle tous à la fois, & c'est comme une conversation générale & comme une discussion."
But, like his young friends, he refused to accept the Council as a genuine consultative body. He did not, for example, consult the Council on the important matter of the draft proposals for serf reforms.\footnote{Ibid., II, 75-79, "Séance du 2 Décembre 1801."} Alexander and his friends recognized the value and need of a truly consultative body to assist the sovereign in his governing tasks, an organ with a real voice in affairs that would actually direct the executive functions of the state. To them the disjointed Nepremennyi Sovet certainly was not such an institution. A prime necessity or requisite of a "consultative" Council was unity, something that Stroganov especially emphasized.\footnote{Ibid., II, 70, "Conférence du 21 Novembre 1801."} The Permanent Council did not fill this need and the question remained open.

The discussion concerning the establishment of a Committee of Ministers was, in many respects, an attempt to solve this problem.

On February 10, 1802, Czartoryski presented a proposal for the dissolution of the remaining collective governing bodies of the administration, the Collegia, and the creation of a Committee of Ministers. He maintained that the

\begin{itemize}
  \item Stroganov stated, "Moi, de mon côté, j'ar observé à Sa Majesté que je croyais qu'un ministère uni était ce qui pourrait arriver de plus heureux chez nous, parce que, tous ayant un unité de vues & cherchant à atteindre le même but, chacun dans sa partie, le tout ensemble ne pouvait que prospérer." 
\end{itemize}
executive branch should be divided into separate ministries, each with an exactly defined sphere of authority. In charge of each ministry would be one single individual, and not a collegium. In his opinion, such a measure would help bring personal responsibility to the administration. The general object of this reform, according to Czartoryski, was to establish a system somewhat similar to those adopted in most other European States by separating the departments, defining their limits, assembling in each department matters of the same kind, centralizing their management and thereby augmenting the responsibility of the principal functionaries of State. It was hoped among other things that this would be an efficacious means of checking the numberless abuses and frauds which are the curse of Russia.  

The Emperor was pleased with Czartoryski's proposal and ordered Kochubei to prepare a draft ukase on the subject. Kochubei presented his report on March 24, 1802, and it was by and large the measure adopted. Stroganov, however, made a special effort to see to it that the most important affairs of state would be examined by all the ministers together. At the head of the executive branch, he would establish a truly consultative body, a committee composed of the individual ministers which would work in close harmony with the sovereign. In fact, the ukase of September 8, 1802, which was published concurrently with

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the new decree on the Senate, provided for a Committee of Ministers.\textsuperscript{14}

Eight ministries were designated under the new law and those appointed included Alexander Vorontsov, Chancellor of the Empire and Minister of Foreign Affairs (with Czartoryski as an assistant); General Viazmitinov, Minister of War; Admiral Mordvinov, Minister of the Navy; Gabriel Derzhavin, Procurator-General of the Senate and Minister of Justice; Count Kochubei, Minister of the Interior (with Paul Stroganov as an assistant); Baron Vasil'ev, Minister of Finances (with Count Goriev, the Master of the Court, as an assistant); Count N. Rumiantsev, Minister of Commerce; Count Zavadovskii, Minister of Public Education (with M. Muraviev as an assistant). The Privy Councilor Count Golubtsov was named Treasurer of the Empire and it was mentioned in the ukase that the Tsar later would appoint an assistant to the Minister of Justice. Eventually Novosiltsev and then Prince P. Lopukhin filled this vacancy.\textsuperscript{15}

Opposition to the creation of the ministries was of course expressed. Many old functionaries attached to the previous system loudly protested against the new institutions.


They complained about the replacement of the colleges and the failure to establish an all-powerful Senate. Derzhavin, according to Kochubei, was "l'opposition en personne de tout système, de tout méthode, et je crois que ce département [Justice] est le moins béni de tous." Furthermore, Kochubei stated that the Minister of Justice, who in his opinion was a "vénérable fou," was involved in all sorts of petty intrigues. In fact, Derzhavin was so stubborn that he resigned in less than a year and was replaced by Prince P. Lopukhin.  

In his political writings Karamzin rejected the bureaucratization of the administration implicit in the creation of the ministries. He felt that the Ministers stood as a barrier between the sovereign and his people, and deprived the Senate of some of its rightful powers. He was in favor of a strong Senate with supreme administrative authority over all governmental bodies, including the ministries or colleges. 

A parallel to Karamzin's position can be found in a report presented by Dmitrii Troshchinskii to Alexander I. In 1811, Troshchinskii developed an elaborate case against the proposal to replace all colleges with ministries.


17 Filippov, "Istoricheskii," 69. Pipes, Karamzin, 78.
Since Russia was an autocratic state, he maintained that safeguards for the rights of the citizens had to be built into the administrative structure. In his opinion, the collegiate principle served this function. In the colleges all decisions were subjected to group criticism and approval. But in the ministries, all authority was in the hands of a single individual who might not be concerned about the welfare of the citizens. 18

Admiral Mordvinov, in a memorandum which he submitted to Nicholas I in 1827, reached the same conclusion drawn by TROshchinskii. He maintained that the establishment of bureaucratic methods in place of the traditional collegiate procedures resulted in the removal of the most effective restraints on the executive branch of the government. 19

But perhaps the most eloquent presentation of the argument in favor of the retention of the collegiate principle, in order to reduce voluntary or involuntary abuses, was contained in a letter written by Simon Vorontsov to Count F. Rostopchin. Vorontsov wrote,

18 "Zapiska Dmitriia P. Troschchinskogo ob uchrezhdenii ministerstv," Sbornik russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva, III, (St. Petersburg, 1868), 1-152. See also Pipes, Karamzin, 77-78; Filippov, "Istoricheskii," 63-65; Dovnar-Zapolskii, "Zarozhdenie," 103-05.

19 "Mnenie Admirala Mordvinova o kollegial'nom i ministerskom upravlenii v Rossii," Chteniia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnosti rossisskih, III, (Moscow, 1864), part 5, 154-60. See also Pipes, Karamzin, 78; Arkhiv grafov Mordvinov, III, 70.
Russia has resisted all of continental Europe which Bonaparte has fashioned after himself, but she will not be able to resist internal disorder. There is only the Senate and the [collegiate] rule of the colleges established by Peter the Great to remedy the weakness that is caused, and always will be caused, by the Sovereign working directly with individual ministers who often mislead him, voluntarily [or involuntarily]...

No minister criticizes the shortcomings of his colleagues. It is as if they applied Molière's two medicines: "you scratch my back, and I will scratch yours" ["passez-moi la rhubarbe, je vous passerai le sênê"].

