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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this dissertation is the diplomatic career of the famous Russian dramatist, A. S. Griboedov (1794-1829). One of the most remarkable and talented Russians of his day, Griboedov managed the uncommon feat of rising to prominence in the two very unrelated fields of literature and diplomacy. Today he is best-remembered as the author of the celebrated comedy Gore ot uma, translated variously as Woe from Wit or The Misfortune of Being Clever - a penetrating but good-humored satire on the ossified atmosphere of Moscow society circa 1820. At the time when, because of this literary masterpiece, Griboedov became known throughout the length and breadth of Russia, he was simultaneously pursuing a career as a tsarist diplomat. Here, too, he made his mark. His diplomatic activity spanned the years from 1817 to 1829, during which he advanced from the obscure position of secretary to the chargé d'affaires at the newly-established Russian mission in Iran to the major post of minister plenipotentiary to the court of Teheran, which is to say that he became the head of the Russian diplomatic establishment in Iran. It was in this capacity that Griboedov met a violent death
at the hands of an enraged mob in the Persian capital.

Iran - or Persia as the country was most frequently called in Griboedov's lifetime - belongs within the orbit of Russia's Eastern policy. It was not until the 1820's that Persia became the object of considerable attention on the part of Russian diplomacy. To be sure, the Shah's empire had not been entirely neglected in the two preceding decades, especially since Russia's frontier first came into permanent contact with Persian territory as a consequence of the annexation of Georgia in 1801, and shortly thereafter the two states became involved in a long, intermittent war. Nonetheless, one can say that in the period from 1800 to 1815 the tsarist government was mainly preoccupied with Western policy - with European affairs and the problems posed by Napoleonic France. Persia, and Eastern policy as a whole, played a secondary role in Russian foreign affairs. However, within a few years after the overthrow of Bonaparte and the pacification of Europe, this situation was reversed. The turning point occurred in 1821 with the outbreak of the Greek war of independence against the Ottoman Turks. From that moment onward the focus of tsarist diplomacy shifted away from European affairs in general to the so-called Eastern question - toward Turkey in particular but also toward the latter's Persian neighbor, who became inextricably bound up with the Near Eastern situation. For these and other reasons, such as
the competition between Russia and Great Britain for influence in Central Asia, the Russian mission in Persia would become a significant outpost of tsarist diplomacy at various times in the course of Griboedov's diplomatic career.

The importance of Griboedov as a man of letters is indisputable, but his significance as a diplomat has become apparent only recently. The reasons for this are two-fold: first, Griboedov-the-poet has usually taken precedence over Griboedov-the-diplomat in the work of most scholars; and, secondly, it has been more difficult to collect materials about Griboedov's diplomatic activity. Apart from the fact that neither his personal nor family archive has been preserved, many valuable documents pertaining to his diplomatic work have disappeared or been destroyed over the years. Nonetheless, despite these

1Griboedov himself destroyed many of his papers prior to being arrested in connection with the Decembrist uprising - see O. I. Popova, Griboedov-diplomat (Moscow, 1964), p. 5; furthermore, all the papers in his possession at the time of his death in Persia have vanished. On the senseless destruction of the Griboedov family archive, see "Sud'ba semeinogo arkhiva A. S. Griboedova," Literaturnyi vestnik, 1904, no. 2, p. 44.

2S. V. Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova (Moscow, 1960), p. 5. A large portion of the materials relating to the diplomatic affairs of the Caucasian Administration during the time of Griboedov's activity there was destroyed when the archives in Tiflis were evacuated to the Northern Caucasus at the outbreak of World War One - see I. K. Enikolopov, A. S. Griboedov v Gruzii i Persii (Tiflis, 1929), p. V.
irreparable losses, scholars both in and out of Russia have hitherto laboriously unearthed a sizeable corpus of primary source material dealing with all aspects of Griboedov's diplomatic career.

In addition to the wide variety of source materials published to date in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, the present study has been based on unpublished documents in the London archives of the Public Record Office and the India Office. These repositories house valuable information not only about Griboedov, but also on the nature of the Anglo-Russian relationship vis-à-vis Persia. It should be noted that the whole period of Griboedov's service in Persia, beginning in 1819, coincided with the initial stage of the Anglo-Russian rivalry for influence in that country. In fact Russia and Great Britain were the only foreign powers to maintain diplomatic establishments in Persia during the interval of Griboedov's presence there. Consequently, he came into frequent contact with Britain's diplomatic agents, whose correspondence with the Foreign Office and the East India Company is to be found at the above-mentioned archives in London. (From 1826 to 1835 diplomatic relations between Persia and Britain were the responsibility of the East India Company.)

At the present time it would be fair to say that there exists no adequate monograph pertaining to Griboedov's diplomatic career in its entirety, either in English or,
for that matter, in Russian. The output in English is limited to a number of articles— one by David M. Lang, three by D. P. Costello, and one by Evelyn J. Harden—all appearing in print within the last three decades; with two exceptions, they all deal with the very last phase of Griboedov’s career as minister to Persia.  

In recent years two books attesting to the dramatist’s stature as a diplomat have been published by Soviet scholars: Diplomatich-eskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova by S. V. Shostakovich in 1960, and Griboedov-diplomat by O. I. Popova in 1964. Regrettably, both of these authors, for reasons best known to themselves, have deliberately chosen to misrepresent the policy and actions of the British government and its agents toward Persia. In particular, the study by Shostakovich suffers from a furious anglophobia which pervades it from beginning to end. An English reviewer has commented that "despite the real value of particular sections of the book, taken as a whole it gives a quite false picture of the transactions in which the great Russian dramatist was engaged." Although the more recent study by Popova also has some merit, it tends for the most part to be too

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3 References to their works appear in the text and footnotes of the following chapters.

episodic and fragmentary: it either treats superficially or neglects entirely certain significant segments of Griboedov's diplomatic work.5

For my part I have attempted to present an overall survey of Griboedov's life and work in the service of Russian diplomacy. Moreover, special attention has been paid to the actions of British diplomats in Iran insofar as they affected Russo-Persian relations - not only because the British factor has been badly distorted by Soviet historiography, but also because Griboedov's diplomatic activity cannot be properly understood without reference to it. Although the latest research by others on the subject matter has been utilized in this paper, I am the first to acknowledge that more information needs to be discovered before a truly definitive picture of Griboedov-the-diplomat can be drawn. History has not yet said its final word about this extraordinary individual.

A word or two about some technical points. Many of the quotations from Russian sources have been translated by myself, but, in some instances, I have used the excellent translations of the late D. P. Costello, formerly professor of Russian at the University of Manchester. In his writings on Griboedov's diplomatic career, Mr. Costello

has translated numerous excerpts from the correspondence of Griboedov and of several of the latter's contemporaries. With respect to the quotations from the English diplomatic documents of last century, some of the original quirks of spelling and punctuation found in them have not been retained. The rendering of Persian names presented a problem. In the source materials oftentimes the name of a specific individual or geographical location was spelled with perplexing irregularity. For the most part I have quite arbitrarily adopted for a given name the variant of it most commonly used in recent scholarly writings. In the text this variant will sometimes be rendered differently in direct quotations, but the reader should have no difficulty in recognizing the person or place referred to. Russian words have been transliterated according to the present practice of the Library of Congress, except that the diacritical marks employed for rendering certain Cyrillic letters of the alphabet into English have not been retained. Unless otherwise indicated, dates in this study are Old Style - that is, they conform to the Russian calendar used at the time. Until February 14, 1918 Russia adhered to the Julian, or Old Style calendar, whereas the western countries used the Gregorian, or New Style (N.S.) calendar, introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. In the nineteenth century the Julian calendar was twelve days behind the Gregorian.
CHAPTER I

FROM CHILDHOOD TO A DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENT
IN PERSIA, 1794 TO 1818

Aleksandr Sergeevich Griboedov was born in Moscow on January 4, 1794.¹ He was the second of three offspring, an elder sister, Mariia Sergeevna, having been born in 1792; a younger brother, Pavel Sergeevich, followed a year after Aleksandr. This younger brother must have died soon after birth, for, apart from his recently-discovered birth certificate, there is no trace of him in the biographical literature on Griboedov.² Mariia Sergeevna grew to be a warm-hearted, sympathetic companion, the only family member who took an interest in the literary endeavors of the future diplomat. A close relationship lasted between brother and sister.³

¹A. I. Reviakin, "Novoe ob A. S. Griboedove," Uchenye zapiski Moskovskogo gorodskogo pedagogicheskogo instituta imeni V. P. Potemkina, 43, no. 4 (1954): 113. Reviakin has proven conclusively that 1794 is the year of Griboedov's birth, heretofore a matter of considerable uncertainty. For additional details, see ibid., pp. 111-15; and N. P. Rozanov, "Zametka o gode rozhdeniia A. S. Griboedova," Russkaia starina, 1874, no. 10, pp. 300-02.

²Reviakin, p. 113.

The father and mother of Aleksandr Sergeevich came from two branches of the same family whose antecedents originated in Poland. Of the father, Sergei Ivanovich Griboedov, little is known. His early forebears had prospered and distinguished themselves as faithful servitors of the House of Romanov in the seventeenth century, but soon thereafter family fortunes took a turn for the worse. Thus it was as the son of an impoverished estate-owner that Sergei Ivanovich was born in 1758. Poorly-educated, he served for ten years in the army and retired in 1785 with the rank of captain; six years later he married Anastasiia Fedorovna Griboedova. Evidently, he spent little time with his wife and children: "He lived either in the country, far from the family, or; when he would come to Moscow, he spent day and night gambling away from home and threw his estate into terrible disorder." If Sergei Ivanovich, who died around 1815, left any imprint on his son, it has not been recorded.