On the other hand, the main advantage of the ministerial system over the collegiate one was apparent to many other Russians. The ministries provided the sovereign with more direct contact with the intermediate organs of government. Responsible ministers were more effective in that they could at the same time serve as trusted advisers of the Emperor as well as the heads of executive departments. The benefits of this system were obvious. Previously, for example, the monarch issued orders to one of the colleges and then waited while his instructions slowly filtered down through the cumbersome collegiate machinery. Frequently important matters were bogged down, since all actions had to be administered "collectively." Under the ministerial system the monarch was able to have his orders fulfilled simply by informing the appropriate minister. Moreover, the sovereign previously had no effective way

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20Filippov, "Istoricheskii," 65.
of calling officials to account or checking the abuses (voluntary or otherwise) of the administrative bodies. It involved judging a whole college since all decisions were taken "collectively." It was far simpler to place the responsibility for a given governmental function into the hands of a single person. Thus the Emperor could hold his ministers personally responsible for any shortcomings.\footnote{Pipes, Karamzin, 227. Filippov, "Istoricheskii," 66. N.M. Korkunov, \textit{Russkoe gosudarstvennoe pravo}, II, 348-49.}

Some historians have viewed the establishment of the ministries as the major accomplishment of the Unofficial Committee. It was significant because it played a vital role in the centralization of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Russian monarchy.\footnote{Kornilov, I, 91. Nechkina, 29.} Others, on the other hand, have correctly pointed out the deficiencies of the act: the fact that the Committee of Ministers had no clearly defined rights or authority; the lack of unity among the members of the Committee of Ministers (viz. life-long enemies were appointed to the Committee); and the inadequate rules of procedure which the ministers were forced to follow.

Furthermore, some see sinister motives in the Tsar's decision. It is charged that Alexander "purposefully appointed individuals with conflicting outlooks, so as to keep the balance of power in his own hands." The Emperor did not encourage ministerial solidarity, did not wish to create a genuine consultatory body. In short, the
ministers were the "creatures" of the autocrat, the executive tools of the crown. 23

The validity of this interpretation is, of course, open to question. It is often maintained, for example, that the concurrent appointment of the Tsar's "liberal" friends and the leading members of the "senatorial group" to the Committee of Ministers suggests a compromise on his part, an acceptance of some of the views of both. Moreover, the forces which motivate individual behavior are indeed difficult, if not impossible, to define. This is especially true in regard to Alexander I since one has the additional task of separating the facts from the myths that have arisen concerning his personality.

In any case, one can view with some certainty the decision to set up the ministries as another step in the general movement during the last half of the eighteenth century away from the collegiate principle. Those who argued in favor of retaining the Collegia were opposed to this trend. The members of the Unofficial Committee, on the other hand, sought to establish a modern bureaucratic administration based on western European models. In this respect, they desired a genuine "consultative" body, something of a unified "cabinet," for the executive branch of the government. But the Emperor would not grant

23Raeff, Speransky, 106-08.
their request.  

Moreover, though the Emperor had named "ministers," the nation still lacked "ministries." The new appointees merely took over the old collegiate apparatus which Paul I had revived. Thus the ministers were to receive their instructions directly from the Tsar and to forward them, together with their own observations, to their respective colleges. The colleges had to carry out the orders of the ministers and could not alter them. In addition, the ministers were required to submit annual reports of their activities to the Senate. This requirement was rather meaningless since the Senate had no real authority over the ministers, and it was dropped altogether in 1806. Furthermore, the manifesto stipulated that the Committee of Ministers would meet with the sovereign once a week (on Tuesdays).

According to one author, Alexander punctually attended these sessions from 1802 until 1805.

The retention of the old collegiate machinery along

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24 Filippov, "Istoricheskii," 41, 45. Tel'berg, "Komiteta," 43.


26 The Grand-duke Nicolas Mikhailovitch, Stroganov, I 70, makes his assertion on material found in S.M. Seredonin, Istoricheskii obzor deiatel'nosti Komiteta Ministrov, I, Komitet Ministrov v tsarstvovanie imperatora Aleksandra I, (St. Petersburg, 1902). Shilder, II, 94, reaches the same conclusion concerning Alexander's attendance. But Raeff, Speransky, 106-07, has pointed out that the Committee of Ministers met very irregularly.
with the establishment of the office of the "minister" was incongruous and gradually, beginning with the department of the Interior, modern bureaucratic ministries were developed. Kochubei, the Minister of the Interior, had to reorganize his department completely. He began by dividing his office into several different sections, each of which dealt with a specific function. He also sought the help of all the able and experienced men he could find. Stroganov, who was Kochubei's special assistant, approached his duties with a zeal that was typical of his behavior. Kochubei secured the assistance of Michael Speransky who was appointed as head of the second section which dealt with police functions and the general welfare of the realm.  

The influence of Speransky was soon felt in the organization of the Ministry of the Interior. This in part explains why that ministry was organized in a regular fashion before the others. Speransky was a firm believer in the principle of a clear and strict hierarchical division of governmental institutions. Kochubei accepted his advice and granted full authority to the various heads of the sections of the newly formed Ministry of the Interior. This structure, with a full bureaucratic chain of command, later served as a model for the other ministries.

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The spirit of reorganization and modernization, of bringing order to a chaotic administrative system, continued after the demise of the Unofficial Committee. In future years administrative weaknesses were identified and, in many cases, were eliminated. In 1810, for example, Speransky's proposal for the creation of a Council of State similar to the Napoleonic Conseil d'État was adopted by Alexander I. The members of the Unofficial Committee had recognized the need for a truly consultative body to assist the sovereign and Speransky's plan provided the solution. The Council of State, which was only part of a general constitutional scheme presented by Speransky, was created on January 1, 1810. The members of the Council were appointed by the Tsar who served as chairman. The main function of the Council of State was to examine all draft laws, statutes and regulations, after which they were to be approved by the Tsar. Moreover, the Emperor met regularly in "consultation" with his Council of State which was to be an advisory and preparatory body, an effective intermediate organ between His Majesty and the administrative apparatus of the government.

29Raeff, Speransky, 156.
30P.S.Z., no. 24,064.
31Kochubei was the only member of the Unofficial Committee to be named to the Council of State.
Speransky also completed the efforts of the Unofficial Committee to establish modern bureaucratic ministries in Russia. In 1810 and 1811, the Tsar promulgated a series of measures drawn up by Speransky which more clearly defined the responsibilities of the individual ministers, brought a more precise distribution of affairs among the ministries, and provided adequate rules of procedure. It is indeed significant that the central administrative structure, fashioned by the Unofficial Committee and perfected by Michael Speransky, by and large remained in effect throughout the nineteenth century. In assessing the legacy of the Unofficial Committee, this fact deserves careful consideration.

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\[^{32}\) P.S.Z., nos. 24,307; 24,686; 24,687; 24,688.\]
CHAPTER VI

THE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION

To the poet Derzhavin, Alexander's young friends were a wiley and selfish "band of Jacobins." He ridiculed all of them in his ode "Zhmurki" ("Blindman's-buff").¹ One Soviet historian, however, concludes that they were anything but Jacobins. They were, in his view, "cowardly liberals" who feared revolution and merely took up the question of reforms in order to avert a revolutionary upheaval.² But were they either "liberals" or "Jacobins," or did they represent some other creed? In short, can their political-constitutional position be defined?