It was the mother, Anastasiia Fedorovna, who apparently ran the affairs of the household. She appears to have

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4 Reviakin, pp. 116-17; see also M. I. Semevskii, "Neskol'ko slov o familii Griboedovykh," Moskvitianin, 1856, no. 12, p. 310.

5 Reviakin, pp. 113, 117-18.

6 From the memoirs of V. I. Lykoshin, a childhood friend of A. S. Griboedov, in N. K. Piksanov, Griboedov: issledovaniia i kharakteristiki (Leningrad, 1934), p. 66.
totally eclipsed the figure of her husband, although ten years his junior. Certainly she had the better education and was regarded as a very enlightened woman by those who knew her best. Indeed, the resourcefulness of an intelligent mind combined with a caustic tongue gained for her a certain notoriety in Moscow. She was a loving mother but in a rather heavy-handed sort of way. Toward outsiders, she could be callous and even despotic when aroused. Anastasiia Fedorovna willingly made any sacrifice to see that her children got the best education, but ambition focused her attention in one direction only: she was firmly determined that her talented son should prepare to enter government service, for that, in her mind, was the path toward the honors and wealth of which she dreamed. Unfortunately, this woman would never be able to sympathize with her son's literary aspirations. One finds that at various times in his life, Griboedov was provoked into complaining about his mother's difficult character.

7PSS, 1: IV.

8Ibid.; for an account of how Anastasiia Fedorovna provoked the peasants on her Kostroma estate into an uprising by onerous exactions, see Piksanov, Griboedov: issledovaniia i kharakteristik, pp. 83-138.

9Reviakin, p. 128.

10See PSS, 1: V-VI.
Practically from the very beginning, it seems that Anastasiia Fedorovna looked forward to the day when young Sasha would serve the emperor, and, once circumstances had placed him in the diplomatic corps, she would do her utmost to keep him there.

The Griboedovs, it would seem, properly belonged to the gentry of Moscow. The parents possessed neither illustrious pedigree, high social standing, nor wealth. Nevertheless, there is a strong tradition in the Russian biographical literature on Griboedov which represents him as coming from a wealthy aristocratic family; such a classification, however, has been termed "part invention and part over-exaggeration" by a Soviet scholar who has thoroughly examined Griboedov's family background. Although both his father and mother had each inherited some landed property in the provinces, apparently their income was insufficient to enable them to purchase even a modest home of their own in Moscow until 1802, eleven years after their marriage. The family's need of money, especially after the death of Sergei Ivanovich, oftentimes

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11 Reviakin, p. 126.

12 See ibid., pp. 115-16.

13 Ibid., p. 116.

14 Ibid., pp. 121-22.
grew acute. Here is one reason why Anastasiia Fedorovna so much wanted her son to enter state service: it at least would guarantee a fairly steady income, whereas the remuneration of a poet would be irregular at best.

Anastasiia Fedorovna came from a more prominent branch of the Griboedov clan. Her father Fedor Alekseevich, an influential owner of a large estate, rose to brigadier in the army, a rank which conferred hereditary nobility. Through her blood relations, Anastasiia Fedorovna had connections with some of the most prominent members of the Moscow aristocracy. Her only brother, Aleksei Fedorovich, a retired army officer and civil servant as well as principal heir of the family patrimony, lived the comfortable life of a Moscow notable. He was twice married. From his first marriage with Princess A. S. Odoevskaia, he had a daughter Elizavet, who would later become the wife of Count I. F. Paskevich, the general under whom Griboedov was to serve in Georgia and Persia in 1827–28. From his second marriage with Princess A. S. Naryshkina, he would have another daughter Sof'ia, the future wife of Prince S. A. Rimskii-Korsakov. Anastasiia Fedorovna also had three sisters, one of whom married Count A. K. Razumovskii,

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15See ibid., p. 123.

16Ibid., p. 120.
minister of education from 1810 to 1816. These family relations provided the Griboedovs with access to the highest social circles.17

As was often the custom for children of Russian nobility, Aleksandr Sergeevich began his education at home. With his mother in supervision, foreign tutors were called in to guide the boy's initial efforts. First there was a French governess followed by a German from Brunswick, Johann Bernhard Petrosilius, who later became a prominent librarian at Moscow University.18 His successor (from 1810 to 1812) was Johann Gottlieb Ion, a young ex-Göttingen student of liberal views,19 who helped coach Griboedov in classical literature.20 During these years, Griboedov grew up in a milieu that brought him into frequent contact with foreigners. Every summer Anastasiia Fedorovna would take son and daughter along with Petrosilius to Khmelita, her brother's large estate in Smolensk province. Although cut off from the world at large, this nobleman's nest in the backwoods of Russia resembled a little island of

17 See ibid., pp. 119-21, 126-28; PSS, 1: II-III.

18 PSS, 1: VII.

19 See M. V. Nechkina, A. S. Griboedov i dekabristy, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1951), pp. 88-90.

20 PSS, 1: VII.
cosmopolitan culture. Whenever the Griboedovs and friends from neighboring estates assembled together, there would always gather a motley collection of foreigners as well - brought along for the benefit of the children. In addition to Petrosilius, one might find l'abbè Baudet, the French teacher; or Adams, the English harpist; or Meier, the German drawing instructor, to mention just a few. It was from such associations during his adolescent years that Griboedov developed his remarkable facility with foreign languages.  

In 1802 or 1803 Aleksandr Sergeevich was sent to the Moscow University Noblemen's Pension, a remarkably liberal institution founded in 1791 to prepare young noblemen for military and state service. Here he spent about three years. In January 1806, at the age of twelve, he enrolled at Moscow University. Although it was not uncommon in those days for students to enter a university at an early age, there were few who matriculated as young as Griboedov. Within two and a half years, he completed his course of studies in literature. The diploma he received would have allowed him to enter government service then and there. Instead, Griboedov remained at the university and took up

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21 Piksanov, Griboedov: issledovaniia i kharakteristiki, pp. 60-61, 71.


23 PSS, 1: IX.
the study of law. This he finished in another two years, earning a second diploma. Perhaps by this time he was contemplating an academic career, for he stayed at the university to pursue mathematics and the natural sciences. However, his days as a student were terminated unexpectedly by the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in June 1812. This momentous event prevented Griboedov from taking his examination for the doctorate.24

Altogether, Griboedov spent six and one half years at Moscow University. For the standards of the day, he received an exceptionally comprehensive education. His knowledge gained from the study of law, as well as from the relatively new disciplines of political economy and statistics, would later prove useful in his work as a diplomat. His linguistic accomplishments are noteworthy. He possessed a near-perfect command of French, together with a sound knowledge of German, English and Italian. He had also studied the principal Slavic languages. He could read Latin fluently, and later, in 1817, began to learn Greek.25 During his stay in the Middle East, he learned to speak Persian fluently and would undertake the study of Arabic and Turkish.26

24 Ibid.
25 Bonamour, p. 63.
There is evidence that he even knew some Sanskrit. Besides his linguistic ability, Griboedov possessed a remarkable talent for music. He loved to play the piano and would spend hours on end at improvisation; his compositions which survive include a number of waltzes. Endowed with an enquiring and penetrating mind, Griboedov would spend the rest of his life broadening the knowledge acquired at the university. He became one of the most widely cultured men of his generation.

Upon hearing the news of the French invasion, the eighteen-year-old student abandoned his studies, in July 1812, and enlisted as a cornet in a newly-formed regiment of Moscow Hussars. As Napoleon approached Moscow, his regiment retreated to Kazan, where it was later merged with the Irkutsk Hussars. Within a short time, Griboedov was appointed adjutant to General A. S. Kologrivov, who had been


28 A. N. Veselovskii, Etiudy i kharakteristiki (Moscow, 1894), pp. 498-99; see also the essay "A. S. Griboedov-muzykant" by S. Bulich in PSS, 1: 305-28.

29 PSS, 1: XVII.

30 See Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 116-18.

31 PSS, 1: XVIII.
placed in charge of the recruitment and training of the cavalry reserves. That Griboedov took his duties seriously may be seen from his article "On the Cavalry Reserves," which appeared in the November 1814 issue of Vestnik Evropy. The article reveals something of the practical ability which was later to mark his conduct of diplomatic affairs: among other things, it cites statistics to demonstrate how huge sums were saved the state in the purchase of food and fodder for the reserves. The nature of this work kept Griboedov behind the lines so that he never experienced actual combat. In the wake of the French retreat, his unit was transferred to Brest-Litovsk. Eventually he reached Warsaw. This, incidentally, marked the farthest point west he traveled in his lifetime. On several occasions in later life, he made plans to visit Europe, but destiny always intervened to drive him in another direction. During his wartime experience, Griboedov made the acquaintance of Stepan Nikitich Begichev, who was to become his closest friend.

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32 The article also may be found in ibid., 3:10-14.

33 Ibid., 1:XX. S. N. Begichev (1785-1859) was also an adjutant on the staff of General Kologrivov when he met Griboedov in 1813. From 1823 onward, he lived as a retired colonel either on his estate in Tula province or in Moscow (see A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 3).
With the general demobilization following the over­throw of Napoleon, Griboedov went to St. Petersburg. The northern capital at this time was fast becoming the intellectual and cultural showpiece of the country. Our young hero, as one who always attached great importance to his personal independence, evidently much preferred the allure­ments of the exciting postwar life on the banks of the Neva to the prospect of returning to the home of his domineering mother in Moscow. It was during this initial St. Petersburg phase of his life, from the summer of 1814 to August 1818, that Griboedov first took up his pen in the service of litera­ture. His early plays date from this period.34 Also at this time, he became absorbed in the political ferment that was agitating many of Russia's young officers fresh from van­quished France who were dissatisfied with the reactionary conditions prevailing at home. In St. Petersburg Griboedov would become acquainted with some of the most prominent representatives of the future Decembrists.35

In December 1815 Griboedov petitioned Emperor Alexander I to be released from the army, "in order to enter state service."36 Family circumstances most likely motivated him to make this decision. His father had died recently so that

34See PSS, 1: XXIII-XXVI.
35See Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 140-61.
36PSS, 1: XXII.
he now had to give some thought to the material well-being of his mother and sister. He was discharged from the army the following March. Nevertheless, more than a full year had elapsed before he submitted a petition, on June 6, 1817, to join the State College of Foreign Affairs. For a youth who prized his independence and loved literature, this was not an easy step to take. That he undertook it at all was probably due to the insistence of his mother. On June 9, 1817 Griboedov was accepted as a member of the College of Foreign Affairs with the rank of Provincial Secretary.

At first he worked as a translator within the College. This assignment did not place much of a burden upon him, for he continued to lead much the same kind of gay and care-free life as he had before joining the College. All this would change abruptly within a few months, however.

37 The text of this petition is in Sergei Belokurov, "A. S. Griboedov (Novye dokumenty k ego biografii)," Russkoe obozrenie, 1895, no. 3, pp. 386-87. In 1817 the Russian Foreign Ministry was still referred to in documents as the "State College of Foreign Affairs," even though a reform of the central government in 1802 had substituted a system of ministries for the former administrative colleges established by Peter the Great.

38 Ibid., p. 387. A Provincial Secretary corresponded to the rank of lieutenant in the military.


40 PSS, 1: XXII
In November 1817 Griboedov became involved in an affair which created quite a scandal in St. Petersburg. Among his acquaintances was the famous ballerina, A. I. Istomina (whom Aleksandr Pushkin immortalized in the first chapter of Evgenii Onegin). A quarrel over her affections broke out between two of Griboedov's social companions - Count A. P. Zavadovskii, son of a former minister of education, and V. V. Sheremetev, an officer of the Horse Guards. The upshot of this lovers' imbroglio was that Sheremetev challenged Zavadovskii to a duel. Since Griboedov had sided with Zavadovskii, he was in turn challenged by Sheremetev's friend, A. I. Iakubovich, a Life Guards' officer later to gain fame as a Decembrist. The double duel was arranged for November 12. According to plan, Sheremetev and Zavadovskii were to exchange shots first, after which would come the turn of Iakubovich and Griboedov. Sheremetev, however, was mortally wounded and had to be immediately brought back to his lodging, where he died the next day. Consequently, the second stage of the duel was postponed to an indefinite date. As soon as news of the affair leaked out, the authorities launched an official investigation. Zavadovskii was compelled to leave Russia, and Iakubovich was expelled from the Guards and relegated to active service in the Caucasus. Only Griboedov appears to have gone unpunished.\(^{41}\)

\(^{41}\)For all the particulars of the duel and the subsequent
In the latter half of Alexander I's reign, it was customary to punish duelists severely.\(^{42}\) It has been conjectured by M. V. Nechkina, a Soviet scholar who has written extensively on Griboedov, that the poet's mother used her connections at court to ward off the danger threatening her son. Her mediator could have been General Paskevich, who had just married, in 1817, the daughter of her brother Aleksei Fedorovich. Paskevich might easily have intervened, since he enjoyed the special confidence of the imperial family. Moreover, he was living in Moscow at the home of his father-in-law for most of the period between November 1817 and March 1818.\(^{43}\) Documentation for this theory is lacking, but it does offer a plausible explanation for the lenient treatment meted out to Anastasiia Fedorovna's son.

In April 1818 Count Karl Nesselrode, first secretary of the College of Foreign Affairs, offered Griboedov the position of secretary to the newly-organized permanent Russian legation in Persia.\(^{44}\) This proposition did not appeal to Griboedov, who expressed his dismay in a letter

\(^{41}\) (continued)

\(^{42}\) Nechkina, *Griboedov i dekabristy*, pp. 163-64.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 164.

\(^{44}\) Popova, *Griboedov-diplomat*, p. 13.
to his friend Begichev, dated April 15, 1818: "Now I'll explain to you my unfeigned sorrow. Imagine, they are firmly determined to send me - where to, would you think? To Persia, and to live there. Try as I may to get out of it, nothing does any good." He goes on to describe his reception by Nesselrode:

... I declared [to him] there was no way I would decide (and even then not for certain) unless I was given two ranks, immediately upon assigning me to Teheran. He made a wry face, but I represented to him with all the French eloquence at my command, how cruel it would be for me to spend my best years among savage Asiatics, in voluntary exile, to be separated for a long time from friends and relatives, to abandon the literary successes which I have a right to expect here, as well as all contact with enlightened people and pleasing women, to whom I also can be agreeable. In short it is not possible for me to sacrifice myself without at least some commensurate compensation.

"You will perfect your talents in seclusion."

"Not in the least, Your Excellency. A musician and poet needs listeners, readers; there aren't any in Persia . . ."

He and I went on to talk about this and that; the funniest part of all is that while I repeated over and over to him how I have never in my life had the least bit of ambition, I offered to put myself at his complete disposal for two ranks.

... it seems, however, that they will not agree to my demands. They can do what they like, but I have decided to be a Collegiate Assessor or nothing at all.47

45 PSS, 3: 128.

46 Here Griboedov appends a footnote to his letter: "Don't laugh - I'm young, a musician, amorous and readily talk nonsense—what more do they desire?"

In spite of all his "French eloquence," Griboedov had to accept the diplomatic post proffered by Nesselrode. His formal appointment took place on July 14, 1818. Though Griboedov did not receive the full two-step increase in rank which he had somewhat brashly demanded, he won promotion to Titulor Councillor in recognition of his "zealous service" as translator. There can be little doubt that Griboedov's diplomatic appointment to Persia was a direct outcome of his involvement in the affair of the duel. Years later, in 1828, when he already had become Russia's minister plenipotentiary to Iran, Griboedov revealed to a subordinate that only an "occurrence" had forced him into the field of diplomacy. Nesselrode, obliged to take some action against a functionary who had seriously compromised himself, was moved, perhaps owing to the possible intervention of

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48 According to the memoirs of A. S. Sturdza, an official in the Foreign Ministry at this time, Griboedov was offered the choice between diplomatic posts in Persia and in the United States, and that he himself decided in favor of Persia (A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 331). This may be true, although there is no corroboration of it either in Griboedov's writings or elsewhere - see Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, p. 9.

49 Belokurov, p. 391.

50 Ibid., pp. 391-92. Titulor Councillor was equivalent to the rank of captain.

51 PSS, 3: 219.
Griboedov's mother, to impose upon him a kind of "honorable' exile" as it were.

Meanwhile, the preparations for the departure of the staff of Russia's Persian legation dragged on several more weeks. During this interval, Griboedov set to work to prepare himself for his future diplomatic career. He began the study of Persian and Arabic and delved into the available scholarly literature on the East. Finally, around the end of August, the poet-diplomat departed for Persia. (Five whole years were to pass before he could return to St. Petersburg.) He left the capital with a heavy heart, overcome with grief at the separation from friends and filled with strange forebodings. To his friend Begichev, he wrote from Novgorod on August 30: "Today is my nameday; the blessed prince, after whom I am named, won fame and renown here; you remember that he died on the return journey from Asia; perhaps the same fate awaits also his namesake, the embassy's secretary - only it's hardly likely I shall become a saint!"

As we shall see, Griboedov expressed similar forebodings on more than one occasion. Unhappily, they were destined to become true.

52 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 28.

53 A reference to Prince Aleksandr Nevskii, who died in 1263 on his return from a visit to the Golden Horde.

54 PSS, 3: 130.
CHAPTER II

GREAT POWER RIVALRY IN PERSIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

It was during the first decade of the nineteenth century that Persia emerged from the obscurity of a distant Eastern monarchy to a place of consequence among the great powers of Europe. The country was drawn into the international political arena because of its strategic geographical position at the time of Napoleon's far-flung struggle against Great Britain for European hegemony. Initially, France vied with Britain to establish a predominant voice at the court of Teheran, but this two-power contest soon grew more complicated as a result of Russia's deepening involvement in Asian affairs. To be sure, in the years from 1800 to 1815, Russia had to direct most of her attention to affairs in Europe - to the menace posed by Napoleon. In tsarist councils relations with the West clearly took precedence over those with the East. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the Napoleonic era also witnessed another phase of Russian penetration into Asia, particularly into Persia, as a direct consequence of tsarism's desire to strengthen its newly-acquired position in Transcaucasia. The present chapter traces the
developments that occurred between Persia and the great powers from 1800 to 1818, since the problems which would confront Russia's first permanent legation in the realm of the Shah date from that period.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Persia was a decadent and strife-ridden, feudal state. The country was governed by the Qajars, a Turkic dynasty, which came to power in the early 1790's. Its founder was a cruel and sadistic tyrant, Agha Muhammad Khan, who was assassinated in 1797 by two of his personal attendants whom he had condemned to death for a slight offense.\(^1\) The monarchy passed into the hands of his nephew Baba Khan, who took the name Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834), an extremely vain ruler, famous for his long beard, vast harem and prodigious avarice.