In the historical literature of Russia, Alexander's friends are generally held up as representing the most liberal tendencies of the day. In fact, as indicated above, their contemporaries referred to them as a "band of Jacobins." But this representation is rejected by some commentators. To them, the actions and deeds of the committeemen during the period of administrative reforms did not reflect political or social liberalism. The

¹Grot, Sochineniia Derzhavina, III, 554-55.
²Nechkina, 26.
rejection of many of the parts of the Vorontsov Charter and Novosiltsev's stand concerning habeas corpus during the Committee sessions are taken as evidence that the Emperor's young advisers were not "forceful" liberals. The failure to enact a comprehensive serf reform is also cited, despite the fact that a majority of the Committee (namely Stroganov, Czartoryski and Kochubei) were in favor of such a measure. It is concluded that what the committeemen really sought was a more solid monarchy, an enlightened bureaucratic absolutism. They were certainly in favor of reform legislation, an improved administrative structure. But all of these measures were designed basically for the benefit of the monarchy, making its rule more efficient and modern so to speak. The question of liberal constitutional rule, it is pointed out, is far more than this.3

In fact, one author maintains that the term "constitution" conveyed to the members of the Committee merely the idea of an "orderly government and administration, free from the caprices and demoralizing tyranny of arbitrariness." Thus, to give Russia a "constitution" meant to bring clarity and order to the administration.4 One must admit that Alexander's friends supported the

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4Raeff, Speransky, 41-42.
growing trend of bureaucratization and centralization of government in Russia. The rejection of the collegiate principle and the birth of the ministries, which the Committee warmly welcomed, was a manifestation of this support. This has led to the conclusion that the Prussian model of an "absolute monarchy" which ruled with an "efficient bureaucracy" according to "clearly defined laws" is the most accurate expression of the aims and purposes of the Emperor's young advisers.5

This interpretation, while valid in many respects, is hard to accept in toto. For one thing, it tends to imply that the members of the Committee merely sought a mechanically perfect "absolute monarchy." In fact, they desired a "limited monarchy." In reviewing the activities and writings of Alexander's friends, it is abundantly clear that they did not view an orderly and efficient monarchy as the ultimate end, but rather as an immediate goal. It was necessary, in their view, to postpone the passage to outright constitutional rule and to prepare Russian society by means of certain preliminary steps taken by an "enlightened bureaucracy" ("prosveshchennoi biurokratiiia"). Bringing clarity and order to the administration, therefore, was a "preliminary step" and was not for them synonymous with a "constitution."6

5Ibid., 46.

6Dovnar-Zapolskii, "Epokha," 8-9, supports this conclusion. See also pp. 29-30, 36-37 above.
One must hasten to concede that it is indeed difficult to formulate the ultimate goal of the members of the Unofficial Committee. Quite simply, they did not state anywhere an exact and explicit definition of their political-constitutional beliefs. Moreover, many of their viewpoints appear rather vague and, in certain cases, contradictory. Several of these contradictions can of course be attributed to the dissimilarity of their views, to a natural diversity within the Committee. In any case, it is possible to discern somewhat the political beliefs of each of Alexander's advisers and to arrive at some tentative conclusions.

One author maintains that "it goes without saying" that Paul Stroganov's so-called "liberalism" was not an expression of profound faith. It was more an empty parroting of phrases he had heard in revolutionary France. Others, however, reject this undocumented assertion and accept the sincerity of Stroganov's opinions. Perhaps Czartoryski offers the most informed statement concerning Stroganov's commitment to the liberal principles he had learned to admire in Paris. Czartoryski stated that

7Bogdanovich, I, 82.

8Pypin, Obshchestvennoe, 73. A.V. Fateev, "Le problème de l'individu et de l'homme d'état dans la personnalité historique d'Alexandre I, empereur de toutes les Russies," Zapiski nauchno-issledovatel'skogo ob'edineniiia pri russkom svobodnom universitet Fraga, (Prague, 1937), V, 16, Korf, I, 93.
Stroganov's more radical views were "modifient entièrement," but he conserved "toujours dans son caractère et dans sa morale quelques traits de sa première éducation."\(^9\)

Of all the members of the Committee, Stroganov wrote what is probably the closest to a complete statement of his political-constitutional position. It is contained mainly in his paper entitled "De l'état de notre Constitution."\(^10\) Underlying his position was a sincere desire to establish a "constitutional" form of government. He did, however, place the complete reorganization of the administrative apparatus and the courts as a prerequisite to this step. Unfortunately, Stroganov was less than precise in his constitutional definition. In discussing the need for initiating guarantees of the rights of the citizens, for example, he failed to spell out exactly how these guarantees would be safeguarded. Apparently he was not prepared to make such a statement and assumed that the answer would be found by first studying all existing substantial constitutions, and then proceeding to the formulation of a document for Russia. Moreover, in his view, this task could be completed only by a strong and enlightened monarch, acting with the assistance of a small group of dedicated and united advisers. In such a

\(^9\)Czartoryski, I, 153.

\(^{10}\)Stroganov, II, 18-19, "De l'état de notre Constitution."
manner it would be possible to enact a constitution in Russia.\(^{11}\)

Stroganov's constitutional definition included the following remarks:

In order to determine anything with respect to this kind of question, it is necessary first of all to agree on the meaning of the word Constitution. In my opinion, a Constitution is the legal recognition of the rights of a nation and of the manner in which they may be exercised. Next, in order to insure the validity of these rights, a guarantee must exist that prevents any outside force from hindering the full effect of these rights. If such a guarantee does not exist, the aim for the granting of such rights, which is to see to it that no measure of the government can be enacted counter to the true national interest, this aim, I say, would not be attained, and then it could be said that there is no Constitution. A Constitution, therefore, may be divided into three parts: the establishment of rights, the manner of exercising these rights, and the guarantee... The happiness of men consists of the security of their property and the freedom to do anything which is not harmful to others. The manner of assuring the enjoyment [i.e. happiness] is contained in the regulations of the administration. The guardians of these regulations are the fundamental laws of the state, in other words, the Constitution. The Constitution is the law which designates the method to be observed in the enactment of administrative regulations which, of necessity, must in a fixed manner be subjected to modifications, interpretations, etc. These interpretations must be developed in such a manner as to deter all arbitrariness and, as a result, lessen the harm which can arise from the difference in

Novosiltsev's so-called liberalism is questioned far more than any of the other members of the Unofficial Committee. His stand on several key issues is perhaps the reason for this. His initial rejection of habeas corpus and his opposition to a comprehensive serf reform are often cited. Even Czartoryski was "astonished" to find that it was Novosiltsev who was "the agent of the Emperor's move against the Senate" during the Potocki affair. It is also pointed out that Novosiltsev was little concerned with "liberal" principles when it came to the serious matter of censorship. In 1804 he presented a censorship project to the Glavnoe Uchilishchne Pravlenie (Chief School Board) which was similar to the harshest one in practice in Europe, the Danish one. Fortunately his plan was never enacted. All of these factors have led many to conclude that Novosiltsev never was a true "liberal," never was really in favor of fundamental change, and always was an absolutist and supporter of centralization.13

On the other hand, Novosiltsev's Constitutional Charter of 1818-1820 is often mentioned as the true

12 Stroganov, II, 18-19, "De l'état de notre Constitution." See also pp. 27-30 above.

manifestation of his political-constitutional philosophy. This charter was to a large degree based on various constitutional proposals made by Michael Speransky during 1809-1812. Unlike Speransky's plan, however, Novosiltsev's charter embodied the federal principle. It granted virtual autonomy to several viceregencies (e.g., Poland, Finland) of the Russian Empire, each of which consisted of several provinces.