The Shah stood at the apex of Persia's political system. In theory, there was no limit to his power; he had absolute command over the life and property of every one of his subjects. For the purpose of administration, the country was divided into thirty provinces and districts, ruled by governor-generals and governors, respectively. It was the practice of Fath Ali Shah to appoint his own numerous sons or closest relatives to those positions. However, the Shah had no easy task insuring the obedience of the royal princes, who governed their provinces as despotically as

Fath Ali Shah ruled over the whole country. The monarch had also to contend with powerful opposition from the khans or chiefs of the nomadic tribes. These feudal lords behaved like independent sovereigns and very often refused even nominally to recognize the authority of the Shah. Unrest among the tribes was endemic, particularly in certain provinces such as Khorasan and Kerman. Indeed, so unsettled was the condition of Persia in the reign of Fath Ali Shah, that scarcely a single year elapsed without the occurrence somewhere of an outbreak which had to be suppressed by armed force.

This recurring tribal strife not only weakened the country politically but also caused further harm to an already impoverished economy. A general economic decline had set in since the end of the seventeenth century, stemming from the loss of the transit trade to and from India. European merchants preferred the newly-discovered searoute around the Cape of Good Hope to the overland caravan trek across Persia. As the government derived less and less revenue from the diminishing transit trade, it had to raise

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2 M. S. Ivanov, Ocherk istorii Irana (Moscow, 1952), p. 123. This Soviet history of Persia is considered a sound general account by Western scholars.

3 Ibid., p. 124.

4 Watson, p. 205.
taxes on the peasantry to ruinous levels. The country's distressing condition was reflected in the lack of cultural achievement. Whereas in Europe and elsewhere the eighteenth century had been immensely creative, in Persia it was one of the darkest and dullest periods for literature and the arts. The masses, and to a large extent even the political elite, lived in profound ignorance of the outside world and were a prey to all kinds of superstitions, perpetuated and reinforced by an omnipresent and powerful Moslem clergy adamantly opposed to modernization. Nevertheless, in spite of her manifold weakness, Persia at the end of the eighteenth century was an isolated but still independent country, free from political manipulation by European powers.

That isolation ended, however, with the advent of the Napoleonic era in Europe. In the summer of 1798 a French army under General Bonaparte made a dramatic appearance in Egypt. Although this campaign failed, subsequently, in concert with Paul I of Russia, Napoleon conceived a grandiose plan to strike a blow against Great Britain by a joint Franco-Russian invasion of India. Part of the planned invasion route was to cross Persian territory. These French designs alarmed the British authorities in

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6 Ibid., p. 154.
India, who also had to cope with a simultaneous threat from the Afghan ruler at Kabul, Zaman Shah, thought to be on the verge of marching into Hindustan. In December 1799 a British agent, Captain John Malcolm, was sent to the court of Teheran from India for the purpose of arranging a defensive alliance with the Persians. Malcolm succeeded in his objective.  

An Anglo-Persian treaty of alliance was signed in January 1801. It called upon the Shah to attack the Afghans if they invaded India and to take joint action with Britain against any attempt by France at gaining a foothold in Persia. In return, the British agreed to assist Persia with military equipment and technicians in the event she was attacked by Afghanistan or France. The British initiative toward Persia was the product of a momentary panic, for once the threat to India had passed away, they quickly lost interest in their tie to Teheran. Conversely, 


9The text of the treaty is in J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, 2 vols. (New York, 1956), 1: 69-70.

10The Afghan menace disappeared with the death of Zaman Shah in 1800, and France was momentarily reconciled with Britain by the Peace of Amiens in 1802.
the alliance took on added significance for the Persians, who were soon to become entangled in a conflict with their expansionist neighbor to the north - Russia.

Persia's first major confrontation with Russia had occurred in the eighteenth century. In 1722, an army led by Peter the Great descended upon the Caucasian isthmus in a campaign which soon brought into Russia's possession all of Persia's provinces adjacent to the Caspian Sea: Gilan, Mazandaran and Astarabad, together with the ports of Derbent and Baku. However, by 1735 all of this territory was restored to the Shah when the Russians withdrew north of the Caucasus. For the next fifty years peace prevailed between the two nations. Yet it was in the course of this long interval that the seeds of the new conflict were sown.

Ever since the sixteenth century, the peoples of Transcaucasia had been living under the rule of the Ottoman empire and Iran. As a result of a long series of wars between these two Moslem states, Persia had seized possession of the lands of Azerbaijan, eastern Armenia and eastern Georgia. The Armenian and Azerbaijani territories were annexed outright; eastern Georgia (comprising the two kingdoms of Kartli and Kakheti) was held in vassalage. In 1747 the assassination of Nadir Shah plunged

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11 See V. P. Lystsov, Persidskii pokhod Petra I, 1722-1723 (Moscow, 1951); and George N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, 2 vols. (London, 1892), 1: 373-75.
Persia into a prolonged state of anarchy which weakened her grip on Transcaucasia. The people of eastern Georgia managed to reassert their independence under a single, reunited monarchy at this time. Fearing the day when a resurgent Persia would try to regain control over Georgia, the monarch, Heraclius II, sought the protection of Russia. In 1783 he signed the Treaty of Georgievsk, by which Russia gained the right to control Georgia's foreign relations in return for a guarantee of protection in the event of war. This was the first crucial step in the direction which led ultimately to Russia's complete annexation of Georgia.\(^\text{12}\)

The issue of who was to govern Georgia placed Russia and Persia on a collision course. In 1795, Agha Muhammad Khan, who claimed Georgia on the ground that it had "belonged" to Persia, invaded the country as far as Tiflis, which was savagely sacked. The Persians thereupon withdrew. A Russian army sent by Catherine the Great belatedly arrived on the scene in the spring of 1796, but when she died in November, Paul I, her eccentric successor, suddenly recalled these troops. The following year the Persians again prepared to invade but were stopped by the murder of Agha Muhammad. However, his successor, Fath Ali Shah, was just as determined to achieve Georgia's complete

\(^{12}\)The history of these events is told in David M. Lang, The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy, 1658-1832 (New York, 1957); and in W. E. D. Allen, A History of the Georgian People: From the Beginning down to the Russian Conquest in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1932).
and unconditional surrender. This ever-present danger of Persian occupation helped to induce the last king of Georgia, George XII (1798-1800), to throw in his lot with the Russians. In 1800 he offered his crown to Paul I, and a year later, after the accession of Alexander I, the small Transcaucasian kingdom was officially incorporated into the Russian empire.

No sooner had Russia surmounted the formidable Caucasian mountain barriers and taken possession of Georgia (i.e., the Kartlo-Kakheti kingdom) than her army embarked upon a campaign to conquer the adjoining country over which the former kingdom exercised a claim of sovereign rights. The territory in question surrounded Georgia on three sides and was composed of a number of tiny Christian principalities and Moslem khanates. Some of the Moslem rulers of these miniature states, in an effort to secure their own independence, did in fact invite the support of Russia against the power they then most feared, vainly imagining that they could rid themselves of the Russians once they had succeeded in emancipating themselves from the control of Persia. The encroachments of the Russian infidels into these khanates further aroused the passions of the

13 Ramazani, p. 44.

14 See Lang, The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy, pp. 231-32.

Shah and in 1804 a Persian army took the field under the command of Abbas Mirza, the heir apparent. The ensuing war lasted nine years.\(^{16}\)

In deciding to cross swords with his powerful northern neighbor, Fath Ali Shah counted on his British ally for military assistance.\(^{17}\) In this he was bitterly disappointed, for the British, as noted above, became indifferent to Persia as soon as the threat to India had waned.\(^{18}\) The Shah had to cast about for a new ally. Into the breach stepped the French, who had been trying, without success, to form an alliance with Persia in 1802, 1804 and 1805.\(^{19}\) Napoleon again wanted to use Persia as a stepping stone to India; moreover, France, like Persia, was also at war with Russia at the time. The two states signed a treaty of alliance at Finkenstein, Napoleon's headquarters in Poland, in May 1807.\(^{20}\) Bonaparte agreed to recognize that Georgia

\(^{16}\) For a Soviet viewpoint of the 1804-13 Russo-Persian war, see A. P. Ioannisian, Prisoedinenie Zakavkaz'ia k Rossii i mezhdunarodnye otnoshenii v nachale XIX stoletiia (Ervan, 1958); an account sympathetic to the Persian side may be found in M. Ottokar von Schlechta-Wssehrd, "Die Kämpfe zwischen Persien und Russland in Transkaukasien seit 1804-1813," Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Classe der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften 46 (Vienna, January 1864): 4-67.

\(^{17}\) Ramazani, p. 40.


\(^{19}\) Ramazani, p. 40.