The document provided for a hereditary monarchy as the sole source of authority in the Empire. The Emperor was the head of the executive branch and was to be assisted in this function by an advisory body, the Committee of Ministers. The sovereign was to be assisted in his legislative functions by a State Duma which would help him in the issuance of "general laws" (as opposed, for example, to "decrees" which were strictly an expression of the Tsar's will). The Duma was to be composed of the Emperor and two chambers: the first being the Upper Chamber or Senate, consisting of Imperial Senators appointed by the sovereign; the second being the Lower Chamber, consisting of representatives nominated by the officials of each viceregency and selected by the Tsar. The State Duma was to meet at least once every five years for a duration of thirty days and hold its discussions publicly (except in the case of "executive sessions"). A project
adopted by both chambers was to be submitted to the monarch for confirmation. ¹⁴

In addition to the State Duma, each Viceregency was to have its own Duma which would meet every three years. Novosiltsev's charter also included certain civil rights: the right of a trial for all those accused, the right of habeas corpus, and the guarantee of the security of property. Furthermore, though the Orthodox Greek-Russian faith was proclaimed as the official faith of the Empire, tolerance was extended to all other "Christian" denominations. Membership in other Christian churches did not entail the loss of any civil or political rights. Jews, however, were still subjected to oppression. ¹⁵

As the above discussion indicates, Novosiltsev and Stroganov apparently were, for the most part, "constitutional monarchists." Likewise, Adam Czartoryski was in favor of a constitutional monarchy for the Russian Empire. Like his two friends, he did not press for a "republic" for Russia. Unlike them, his attitude in regard to constitutionalism was tempered by certain Polish


circumstances. He had a personal motive for seeking a strong constitutional monarchy in Russia and not a more "liberal" form of government. He recognized that only a strong Russian monarch would have enough power and control to free Poland. Significantly, Alexander had professed such a desire to Czartoryski during their first intimate talks.\textsuperscript{16}

Their conversations also somewhat revealed Czartoryski's political-constitutional beliefs. In his memoirs, Czartoryski stated,

\begin{quote}
His opinions were those of a student of 1789 who wishes to see republics everywhere and considers this form of government as the only one which could conform to the desires and rights of mankind. Although all of this excited me, although I had been born and brought up in a republic where the principles of the French Revolution had been greeted with ardor, nevertheless it was I who was more reserved, who tried to moderate the extreme opinions of the Grand Duke. He held, among other things, that hereditary monarchy was an unjust and absurd institution, that supreme authority had to be determined not by the accident of birth, but by the votes of the nation, which would select the most capable of rulers. I pointed out to him that there were arguments against this position; the difficulty and the hazards of an election, what Poland had suffered from it, and how Russia was very little suited or prepared for it. I added that, for the present time at least, Russia would gain nothing by this change, since she would lose the man who by his benevolent and sincere intentions was most worthy of acceding
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16}Czartoryski, I, 96-99, 105.
to the throne. We had incessant discussions on this point.\textsuperscript{17}

Count Kochubei was described by one of his friends as being "un homme commode."\textsuperscript{18} Czartoryski likewise suggested that Kochubei possessed an extreme ease at adapting himself to "opinions en vogue." In the Unofficial Committee, he displayed "manifestations libérales," but always with a "sorte de réticence." He could not "se concilier avec ses propres opinions."\textsuperscript{19} This may be true, but Kochubei did manifest an enlightened view towards serfdom, as did Stroganov and Czartoryski. His writings concerning foreign affairs and the domestic situation offer some idea of his political-constitutional philosophy.\textsuperscript{20}

Basically, Kochubei asserted, in keeping with the Emperor's views, that His Majesty should attempt to maintain friendly relations with all of the powers of Europe. Blissful neutrality was the prerequisite for prosperity in Russia. A long peace and the incessant care of a wise government would result in progress. Furthermore, one can infer from Kochubei's writings that he recognized, in the tradition of his uncle Prince Alexander Bezborodko,

\textsuperscript{17}Czartoryski, I, 103.
\textsuperscript{18}A.K.V., XXX, 264.
\textsuperscript{19}Czartoryski, I, 268-69.
\textsuperscript{20}See e.g. A.K.V., XVIII, 266, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 3 February 1801.
the need for a strong (and enlightened) executive to rule over the vast and diverse Russian Empire.21

Kochubei's correspondence with Simon Vorontsov was particularly revealing. Early in 1803 Vorontsov had criticized Kochubei for his views on the role of the Senate and the Committee of Ministers. Kochubei responded that he was opposed to the Senate having the right of "surveillance" over the Ministers because many of the Senators, such as Derzhavin, were involved in petty intrigues and quarrels. If granted too much authority, the Senate could bog down the entire administrative machinery. Kochubei did not reject the theory of ministerial responsibility to a parliament as such, but based his stand on the deplorable situation in Russia (e.g. the Senate and all its ills). Furthermore, he recognized the shortcomings of the Committee of Ministers (that it "could perhaps be much better ruled"). But he maintained that "the spirit of order and efficiency was being introduced little by little." This struck him as a favorable development.22

Kochubei's concern for an efficient administration, as an immediate goal, was amply demonstrated in a memorandum which he presented to Alexander I in 1806. Kochubei

21Ibid. See also Czartoryski, I, 292-93.

cited the lack of unity of purpose and the lack of understanding among the ministers as grave weaknesses. He called for a more precise definition of goals, a clarification of positions, and basic unity among the members of the Committee of Ministers. Frank discussions within the Committee of Ministers should be encouraged, but ministers should not promote in public or in the Senate positions which ran counter to the established policies of the government. Kochubei sought three main things: unity and swiftness of action, responsibility of organs to the central government, and a general conformity among the members of the executive branch. Such cohesion, in his opinion, was necessary for the development of an efficient (and enlightened) administration.\(^2^3\)

In general, it might be said that none of the members of the Unofficial Committee were profound constitutional theorists. They were primarily concerned with immediate tasks and objectives, the most essential being the establishment of a wise and efficient administration. As such they were realists rather than young idealistic liberals as they so often have been portrayed. While all of them admired and respected western European institutions, they were intelligent enough to realize that such advanced forms could not be incorporated wholesale.

\(^{23}\text{A.K.V., X, 100. Dovnar-Zapolskii, "Zarozhdienie," 98.}\)
and over-night into Russia. Thus they quite logically opted for a step by step process of reform leading eventually to the ultimate goal, the establishment of constitutional rule.

It is clear that the members of the Unofficial Committee recognized as their first political objective the establishment of government based on law and order. The establishment of a constitutional monarchy was viewed as the final goal. Thus the Emperor's young advisers were occupied with the problems of formulating an efficient and wise administration as a preliminary to eventual "constitutional" rule. As such, they did not seem to be concerned with the advanced liberal tenets of the day such as popular sovereignty, no taxation without representation, the subordination of the executive to the electorate. Moreover, they seemed to be more influenced by British than American or French developments. In Britain, for example, the government was the antecedent of a constitutional order which had evolved over a period of years. In the United States and France, on the other hand, the constitution was the antecedent of the government; indeed it created the new government. 24

The American and French experience represented a new definition of a "constitution." It had advanced the concept

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of the conscious formulation by a people of its fundamental law. 25 The older traditional view applied more to substantive principles which had been deduced from the evolution of a nation's actual institutions, a national inheritance. 26 The American and French models probably conform more closely to constitutional developments since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since that time, most subsequent constitutions have been written documents defining and creating governments. 27 But one hastens to point out that these developments represent only the latest phase in the history of constitutional thought.

The members of the Unofficial Committee failed to adhere to these advanced principles, to the most recent phase of constitutional development. But one should resist the temptation to conclude immediately that they were somehow "anti-constitutional" or "anti-liberal." Rather, one should determine whether Alexander's friends opposed

25Thomas Paine, for example, stated in his Rights of Man, "A constitution is not the act of a government, but of a people constituting a government...A constitution is a thing antecedent to a government; and a government is only the creature of a constitution." McIlwain, 4-5.

26In this respect, Lord Bolingbroke offered the following remarks in 1733: "By constitutions we mean, whenever we speak with propriety and exactness, that assemblage of laws, institutions and customs derived from certain fixed objects of public good, that compose the general system." McIlwain, 4-5.

27One exception which quickly comes to mind is the Soviet Union where the government was the antecedent of the constitution.
the most essential quality of constitutionalism that holds true for all its phases, namely the call for legal limitations on government (which is the antithesis of despotic and arbitrary rule). The basic premise of constitutional thought always has been rule by law instead of personal will.28

This is precisely what the members of the Unofficial Committee sought. Their idea was to make the governor responsible to the law. This was the logical first step. On the other hand, they had not proceeded to the point of making the governor responsible to the governed. Thus they cannot be classified as advanced liberals, Jacobins or Republicans. Nor were they reactionary monarchists or self-seeking oligarchists. This author has come to the conclusion that a "constitutional monarchy" best symbolizes their highest aspirations. They definitely were gradualists and their approach was rather Burkean in that they sought the creation of a limited, constitutional order based on traditional forms and institutions. They rejected the French example of sudden and complete change.29

28McIlwain, 16-17, 23-24. F.M. Watkins, The Political Tradition of the West, (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), Links constitutionalism with the emphasis on law in government and maintains that it is the most distinctive feature of Western political thought.

29Raeff, who is very suspicious of the "liberalism" of the members of the Committee, has concluded in his latest work that "In general, we may infer that their final aim was not unlike the aspiration expressed in the Vorontsov Charter to the Russian People. The main difference was one of method." Plans, 85-86.
The members of the Unofficial Committee vigorously prevailed upon Alexander I to enact significant political and social reforms. The establishment of a true constitutional order was their ultimate goal. Unfortunately, however, His Majesty balked at many of their proposals and soon shifted his attention to foreign affairs.

The sessions of the Committee were interrupted in May, 1802, when Alexander left Russia for a meeting with the King of Prussia. The Emperor did not summon the Committee upon his return and it did not assemble again until October 26, 1803. Three more rather unimportant sessions were held, and the Committee came to an end with the meeting of November 9, 1803.30

Alexander's friends were aware that the end was on its way. According to Czartoryski, the Emperor had special relations with certain individuals whose views he often introduced at the sessions of the Committee. His Majesty liked to defend their opinions against the objections of his young advisers. Furthermore, he enjoyed having these contacts without the knowledge of the members of the Committee who already had "begun to displease him."31

Count Kochubei was more precise in assessing his own relationship with the Emperor. Despite the fact that

30 Stroganov, II, 145.
31 Czartoryski, I, 319.
he had been appointed the Minister of the Interior, Kochubei informed his friend Simon Vorontsov, "I have no special influence and the Emperor treats me more poorly than well. Before your departure I sensed that I displeased him, and that was not too surprising." This letter is significant because it was written on January 20, 1803, nearly nine months before the final session of the Unofficial Committee. It confirms the decline of importance of the Committee and, as such, explains why no meetings were held from May, 1802, till October, 1803.

Although Alexander I was unwilling or unprepared during the era of the Unofficial Committee to enact a constitution, he continued throughout his reign to consider the possibility of constitutional rule for Russia. He corresponded with Thomas Jefferson, for example, in an effort to come to an understanding of the system in practice in the United States. Alexander sanctioned constitutional rule for the Grand Duchy of Finland and directed Michael Speransky to formulate a draft constitution for the rest of the Empire in 1809. In 1815 the Tsar granted a constitution to his Polish subjects, and

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he brought Novosiltsev to St. Petersburg in 1818 to draw up a constitution for the entire Empire.

Alexander's continued interest in constitutional projects stemmed from his youthful thoughts of reform and from his consultations with his young friends, the Unofficial Committee. Significantly, at no time did he think in terms of a "republic" for Russia. His aspiration, like that of Stroganov, Novosiltsev, Czartoryski and Kochubei, was for an enlightened and efficient monarchy based on the principle of rule by law, for a "constitutional monarchy."  

34Dovnar-Zapolskii, "Zarozhdenie," 56, confirms this conclusion.
APPRAISAL AND CONCLUSION

The members of the Unofficial Committee, according to Czartoryski, were regarded for some time as models of close and unshakeable friendship. This relationship, as noted earlier, commenced at the time of the coronation of Paul I. With the accession of Alexander and the sessions of the Committee, the young men were drawn more closely together. The Emperor in jest called them his "Committee of Public Safety." There was, however, a great deal of diversity among the Committee members. Alexander's young advisers were different in many respects and any assessment of them as a group must include an examination of these differences.

In the words of Czartoryski, "Stroganov was the most ardent, Novosiltsev the most prudent, Kochubei the most time-serving, and I the most disinterested, always seeking to reduce undue impatience."¹ In fact, Stroganov was a fervent admirer of Mirabeau and a confirmed Francophile. His admiration of French institutions was displayed, for example, in the Committee dealings concerning

¹Czartoryski, I, 270; this passage is cited in Walsh, II, 283.
educational reforms. In many ways, Stroganov was the most enthusiastic, the most frank of all the members of the Committee. His passionate criticism of the institution of serfdom surprised even his colleagues. According to his biographer, he was provocative, sometimes imprudent, inexperienced, but always sincere, noble and a seeker of the truth. Other commentators, on the other hand, have questioned the merits of Stroganov. One has asserted that he was "gifted with a most mediocre mind" and "could bring as his contribution only a name and wealth." It is also suggested that Stroganov owed his position solely to the closeness of his wife Sophia to the Emperor's wife Elizabeth.