\(^{20}\) The text is in Hurewitz, 1: 77-78; see also Vernon J. Puryear, Napoleon and the Dardanelles (Berkeley, 1951), chap. 8.
"legitimately" belonged to Persia and promised to make every effort toward compelling Russia to withdraw her forces from that country. French advisers were to be sent to Persia to build fortifications and reorganize the Shah's army along European lines. In return, Persia agreed to declare war on Britain at once and to grant French troops the right of transit across her territory if Napoleon decided to invade India. As a follow-up to this treaty, Bonaparte dispatched a large military mission to Teheran under General Gardane. 21

The ink had hardly dried on the Franco-Persian compact when a sudden reversal fundamentally altered the international situation. Peace was restored and an alliance formed between France and Russia at the famous Tilsit summit in June 1807. Napoleon thereafter attempted to mediate an end to the Russo-Persian war, but was rebuffed by Fath Ali Shah, who would not make peace unless Russia relinquished Georgia. 22 As the war dragged on, with Persia gradually sinking before the power of Russia, French influence in the councils of the Shah started to diminish. By 1809 it would vanish altogether.


22 Ramazani, p. 45.
Meanwhile, the French ascendency at Teheran had re-kindled Britain's solicitude for her erstwhile ally. Once again English diplomats set out to court the Shah. In March 1809, Sir Harford Jones, a British envoy representing the Home government, succeeded in arranging a new alliance with the Persians. The pact, termed a "Preliminary Treaty," bound the Shah to break relations with all European powers in conflict with England. (This stipulation applied primarily to France, since Persia was already in a state of war with Russia.) Great Britain, for its part, agreed to provide Persia with troops, or, in lieu thereof, an annual subsidy (tacitly understood not to exceed 160,000 tomans - the equivalent of 120,000 pounds sterling), together with materiel and officers to train the Persian army for as long as Persia should remain at war with an invading European nation (i.e., Russia). The British rapprochement with the Shah completely dislodged the French, who never regained a voice in Persian affairs. From this time onward, the contending powers

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23 Kaye, History of the War in Afghanistan, 1: 137. A "toman" was a Persian gold coin.

for influence at Teheran would be Britain and Russia.

England's financial and military assistance did not stave off Persia's ultimate defeat. The war lasted so long, because the Russians had never been able to concentrate the bulk of their army in the Middle East, owing to the tense situation in Europe. Moreover, the Persians had failed to gain any permanent success on account of the backwardness of their military establishment. A British officer aptly described the situation:

The disciplined forces of Persia, considered as an army, and for the purpose of national defence, were from the epoch of their first creation contemptible. Beyond drill and exercise, they never had anything in common with the regular armies of Europe and India. System was entirely wanted, whether in regard to pay, clothing, food, carriage, equipage, commissariat, promotion, or command; and under a lath-and-plaster Government like that of Persia, such must have been inevitably the case.25

In October 1812 the Persian army under Abbas Mirza was entirely routed in a battle at Aslanduz. The British, who in the meantime had become reconciled with the Russians after the latter's rupture with Napoleon, used their good offices to bring an end to the war.26 A treaty of peace was signed at the village of Gulistan on October 12, 1813. The terms of the Treaty of Gulistan27 were highly humiliating for Persia. Based on the principle of the

25 Rawlinson, p. 31.
27 The text is in Hurewitz, 1: 84-86.
status quo ad presentem, with each side retaining possession of the territory occupied by its forces when peace was restored, the treaty required Persia to cede to Russia the khanates of Karabagh, Ganja, Shaki, Shirvan, Derbent, Kobeh, Baku and a part of Talish. Moreover, she had to abandon all pretensions to Georgia and Daghestan, and to recognize as belonging to Russia all the remaining territory in the western half of Transcaucasia which had formerly been under Turkish control. In effect, the vanquished Persians lost practically all their possessions between the Black and Caspian Seas. The only land they retained north of the Araxes River - the present boundary between Iran and the Soviet Union - were the khanates of Erivan and Nakhichevan. They also conceded to Russia the exclusive right to maintain ships of war on the Caspian Sea. In return for these concessions, Russia merely pledged herself to support the heir apparent (Abbas Mirza) in securing the succession to the throne, an obligation which really would enable her to interfere in the internal affairs of Persia. A number of clauses also dealt with the regulation of trade between the two countries.

As later events proved, Gulistan was only an armistice and not a final peace treaty. It left the Persians extremely dissatisfied. Furthermore, they had reason to regard it as only a provisional settlement, owing to an egregious error committed by the Russian plenipotentiary
at Gulistan, General N. F. Rtishchev. At his own discretion, he signed a so-called Separate Act, which granted the Shah the right to petition Russia's sovereign for a return of part of the ceded territory. This was done at the insistence of the new British envoy, Sir Gore Ouseley, who as unofficial mediator strove to make the peace as palatable as possible for his Persian ally. The Separate Act, however, extremely displeased Rtishchev's superiors in St. Petersburg, and, indeed, it helped to keep the flames of Persian revanchism burning.  

After the humiliation of Gulistan, Persia had more than ever to rely on British support in facing up to Russia. For the moment the British were disposed to be obliging. It cannot be denied that they took a jaundiced view of the new power that had appeared on Persia's northwestern frontier. They could not but speculate about the consequences of this development for the security of India.  

The concern of both nations with respect to the expansionist policy of Russia was clearly reflected in the new Anglo-Persian treaty of mutual defense concluded at Teheran in November 1814.

Known as the "Definitive Treaty," it was destined to remain in force until 1856. The pact contained some

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28 See Ioannisian, pp. 413-20.
29 Rawlinson, p. 29.
30 For the text of the treaty, see Hurewitz, 1: 87-88.
mention of measures to be taken in the event of trouble with Afghanistan, but its real purpose was to provide against the designs of Russia.  

It bound the Shah not to allow any "European" army to enter Persian territory for the purpose of proceeding to India. Furthermore, if any "European" power should try to invade India across the territory of Kharizen (Khiva), Taturistan, Bokhara and Samarkand, the Shah was obliged to persuade the rulers of those states to oppose such invasion. Another clause stipulated that Great Britain was to participate in establishing the territorial limits of Russia and Persia, even though Russia had never consented to such a mode of adjudication. In case a "European" nation should invade Persia, the treaty obliged Britain to come to her ally's assistance either by sending an army from India or by paying an annual subsidy now raised to 200,000 tomans (150,000 pounds sterling) for the duration of the war. However, an important proviso stated that the subsidy would not be paid if the war was caused by Persian aggression. Lastly, it

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31 See, for example, H. W. C. Davis, "The Great Game in Asia (1800-1844)," Proceedings of the British Academy 12 (1926): 230; and Rawlinson, p. 36.

32 Since part of the Russo-Persian frontier line was described only in general terms by the Treaty of Gulistan, provision had been made for the formation of a bilateral commission which would determine the final demarcation of the boundary at a later date.
was agreed that if Persia should become engaged in a war with any "European" power at peace with Britain, the English government would use their good offices to restore peace between the warring parties. Such were the main provisions of the Definitive Treaty.

Following the conclusion of this treaty, Britain maintained a permanent diplomatic mission at Teheran. At first, her diplomats endeavored to support the Shah's attempts to revise the Treaty of Gulistan by urging the Russian government to take a lenient view of the case. However, as Russia would accept no mediation in her relations with Asiatic states, England did not press the matter. In point of fact, after 1815, in the friendlier European atmosphere engendered by the Quadruple Alliance, London came to regard the Definitive Treaty as a nuisance, since it threatened to make difficulties between Britain and Russia. Accordingly, Britain stopped the payment of all financial assistance to the Shah and withdrew most of her officers from the Persian service. The importance of the British presence at Teheran was reduced as much as possible. Some years later, Henry Willock, who as chargé d'affaires headed Britain's mission in Persia from 1815 to 1826, summarized his government's policy toward Persia after 1815:

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34 Ibid.; Curzon, 1: 579.
No exertion has been made [by Britain] to maintain an ascendant influence at the Court of Teheran and any attempt to oppose the ordinary views of Russia has been strictly prohibited. From 1818 it seems to have been the chief object of the British Government to prevent the possibility of any subject of discussion arising with Russia out of the proceedings of their agents in this country.

For Russia, the Persian question in the aftermath of Gulistan centered around the Shah's insistent efforts to obtain a territorial retrocession. With this objective in mind, the Persian monarch dispatched an embassy headed by Mirza Abul Hasan Khan to St. Petersburg. It arrived there with great fanfare at the beginning of 1815. The ambassador was accompanied by a magnificent suite, encompassing, as presents for Alexander I, Arabian horses, Abyssinian slaves and two of the Shah's elephants. In his dealings with Nesselrode, the Persian envoy demanded the return of at least a part of the land ceded to Russia and at one point insisted even on a revision of the entire

35Great Britain, Public Record Office: F.O. 60/25, Willock to George Canning, secretary of state for foreign affairs, February 13 (N.S.), 1825. (This archive is hereafter cited as PRO.)


37James Morier, A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, between the Years 1810 and 1816 (London, 1818), pp. 300-01.
Gulistan Treaty. His entreaties elicited the response that no decision on the territorial question could be made pending the completion of a careful survey of the frontier area. A special embassy would then be sent to Persia to convey Russia's final answer to the Shah. Mirza Abul Hasan Khan had to return home empty-handed.

The man entrusted with leading the Russian mission to Persia, as ambassador extraordinary, was General Aleksei Petrovich Ermolov. He had recently been appointed commander-in-chief of Russia's forces in Georgia, with jurisdiction over the whole of the Caucasus. Having already made a brilliant military career for himself in the Napoleonic wars, Ermolov was now about to begin ten years of service in the Caucasus, during which his name became one of the most feared and respected among the rebellious tribes of that mountainous area.

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38 B. P. Balaian, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia Iran v 1813-1828 gg. (Erivan, 1967), p. 31. The Treaty of Gulistan, which had yet to be promulgated, did not go into force until July 1818 (ibid., p. 36, n. 84).

39 Ibid., pp. 31-32.

40 For a character sketch of Ermolov, see Michael Whittock, "Ermolov - Proconsul of the Caucasus," The Russian Review 18 (January 1959): 53-60; also, see below, pp. 78-81.
Alexander I himself drafted the instructions for the Ermolov mission. These instructions clearly reveal the Emperor's desire to establish genuinely peaceful and friendly relations with his former adversary. To this end, Ermolov was directed to make an accurate survey of the frontier area to see if some slight rectifications could be made in the boundary to Persia's advantage. Any return of territory on a large scale, however, was expressly ruled out. Among other points, the envoy was instructed: 1) to seek the Shah's permission to open Russian commercial offices in Gilan and Astarabad, two of Persia's northern provinces; 2) to arrange for a declaration providing for the neutrality of either state in the event the other should become engaged in a war with a third party; 3) to undermine and eventually, if possible, to destroy English influence in Persia; and 4) to establish a permanent Russian diplomatic legation at Teheran. Ermolov's instructions, which run to approximately 3,500 words, show that Alexander I, after the pacification of Europe in 1815, wanted to turn his particular attention to Russia's southern borders and to devise a more constructive policy toward Persia.

Ermolov arrived at Tiflis in October 1816. Before proceeding to Persia, he spent a month examining the

41 The instructions may be found in Akty, sobrannye Kavkazskoi arkheograficheskoi komissiei, 12 vols. (Tiflis, 1866-1904), 6, pt. 2: 122-27 (hereafter cited as AKAK).
frontier. His report to Alexander I of January 9, 1817 shows that he had already firmly resolved not to return one square inch of territory to the Shah. Ermolov adhered unbendingly to this posture in parleying with Fath Ali Shah and his ministers throughout the summer of 1817. His behavior toward the monarch's functionaries was bellicose in the extreme:

My grim visage [he wrote] always expressed pretty clearly what I felt, and when I spoke of war, I conveyed the impression of a man ready to set his teeth in their throats. Unluckily for them I noticed how little they liked this, and, consequently, whenever more reasonable arguments were wanting, I relied on my wild beast's muzzle, gigantic and terrifying figure, and extensive throat - for they were convinced that any one who could shout so vociferously must have good and weighty reasons.

But in dealing with the Shah, Ermolov adopted other tactics: by using the grossest flattery and claiming, without warrant, to be the descendant of Djenghis Khan, he apparently succeeded in making a very favorable impression on the Persian ruler. Nevertheless, the Russian envoy's uncompromising attitude with respect to territorial concessions led to a complete impasse. Since the Persians regarded the return of some territory as a sine qua non, they proved

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42 AKAK, 6, pt. 2: 142.
44 Ibid.
45 See Balaian, pp. 41, 51.
to be as unaccommodating as Ermolov. In short, the Ermolov mission ended without having removed the tension in Russo-Persian relations.\textsuperscript{46}

The Russian general had proven to be a tough negotiator, too inflexible perhaps to measure up to the letter and spirit of his instructions. Upon recrossing the frontier into Russia, Ermolov summed up his unfavorable impressions of Persia in his diary:

\begin{quote}
To you, Persia, who dares not cast off the fetters of a most ignominious bondage imposed by a boundless and insatiable authority; where the base character of the people destroys the dignity of man and takes away any notion of his rights; where the duties of each man are interpreted as cringing subservience before his master; where religion itself teaches evil deeds and good works receive no reward - to you I consecrate my hatred and, putting my curse upon you, I prophesy your downfall.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

In one respect only did Ermolov successfully make any headway with the Persians. He managed to gain their consent to the establishment of a permanent Russian diplomatic legation in the country.\textsuperscript{48} Broadly speaking, the purpose of this permanent mission was to ensure the full implementation of the Treaty of Gulistan. In particular, it was

\textsuperscript{46}For a full account of the Ermolov mission, see ibid., pp. 33-53; and Ad. P. Berzhe, "Posol'stvo A. P. Ermolova v Persiiu," Russkaia starina, 1877, no. 6, pp. 255-74 and no. 7, pp. 389-427.


\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., p. 421; Enikolopov, A. S. Griboedov v Gruzii i Persii, pp. 1-2.
expected to promote the growth of trade between the two countries and to keep an eye on the activity of Russia's "political enemies." Control over the Russian legation would be exercised by two authorities: the Asiatic Department within the State College of Foreign Affairs at St. Petersburg and the commander-in-chief of Russia's forces in Georgia. It would be the customary practice of the Russian Foreign Ministry to deal with the authorities in Persia through the agency of the commander-in-chief in Georgia (that is, the governor-general of the Caucasus).

At the recommendation of General Ermolov, Simon I. Mazarovich was appointed head of the legation, with the rank of chargé d'affaires. It was as secretary to this mission that Aleksandr Griboedov embarked upon his diplomatic career.


50 Balaian, p. 69, n. 195.

51 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaja deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 30.

52 AKAK, 6, pt. 2: 180.
CHAPTER III

DEBUT AS A DIPLOMAT: FIRST TOUR OF DUTY
IN PERSIA AND GEORGIA, 1819 TO 1823

Griboedov, as noted previously, left St. Petersburg to take up his diplomatic post in Persia at the end of August 1818. After stopping several days to visit his family in Moscow, he continued the long journey southward until he arrived in Tiflis on October 21. For the next four and a half years, Griboedov would be living and working among the peoples of Transcaucasia and northern Persia. During this first tour of duty, the young neophyte was to gain the practical experience that would stand him in good stead at a later stage of his diplomatic career.

While crossing the Caucasian mountains, Griboedov started to keep a record of his impressions - a kind of diary consisting of fragmentary notes and letters which he intended for the perusal of his friend Begichev.¹ These Putevye zapiski,² as the surviving notes are now called,

¹See Vano Shaduri, Dekabristskaja literatura i gruzinskaia obschestvennost' (Tbilisi, 1958), p. 85.

²The Putevye zapiski have been published in PSS, 3: 30-88.

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enable one at times to follow the traveler's progress on a day-to-day basis. They are a valuable source of information on his activities during some of the numerous trips which he would have occasion to make in the East.

On the very day of Griboedov's arrival in the Georgian capital, he was challenged to a duel by his former adversary, A. I. Iakubovich, now serving with the Nizhnii Novgorod Dragoons in the Caucasus. Iakubovich had sworn revenge on Griboedov and Zavadovskii for the death of his friend Sheremetev on the occasion of their notorious double-duel in St. Petersburg. Attempts by friends to reconcile the two men having failed, the encounter took place outside Tiflis on October 23. Iakubovich fired first, hitting Griboedov in the left hand; the latter, in turn, missed his man. Although Griboedov's wound was not dangerous, it crippled the little finger of his stricken hand for life. The incident soon came to the attention of the local authorities: Iakubovich had to take his leave of Tiflis, but Griboedov managed to escape scot-free. 3

In Tiflis, Griboedov joined the entourage of the head of the Russian mission to Persia, Simon Mazarovich, who had preceded him to Georgia. They were obliged to remain in

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3 An eyewitness account of the whole episode has been provided by Iakubovich's second, N. N. Murav'ev-Karskii, a prominent army officer who later became governor-general of the Caucasus in 1854 - see A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, pp. 58-64.
the city, awaiting the appearance of Ermolov, who, as governor-general of the Caucasus, had immediate control over Russia's diplomatic relations with Persia. The general was campaigning against the mountain tribesmen of Daghestan and did not return until the end of November. Two months more were to pass before Mazarovich and his suite finally left for Teheran, on January 28, 1819, in order to present their credentials to the Shah.

Griboedov has left a detailed description of this journey in his _Putevye zapiski_. Forming a small caravan, the diplomatic party traveled on horses and mules via the Armenian capital of Erivan and the Persian city of Tabriz. Upon arriving in Erivan, which was still a Persian possession, Griboedov's national pride was flattered by one incident:

The women stood with their backs to us, which embittered me, but in front louts carried chairs into the house allotted to us, and that cheered me up. This was a special mark of distinction for us Russians, whereas the English meekly bend their knees and sit on the floor with their shoes off, the best way they can, we sit cheerfully on our lofty seats and trample the precious Persian carpets with our thick soles. Ermolov's compatriots are obliged to him for that degree of respect which is rightly observed by these people.

Soon after Griboedov had crossed the Georgian frontier into the territory under Persian administration, we find

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4PSS, 1: XXXIV-XXXV.

5Ibid., 3: 45.
him complaining about the "blind servitude," the "blind power," and the cruelty and wantonly arbitrary actions of the local officials — all of which filled him with anger and contempt. He expresses indignation at the sight of a district administrator who, "in spite of thirty years of service, a grey head and the Koran in his hands," was being bastinadoed without having been brought to trial. This is not the only passage of his diary in which Griboedov reveals a sympathy for the wretched common people in Persia.

Our traveler adjusted fairly quickly to the difficulties of a wintertime journey across mountainous terrain: "I have become so accustomed to a horse that, while riding on a slippery slope or over ice-covered ground, I nonchalantly smoke a long pipe," he wrote. "There is one misfortune: my scanty knowledge of this region drives me mad at every step of the way. But did I ever think I would be traveling to the East? My thoughts were never directed here."

Mazarovich and his party arrived in Teheran the first week of March. The correspondence of the British chargé d'affaires, Henry Willock, affords a glimpse into what

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6 See ibid., pp. 50-51.