Novosiltsev, in vivid contrast to Stroganov, showed his "prudence" in the discussion concerning serfdom. An admitted Anglophile, he was an excellent worker, a dispassionate and well-informed functionary. He had made much progress in the study of applied science and industry, and had acquired a knowledge of law, the process of legislation, and economics. This knowledge was accompanied by an unprejudiced opinion on many subjects. According to

\(^{2}\text{Stroganov, I, 80.}\)
\(^{3}\text{F.F. Vigel, Vospominaniiia, (7 vols., Moscow, 1864-1865), II, 6.}\)
\(^{4}\text{Bogdanovich, I, 80.}\)
Czartoryski, his penetrating mind and great perseverance in work was hindered only by his extreme love of "plaisirs et des jouissances sensuelles." 5

Novosiltsev set himself up as a discreet guide of affairs and sought to moderate the passions and enthusiasm of his fellow committeemen. More than any of the others, he was in charge of working with the Emperor on day to day tasks. He had been appointed one of Alexander's secretaries and every letter addressed to the sovereign passed through his hands. Thus he possessed more real importance than outward appearances would indicate. 6

This fact was recognized by perceptive foreign observers, as well as the members of the Committee. 7 Kochubei, for example, wrote the following to Simon Vorontsov in April, 1801,

Our friend Novosiltsev has gained much ground. He is actually the man of great confidence... He is responsible for all difficult problems and their solution. I think that nothing is done without passing through his hands, except for military matters... I think that it is he who will be responsible for making up all our regulations from the materials

5Czartoryski, I, 155.
6Stroganov, I, 72, 80. Czartoryski, I, 271.
7See e.g. Dumont to Romilly, 10 June 1803, Bentham, X, 407.
that each of us have furnished for consideration. 8

As for Kochubei, he had acquired certain European habits and manners which easily earned esteem and favor for him. Of all the members of the Committee, he had the most experience in administrative affairs. He had a good mind and was a fine practitioner, but was not a profound thinker. He conscientiously performed all the tasks which were assigned to him. On the other hand, he was very stealthy, susceptible to flattery, and greedy. According to Czartoryski, despite his good characteristics, Kochubei possessed the "typical" Russian hunger for posts, distinctions, and honors. He was especially desirous of acquiring wealth in order to satisfy his fine tastes and to support his family, which was quite numerous. Furthermore, Kochubei's vanity was revealed to the members of the Committee and exposed him to the sarcasm of Novosiltsev and Stroganov. 9

Czartoryski, especially in the early days of the reign of Alexander I and in the work of the Committee, devoted himself loyally to the task of reform. Without any visible motive, he vigorously participated in the discussions of the Tsar's advisers. Czartoryski himself

8 A.K.V., XVIII, 291-92, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 11 April 1801.

stated that he had no "ambition russe." He did feel out of place, like a "plante exotique" which had been planted in "terre étrangère." Despite his extraordinary good fortune and position, he stated in his memoirs that he still longed for his native Poland and his parents. Later, according to one observer, the Polish patriot could not "restrain his sentiments and passions" when it came to foreign affairs.

All of the members of the Unofficial Committee had been educated in the typical manner of the aristocracy of the age. They had been tutored by foreigners and had traveled abroad. In general, they were rather well-educated and had benefited from a first-hand familiarity with the advanced institutions of western Europe. In the eyes of some Russians, however, this was more of a liability than an asset. One commentator maintained that Alexander's friends knew little of Russia and her needs. Since these young men had spent much time abroad, they were unaware of Russia's problems. Furthermore, it is charged that they lacked experience and that these two factors (their alleged ignorance of Russian society and inexperience) explain the shortcomings of the Unofficial Committee.

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10 Czartoryski, I, 278-79.
12 Bogdanovich, I, 73-74, 81-82, 87-88.
The first response to this interpretation is obvious. The Committee members did lack a certain amount of experience. But they were aware of this situation themselves. Indeed, they were concerned with any possible weakness on their part because of a lack of knowledge. Kochubei, in a conversation with Stroganov, observed that since the Committee was composed only of young men, they might on occasion be mistaken and mislead the Emperor. Stroganov responded that he had also thought of this possibility. He had, therefore, proposed to Alexander that every decision that came out of the Committee be submitted to the censure of elder statesmen, who would have no knowledge of the Committee and think it the work of the Emperor. One example of the effort of the Tsar's friends to overcome their personal limitations was Stroganov's decision to seek the advice of Dmitrii Resanov concerning the formulation of a clear definition of the functions of the Senate. On other occasions, they consulted with knowledgeable Russians such as the Vorontsov brothers, Count Troshchinskii, the Zubov brothers, Admiral Mordvinov and Count Muraviev.13

In any case, it should be noted that Alexander's friends were not entirely without experience or knowledge of Russian society. Kochubei's administrative experience

13Stroganov, II, 13-14, "Résultat d'une conférence avec le Comte Kotchoubey, du 9 Mai 1801."
has already been mentioned. Moreover, according to Czartoryski, "no one in Russia was at that time superior" to Novosiltsev "in that administrative knowledge which was then only to be obtained by reading French and English works. His practical mind rejected all vain theories; he possessed skill and tact in dealing not only with individuals, but with the Russian public as well, which he knew thoroughly." Several authors have maintained that Stroganov's discourses on serfdom during the sessions of the Committee revealed a very exact awareness of the situation. His description of the state of the political and intellectual decline of the majority of the Russian nobility, and his picture of popular conceptions were particularly sagacious observations. This, in itself, refutes the charge that Alexander's young advisers were very "ignorant" of Russia.

One commentator has concluded that the members of the Committee were selfish opportunists. It is charged that they espoused a liberal creed of reformism and feigned a concern over the public welfare for the benefit of the Emperor in order to obtain powerful positions in the administration. They lacked sincerity and were merely

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14 Czartoryski, I, 320.
self-seeking bureaucrats. It is maintained, for example, that the origin and aim of the Committee of Ministers had been to satisfy the ambitions of Alexander's young friends. Others, however, have pointed out the shallowness of this allegation. In reviewing the appointees to the Committee of Ministers, one might conclude that the result was something of a compromise between the position of the senatorial group and the members of the Unofficial Committee. Derzhavin, Zavadovskii and Mordvinov, as well as Kochubei, Stroganov and Czartoryski, were appointed to important administrative posts.