7 Ibid., p. 51.

8 Ibid., p. 41.
transpired during the Russians' sojourn there. In a private letter of April 1 (N.S.), 1819, to James Morier, an ex-diplomat from Britain's Persian establishment, Willock reported the following:

Mazarovich in his private conversation with the English gentlemen talks very wildly; he says we must establish in this country a superintending influence and exert it as you do in India. Persia must hereafter receive her Kings from us, . . . He courts' popularity very much amongst the great, rather too much so, to be successful; this will not do in Persia, a too humble deportment is apt rather to inspire contempt than respect: He is a very pleasant agreeable man and we live in the best terms. The King [i.e., Fath Ali Shah] does not like to be too closely observed by the Russians, and he has desired M. Mazarovitch to reside at Tabriz, and to my great astonishment he has made no objection.\(^9\)

Willock expressed surprise at Mazarovich's willingness to establish the residence of the Russian mission at Tabriz. The British diplomat believed that, by so doing, Mazarovich would "forego the great advantage in promotion of the interests of his sovereign, of having easy access to the Shah and his ministers."\(^10\) In point of fact, Willock's remarks are somewhat misleading. Tabriz was the principal city of Azerbaijan and the residence of Crown Prince Abbas Mirza. The Prince not only controlled the provincial government of Azerbaijan, but, more importantly, also had come to exercise a commanding influence in shaping

\(^9\)PRO: F.O. 60/15.

\(^10\)Ibid., Willock to Castlereagh, British secretary of state for foreign affairs, April 1 (N.S.), 1819.
Persia's foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia and Turkey. Practically all of Persia's contacts with those two neighboring empires were focused in Azerbaijan, especially from 1815 onward, when the Shah more or less abandoned himself to the pursuit of carnal pleasures at the expense of guiding the ship of state. Even the British recognized Abbas Mirza's growing ascendancy in state affairs and endeavored to influence his councils, for, although Willock himself was accredited to the court of Teheran, he was often to be found at Tabriz and one or more British agents were always in residence there. Indeed, whenever Persia's diplomatic negotiations with Britain pertained to problems involving Russia and Turkey, they were handled in Azerbaijan.  

After spending nearly five months at the court of Fath Ali Shah, the Russian legation moved to Tabriz. This city had once been a magnificent and flourishing metropolis. As recently as 1671 the French explorer Chardin noted that it contained 250 mosques and 300 caravanserais, with a population of more than 500,000. But by the start of the nineteenth century, the number of inhabitants had dwindled to between thirty and fifty thousand. Two calamitous earthquakes and the anarchical state of the country during the preceding decades account for the change. In 1810

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11 See F. Adamiyat, "The Diplomatic Relations of Persia with Britain, Turkey and Russia, 1815-1830," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1949), pp. 12-42, which discuss the factors that determined Persia's foreign policy in the aforementioned period.

an English traveler described Tabriz as "one of the most wretched cities in Persia."\textsuperscript{13} Its streets were mean and narrow and there were few public buildings of any distinction. Tabriz had always been an important emporium, owing to its proximity to Trebizond, Constantinople and the Black Sea, through which passed the main trade routes connecting Persia with Europe. Although the volume of its trade had declined over the years, the town's bazaar in the 1820's was still filled with all kinds of merchandise from different parts of Persia and neighboring countries. It was this commercial activity above all else which caught Griboedov's eye when he reached the Azerbaijani capital. The first entry in his diary on that occasion reads: "Tabriz with its bazaar and caravanserais."\textsuperscript{14} Such was the setting in which Griboedov was to spend the next several years.

The small staff of the Russian legation affords a good illustration of the non-national character of Russian diplomacy in those years. Mazarovich was the son of a Venetian admiral and a physician by profession. Having first entered the Russian service in 1807, he later accompanied Ermolov to Persia and performed so well that the general recommended him for the newly-created post of chargé d'affaires. Mazarovich would serve in that capacity until 1826. It would be another ten years before

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 521.

\textsuperscript{14}PSS, 3:53.
he became a Russian citizen, however. Another of Griboedov's colleagues was the German-born Andrei K. Amburger, who served as the legation's register clerk. He would be appointed Russia's consul-general at Tabriz in 1828. Besides these individuals, the staff included several Georgian interpreters.

Initially, Griboedov's opinion of Mazarovich was enthusiastically positive. But as the young secretary began to accumulate diplomatic experience, he became quite skeptical about the effectiveness of his chief's conduct of affairs. He apparently made no secret of his feelings, for we find the British chargé d'affaires reporting to London in October that Griboedov

... contrasts the power of the one State with the weakness of the other, which, he says, ought to be productive to Russia of a commanding influence over the Councils of Persia, whereas M. Mazarowiciutz, of whom he speaks very indecorously, does not sufficiently uphold the dignity of his Sovereign, and is too moderate and submissive in all his communications with the Persian Ministers.

A few years later, in a conversation with Murav'ev-Karskii, Griboedov would again censure Mazarovich's

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15 See the biographical note in O. I. Popova, A. S. Griboedov v Persii 1818-1823 g.g. (Moscow, 1929), p. 97.

16 Gostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 37.

17 See Popova, A. S. Griboedov v Persii 1818-1823 g.g., pp. 6-7, 9.

18 PRO: F.O. 60/14, Willock to Castlereagh, October 3 (N.S.), 1819.
undignified behavior toward Persian officials. (The incident which caused Griboedov's displeasure on this latter occasion will be discussed in another context.)

Quite possibly, Griboedov's disenchantment with Mazarovich partly stemmed from the fact that, as the head of the Russian legation, he was a foreigner. In this connection, the late D. P. Costello, a British scholar who has published several articles on Griboedov's diplomatic career, correctly points out that Griboedov had "his full share of the national pride" which marked the men of his generation who had participated in Russia's triumph over Napoleon.

Not long after the Russian mission had settled down in Tabriz, an opportunity arose for Griboedov to display that dogged determination with which he was to defend the interests and dignity of Russia throughout his diplomatic career. One of the most vexing problems confronting the tsarist authorities in Georgia was the army's steady loss of men through desertion. Conditions of service were difficult in the Caucasus; over the years a sizeable number of Russian soldiers had fled to Persia, attracted there by easier conditions of life and the chance to earn relatively good pay as military instructors. Abbas Mirza had long recognized the value of Russia's well-trained veterans:

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19 See below, pp. 70-71.

the most combat-worthy unit in his army at this time was
the elite "Russian battalion," which had been organized
entirely out of deserters and prisoners-of-war by an ex-
sergeant major of the Nizhnii Novgorod Dragoons named
Samson Iakovlev Makintsev.

The presence of Russian soldiers in the army of the
Crown Prince of Persia undermined Russia's prestige in the
East and adversely affected the morale of her troops posted
along the Persian frontier. For this reason the authorities
in Georgia tried repeatedly to obtain the repatriation of
the men in the "Russian battalion." A provision calling
for the return of all prisoners-of-war and deserters was
included in the Treaty of Gulistan, but all attempts at
implementation had been to no avail, since the Persians
were unwilling to part with such experienced veterans.

However, some of the Russians in the Persian service
evidently had come to regret their actions. Willock re-
ported to Castlereagh on September 2 (N.S.), 1819: "I under-
stand that many of the Corps of Russian deserters have
taken refuge in his [i.e., Mazarovich's] house, begging

i russkie begletsy v Persii v 1806-1855 gg.," Russkaia
starina, 1876, no. 4, pp. 771ff.

22 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost'
A. S. Griboedova, pp. 60-62.
him to send them back to their country."\textsuperscript{23} Griboedov took an immediate interest in the fate of these soldiers. On two occasions he brought a group of them to the Crown Prince to arrange for their return to Russia. Griboedov has left an interesting account of his second interview with Abbas Mirza, part of which follows:

Naib-Sultan [Crown Prince]: Do you see that basin? It is full and there is no great loss if a few drops escape from it. The same thing can be said of my Russians with respect to Russia.
I [Griboedov]: But what if those drops might wish to return to the basin – why prevent them?
N-S: I'm not preventing the Russians from returning to their fatherland.
I: I see that very clearly; nevertheless, they are being locked up, tormented and are not allowed to come to us.
N-S: What is there for them to do in Russia? Let them tell me and I'll return to you those who wish to go.
I: Perhaps that is the feeling of Your Highness but your entourage acts altogether differently; they are again trying to entice away, with promises of gold and anonymous letters, those who are already in our possession.
N-S: That's untrue; you're the ones inciting my people to revolt, whereas all of my servants have been acting properly.
I: Would Your Highness care to see? I have with me the anonymous letters of your officials.
N-S: I know about them; that was done at my command.
I: That's a great shame. I thought that was done without your knowledge. You say you are dissatisfied with us because we are acting falsely. Where? What have we been doing that is wrong? Be so kind as to make it known.
N-S: You're giving them money and whispering all kinds of tales into their ears.
I: Ask these men yourself if we have given so much as one gold coin to them. We can't possibly

\textsuperscript{23}PRO: F. O. 60/14.
whisper anything in their ears because in all the alleyways adjoining our quarters guards have been posted who keep us shut in and prevent us not only from whispering but also from talking aloud with anyone at all.

N-S: Why don't you behave like the English? They are quiet and mild. I'm very well pleased with them.

I: We don't model ourselves upon the English or upon anyone else. . . .