The concurrent publication of the decrees on the Senate and the Committee of Ministers even further suggests a compromise. There were features in the two decrees that displeased and pleased both groups. This may explain why the Tsar promulgated the two ukases on the same day. Perhaps he desired not to reject totally or accept completely the position of either side. Thus the senatorial group was not granted an all-powerful Senate, nor was the Senate founded strictly as a "supreme court" as desired by Alexander's young friends. Despite the opposition of the

16 Bogdanovich, I, 88.

17 Dovnar-Zapolskii, "Zarozhdenei, 69, concludes "...v srede chlenov Komiteta ne nedostavalo zhelanlia rukovodit upravleniem gosudarstva." See also Raeff, Speransky, 50n.

senatorial party, the ministries were founded. But many in their ranks, to the dismay of the members of the Unofficial Committee, were appointed as ministers.19

A great majority of observers has accepted the sincerity of the members of the Committee as genuine. They were dedicated and talented young men who were convinced that government based on rule by law was necessary for Russia. Though they differed in many respects, they were united by a common desire for a rectification of the political shortcomings of Imperial Russia. They had similar educational backgrounds and were very close in their general understanding of the socio-political situation in Russia. They were not exceptionally gifted individuals. Nor were they crass opportunists merely seeking unmerited privileges for themselves. True, they were not really in touch with the Russian masses. But they were leading examples of a well-educated generation of young Russian aristocrats who were rapidly becoming aware of the political, economic and social backwardness of their native land. They clearly recognized the imperative need for reforms.20

Some Russians, however, were very critical of the approach of the members of the Unofficial Committee. They

19 P.S.Z., nos. 20,405; 20,406.
were accused of duping the Emperor and filling his head with the dangerous ideas of "French and Polish" constitutionalism. Some of the old functionaries, such as Derzhavin, could not stand Alexander's "liberal collaborators." The members of the senatorial group were very sympathetic to Alexander and blamed his "unwise" steps on the faulty advice of his friends.  

The historian Karamzin maintained the following:

...the counselors of Alexander developed a fancy to introduce novelties into the principle organs of royal authority. In so doing, they ignored the wise precept which teaches that all novelty in the political order is an evil to which recourse is to be had only of necessity; for time alone gives statutes the requisite firmness, since we respect more that which we have respected for a long time, and do everything better from habit.  

In short, the Tsar's young advisers are singled out by many as the scapegoats for the shortcomings of the early period of Alexander's reign.

It must be admitted that the Committee (as a whole) somewhat failed to live up to its lofty promises. Moreover, the Emperor's young friends were indeed important individuals, had much influence, and determined policies to a large degree. But in assessing the shortcomings or

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22 Pipes, Karamzin, 147-48.
accomplishments of the Unofficial Committee, one must assign a large part of any blame or praise to the Tsar himself. His Majesty made all final decisions (or failed to commit himself) and maintained his personal (as monarch) independence.

The members of the Committee were very realistic in their dealings with the Tsar. They recognized that tact and caution were imperative in discussing reforms with the sovereign. Though Alexander I professed a desire to initiate reforms, he was a very stubborn individual. Stroganov revealed that whenever a serious difference of opinion occurred, "it was more prudent to wait until later" before pressing matters in order to avoid the obstinacy of His Majesty. Thus the members of the Committee were forced to bring up several sensitive matters in an indirect manner.\textsuperscript{23} Czartoryski, in his memoirs, added that those who urged His Majesty to take "sudden and severe" steps simply did not understand him. Such proposals made Alexander skeptical and he was inclined to back away from them.\textsuperscript{24}

The Emperor's young friends were aware that he intended to maintain the reigns of power in his own hands while enacting reform measures. This must have tempered

\textsuperscript{23}Stroganov, II, 55.

\textsuperscript{24}Czartoryski, I, 270.
their approach to Alexander. The Tsar made it clear on the day of his accession that he intended to return to the ways of Catherine II. This meant change, but change directed by the monarch and under his supervision and instruction. It certainly did not mean an abdication of authority, and the members of the Committee were well aware of this. The lesson was presented more directly to them in the circumstances surrounding a conversation between Alexander and Stroganov.

In April, 1801, Stroganov met with Count Kochubei. They discussed the necessity of reforms and a memorandum which Bezborodko, Kochubei's uncle, had presented to Paul I in 1799. Bezborodko's opinion was that the powers of a sovereign in an Empire as vast as Russia had to be considerable. Because of its immense size and diversity of peoples and customs, it was necessary that the powers of the "executive" be very strong. Bezborodko was, however, by no means a reactionary; according to Stroganov, he knew "son Montesquieu par coeur." Among other things, for example, Bezborodko suggested an amelioration of the conditions of serfdom. In any case, one of the significant features about Bezborodko's memorandum was the Grand Duke Alexander's opinion of it. Apparently Alexander informed Kochubei in their correspondence that he accepted it with only minor reservations. Alexander certainly approved of
its major premise: the need for a strong monarch. Kochubei informed Stroganov of Alexander's views during their conversation on April 22, 1801.25

On the following day, April 23, 1801, Stroganov spoke with Alexander. It was noteworthy that the Emperor was concerned about Stroganov's opinion of the basic features of Bezborodko's memorandum. Stroganov already knew what the Tsar's view was, having discussed this very point the day before with Kochubei. Thus Stroganov very wisely replied that Bezborodko's major premise was a "masterpiece" and exactly what he himself had in mind. It was also significant that His Majesty mentioned that Count Zavadovskii interested him because he likewise held the view that the Emperor should personally oversee the process of change.26

If the future members of the Unofficial Committee had not been sure of Alexander's conception of his own role, they certainly could infer from his conversation with Stroganov that he intended to maintain the reins of power in his own hands. The subsequent behavior of the members of the Committee in their relationship with the sovereign

25 Sbornik Imperatorskago russkago istoricheskago obshchestva, XXIX, (1881), 643-46. Stroganov, II, 6, "Résultat d'une conversation avec le Comte Kotchoubey, le 22 Avril 1801."

26 Stroganov, II, 1-2, "Résultat d'une conversation avec l'Empereur, le 23 Avril 1801."
indicates that they drew the proper implications. The Emperor laid down guidelines, set forth certain rules and limits, and his young friends adopted a very realistic approach which corresponded with them.

The sincerity of Alexander I to his avowed constitutional principles has long been the subject of conflicting interpretations and it is not the aim of this work to add another chapter in this historical debate. But, in discussing the relationship between the members of the Committee and Alexander, one must examine the question briefly.27

According to Karamzin, Alexander was "inspired with love for the common good."28 Count Kochubei informed his friend Simon Vorontsov that the monarch's views were excellent. "The words of public utility, the welfare of the nation, are constantly on his lips because they have been etched in his heart."29 Czartoryski, in his memoirs, noted that the Grand Duke Alexander confessed to him that he "detested despotism" and loved "liberty" which was owed equally to all men.30

27Pypin, Obshchestvennoe, 98.
28Pipes, Karamzin, 149.
29A.K.V., XVIII, 239, Kochubei to S. Vorontsov, St. Petersburg, 12 May 1801.
30Czartoryski, I, 96.
One foreign observer, Louis Dumont, reported the following: "And since I have spoken of the emperor, let me tell you what will interest you more than any description of the eternal splendour of the capital. I cannot mention the Prince [Alexander I] without an emotion of pleasure...the emperor is both prudent and patient...he both prepares and matures his plans."31 Thus many have concluded that Alexander had a "natural aversion" to despotism and thought seriously of subordinating the despotism of the Russian monarchy to rule by law, of turning this ill-defined absolute monarchy into a limited and enlightened monarchy.32

On the other hand, Alexander seemed to have a strong penchant toward indecision. His Majesty may have had faith without reserve in the general principle of reform, but he hesitated to put it into practice and fell into indecision. In reviewing the period of the Unofficial Committee, one is struck with the fact that Alexander at the outset of discussions would boldly move forward, but when the moment came to take definite steps he often delayed. In fact, one of the most significant features of the Unofficial Committee was its lack of fulfillment, the unfinished nature of the measures which it prompted. This, no doubt,

31 Bentham, X, 407, Dumont to Romilly, 10 June 1803.
was to a large degree the result of the Tsar's temporizing.  

Several commentators have concluded that Alexander's peculiar relationship with his father and grandmother, and the premature interruption of his education explain his so-called indecisiveness. The Grand Duke Alexander was compelled from childhood constantly to exercise tact in answering the demands of both Catherine II and Paul I. The two hated each other and Alexander was forced to please them both. This delicate situation, shuffling between the salons of the Winter Palace and the regiments of Gatchina, apparently fostered a sense of duplicity in the Grand Duke. Alexander learned to conceal his thoughts and to evade direct answers. Reaching his ends in an indirect manner became second nature to him.  

As a result of his evasiveness, Alexander tended to give the impression of vacillation or weakness. But behind the facade of indecisiveness there was a definite strain of outright stubbornness. This has led some to doubt that he really had a "natural aversion" to despotism.  

One occasion when Alexander was particularly

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33 Stroganov, I, 69-81.
obstinate was during a session of the Unofficial Committee in July, 1801. The topic of discussion was the appointment of military men as governors of the various provinces in the Empire. The Emperor explained to his friends that he had named certain military men to these posts. Although they were good soldiers, they were not capable civil administrators. But the Tsar was reluctant to replace them for fear that they might retire from the military. It was pointed out to His Majesty that it was perhaps a bit expensive to purchase the continuation of service of these officers at the cost of abandoning provinces to their inept direction. This reply did not at all please Alexander who stubbornly insisted that it was absolutely necessary to secure the loyalty of these gentlemen. Stroganov, in his notes, mentioned that the other members of the Committee recognized that this crucial problem would have to be resolved later. They would have to bring the matter up in an indirect way in order to avoid Alexander's stubbornness.36

While at his father's palace at Gatchina, the young Grand Duke Alexander was subjected to the trappings of

militarism, to uniforms, to daily parades, drills and ceremonies. After the accession of Paul I, Alexander was assigned nonessential and often frustrating military duties. His father was determined to convince his heir of the value of the meticulous discipline of army life. According to Czartoryski, he was successful: "The small details of military service and the habit of attaching extreme importance to them, corrupted the spirit of the Grand Duke Alexander...He was infected during all of his reign by paradomania...paradomania inculcated in him by Paul."37

Alexander's infatuation with the regimentation and minutia of the military made the members of the Unofficial Committee, as well as other leading Russians, uneasy. Simon Vorontsov, for example, wrote to his brother in September, 1801,

I view with regret that the government continues to attach so much importance to the military that in all the gazettes of the court the promotion of an ensign precedes the edicts addressed to the Senate, and that all internal affairs appear of less consequence than those which concern a battalion of cavalry or a troop of cossacks.38

In his relationship with the members of the Committee, Alexander maintained his personal independence. He wanted

37 Czartoryski, I, 108-09.

38 A.K.V., X, 134, S. Vorontsov to A. Vorontsov, Southampton, 16 September 1801.
the opinion of his friends, but did not accept their views in toto. Often he only listened, voicing no comment, and his advisers did not know his position. Then, at the conclusion of a discussion, he would assert his will. The Emperor pondered and considered things a long time, but once he arrived at a decision, especially concerning a matter in dispute, he displayed an extraordinary persistence. In fact, as has been shown, his friends frequently had to exercise caution in order to insure that he would not become obstinate. Nevertheless, His Majesty did accept much of what was suggested to him. In the process, his vague ideas were somewhat given shape by the efforts of Stroganov, Novosiltsev, Czartoryski and Kochubei.39

The major accomplishment of the Tsar's young friends was their assistance in helping His Majesty translate his ideas into real and concrete forms. Alexander came to the throne with all sorts of vague plans. As the monarch, the depth of his commitment was tested in many ways. In this respect, the activities of the Unofficial Committee proved to be something of a catalyst. The Emperor's advisers helped him to define and give substance to his principle plans. In short, reforms were no longer a matter of idle speculation once Alexander was on the throne. In the words of one author, "le moment arrive inévitablement

39Pypin, Obshchestvennoe, 97. Czartoryski, I, 305-06.
During the Committee era the Tsar temporized and then arrived at the conclusion that the monarchy could be justified, indeed had to be maintained in order to bring progress to Russia. Alexander's early vagueness gradually gave way as he gained experience and confidence.

Many of the creative ideas of the reign of Alexander I stemmed from the sessions of the Unofficial Committee. According to Czartoryski, the "Emperor freely expressed his thoughts and sentiments in the Committee, and although the discussions at these meetings for a long time had no practical result, no useful reform was tried or carried out during Alexander's reign which did not originate in them." With the help and assistance of his young advisers, Alexander rejected despotism and sought to establish the Russian monarchy as an institution deserving of the loyalty and respect of its subjects.

While there was a certain lack of immediate fulfillment on the part of the Unofficial Committee, many of the progressive attitudes fostered in the sessions of the

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41 Czartoryski, I, 268-70. Aldanov, Iunost Pavla Stroganova, 21, concludes that the Unofficial Committee inspired or laid the seeds for most of the progressive reforms that were enacted during the remainder of the Tsarist period.
Committee continued on after it was disbanded. This was the legacy left by the Unofficial Committee. Though serfdom was not abolished, Alexander enacted important serf reforms throughout his reign, beginning with the measure of December 12, 1801, prompted by His Majesty's young friends. Though Alexander was not willing to move as far or as fast as his friends, he nonetheless had come to the conclusion that steps to ameliorate the conditions of the serfs were absolutely essential. In education a great deal was accomplished. In 1825 there were far more Russian students, schools and teachers than ever before in Russian history. Moreover, uniform standards had been adopted and a masterplan for education had been established. These accomplishments stemmed from the efforts of the Unofficial Committee and the activities of the Educational Commission. The administrative apparatus of the Russian government was made far more orderly and less chaotic. The spirit of reorganization and modernization continued after the demise of the Unofficial Committee and the central administrative structure, fashioned by the Tsar's young friends and perfected by Michael Speransky, by and large remained in effect throughout the nineteenth century. Finally, though Alexander was unwilling or unprepared during the era of the Unofficial Committee to enact a
constitution, he continued to consider the possibility of constitutional rule for Russia. The Emperor's continued interest in constitutional projects emanated from his youthful thoughts of reform and from his consultations with his young friends.
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