The argument continued a while longer, but in the end Abbas Mirza consented to the repatriation of the seventy soldiers accompanying Griboedov. Then Griboedov asked him to release a number of others still being detained against their will. He had previously submitted a list of these men to the Crown Prince. At this point Abbas Mirza summoned the head of the "Russian battalion," Samson Makintsev, to check the list. The sight of this traitor provoked Griboedov into an angry outburst:

I . . . declared that not only was it shameful to have this rogue in one's entourage but it was still more shameful to produce him before a Russian officer and gentleman. What would the Naib-Sultan say if our sovereign were to send a runaway Armenian from Persia to negotiate with him? "He is my noukar," [the Prince responded]. "He can be your general for all I care; to me he is a scoundrel and a blackguard, and I should not have to set eyes on him." At this he got angry and started to say all sorts of nonsense to me; I dished out twice as much in kind to him; he decided he didn't want to have anything more to do with me, and we parted.

24 PSS, 3: 61-62.

25 Persian for "servant."

26 PSS, 3: 64.
We learn in a report from Willock that the Crown Prince afterwards complained to Mazarovich about the conduct of his secretary and requested that Griboedov might never again be charged with any communication to him or his ministers. Nevertheless, instead of being counterproductive, Griboedov's bold performance achieved results. Early in September he departed for Tiflis at the head of a party of 158 POW's and deserters. During the homeward journey, the column was attacked by resentful Persians who injured three men with stones; however, Griboedov who had sworn to sacrifice his life for his "unhappy countrymen" if necessary, accomplished the mission successfully. His exploit was warmly applauded by Ermolov, who wrote to St. Petersburg recommending Griboedov for a decoration. However, officials in the capital took a different view. Evidently fearing that the whole proceeding would complicate relations with Persia, the Foreign Ministry rebuked the twenty-five-year-old secretary by replying that a "diplomatic official ought not to have behaved in such a fashion."  

27 PRO: F. O. 60/14, Willock to Castlereagh, October 3 (N.S.), 1819.  
28 PSS, 3: 64.  
29 Ibid., p. 61.  
30 AKAK, 6, pt. 2: 219.  
31 D. A. Smirnov, "A. S. Griboedov. Chernovaia tetrad' Griboedova," Russkoe slovo, 1859, no. 4, p. 79.
It is a fact, nonetheless, that Griboedov was the only Russian diplomat in those years who managed to repatriate some of his compatriots who were being held against their will and in contravention of the Treaty of Gulistan. More than twenty years were to pass before the Russians extricated another batch of these men.32

Lest one should be inclined to censure Griboedov's undiplomatic conduct toward Abbas Mirza, it would be well to mention here that Willock himself believed that it did not pay to be accommodating in one's dealings with the Persians.33 This attitude of the British chargé d'affaires was shared by other English diplomats in Persia. Sometimes a firm hand was needed to contend with the "delays, evasions, thriftless lies, and miserable shifts" of the Shah's officials.34 Sir Harford Jones' mission to Teheran in 180835 provides several instructive examples. From a chronicler's account of this mission, we read the following:

After Jones had landed at the Persian Gulf port of Bushire, he had difficulties to contend against of no common order, and it must be admitted that he faced them manfully. He found the Persian


33 See Costello, "Griboedov As a Diplomat," p. 57.

34 Quoted in ibid., p. 59 from a dispatch of a British diplomat in 1828.

35 See above, p. 35.
authorities but too well disposed to arrogance and insolence; and he met their pompous impertinence with a blustering bravery, which may have been wanting in dignity, but was not without effect. He bullied and blasphemed, and after a series of not very becoming scenes, made his way to Teheran. . . .36

While negotiating the Anglo-Persian Preliminary Treaty at the court of the Shah, Jones had to deal with Mirza Shafy, the grand vizier. At one point the latter alleged that the British envoy designed to "cheat" him (though, we are told, the Persian expression was much more offensive). What happened next is described thus:

Jones had not the patience to bear it. . . . Turning to the astonished Wuzeer, [Jones] told him that he was a stupid old blockhead to dare to use such words to the representative of the King of England, and that nothing but respect for the Persian monarch restrained him from knocking out the old man's brains against the wall. "Suiting the action to the word, I then," says Jones, in his own narrative of his mission, "pushed him with a slight degree of violence against the wall which was behind him, kicked over the candles on the floor, left the room in darkness, and rode home without any one of the Persians daring to impede my passage."37

When conducting negotiations or business with the Persians, European diplomats were all too frequently driven to the point of exasperation by the devious modus operandi of the Shah and his officials. How the foreign envoy reacted to the situation would depend in large measure on his character and temperament.


37Ibid., p. 70.
Almost a year after his confrontation with Abbas Mirza, Griboedov became involved in a clash with the British chargé d'affaires, Henry Willock. The point at issue again concerned Russian deserters. In August 1820, when Mazarovich was temporarily absent from Tabriz, Griboedov received information which led him to believe that a band of Russian deserters had been escorted to Tabriz by Captain Edward Willock (a brother of the chargé d'affaires) and his servant, upon their return from a visit to Georgia. Griboedov immediately drafted a sharp protest to the British diplomat, accusing Captain Willock of encouraging the desertion of Russian soldiers and of permitting his servant to collect a party of deserters on the frontier. An exchange of notes followed in which Henry Willock vigorously rebutted these allegations, and it does appear from his reply that Griboedov acted on misleading information.38

The affair itself was of little importance, but it reveals Griboedov again as a staunch champion of the rights and dignity of his country. Moreover, Aleksandr Sergeevich's impulsive nature stands out in sharp relief during this squabble. In his correspondence with London, Willock attributed the behavior of Griboedov on this occasion to the latter's "hasty and intemperate disposition" and "impassioned feelings"; Willock also called attention to his

adversary's "violent and imprudent conduct" and "irratibility [sic] of . . . temper."  

The Englishman's characterization of Griboedov should not be dismissed on grounds of prejudice, since other evidence drawn from contemporary Russian sources tends to corroborate it. As an example, one may cite the testimony of P. A. Karatygin, an actor acquaintance of Griboedov's, who describes the poet-diplomat as "modest and indulgent in a circle of friends, but extremely hot-tempered, arrogant and irritable when he met people not to his liking." Griboedov, as Karatygin goes on to illustrate, was quick to take offense at the slightest affront to his personal dignity. Whatever the challenge to his own honor or that of this country, Griboedov would meet it headlong, heedless even of any risk to his personal safety. Indeed, he seemed to respond best to the challenge of action and danger - such moments, however, were infrequent during his first stint of duty in Persia.

Instead, it was with the tedium of life in a provincial Azerbaijani town that Griboedov had most often to cope. The isolation of his post compounded matters: "News from Russia reaches me like rays from Sirius - after six years," Griboedov wrote to his poet friend P. A. Katenin

39 Ibid., p. 83.

40 A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 113.

41 See ibid., pp. 113-15.
in February 1820. In the same letter he described his existence after six months at Tabriz with unfeigned irony:

Don't picture me, however, as being too pitiful. I've been able to add variation to my boredom and I've divided my time; I get bored alternately with the Persian Lugat, which I haven't taken up since September; with the work of nothing to do [delovye bezdel'ia]; or in conversations with comrades. My gaiety has vanished; I don't write verses, though I might have done so, but there is no one to read them to - my colleagues aren't Russian. As to my dear, piano - I haven't the faintest idea where it is. The books which I sent from Petersburg by the same route have been lost.

From time to time the foreign colony at Tabriz provided Griboedov with some solace. In those years the court of Abbas Mirza had attracted a small crowd of Europeans, many of whom were French and Italian adventurers - the flotsam and jetsam of the Napoleonic wars - seeking employment in the Persian service. Since Griboedov was conversant in many languages, he was often able to amuse himself in the company of these expatriates - especially with those among the fair sex. From a letter dated May 3, 1820, we find that he has taken a certain de la Fosse, the daughter of a French doctor, as his mistress. And the following month he writes to the same correspondent: "What a pity . . . that you aren't here now. . . . What women you would

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42 PSS, 3: 136.

43 Arabic for "dictionary."

44 PSS, 3: 137.

45 Ibid., p. 139, Griboedov to N. A. Kakhovskii, an officer of the Caucasian Corps.
find with me. Not just one, but many, and each more charming than the other. Who could have foreseen this two months ago! The paths of love are inscrutable!"  

Amorous escapades, however, were small consolation to Aleksandr Sergeevich, who was now cursing the day when he had put on the uniform of the College of Foreign Affairs. In 1820 he made several unsuccessful attempts to extricate himself from Tabriz. On one occasion he requested Ermolov to transfer him to Tiflis as a "judge" or "teacher." On another, he wrote to an official whose identity remains unestablished seeking permission to resign from state service for the following reason:

The knowledge which I possess consists of languages: Slavonic [sic] and Russian, Latin, French, English, German. During my presence in Persia I have studied Persian and Arabic. But he who wants to be of use to society must have more than simply several different words for the expression of a single idea, as Rivarol says; the more knowledge a person has, the better he can serve his fatherland. It is in order to have the means of acquiring this knowledge that I am asking to be relieved

46 Ibid., p. 142.


48 PSS, 3: 141-42.

49 It has been suggested by N. K. Piksanov, the foremost Russian scholar on Griboedov, that the official in question was Karl Nesselrode (Tvorcheskaia istoriia "Goria ot uma" [Moscow, 1928; reprint ed., 1971], p. 83).

50 Antoine Rivarol (1753-1801), a French critic and publicist.
of my duties or to be recalled from a dismal country
where, instead of learning something new, a person
even forgets what he knows. I have preferred to
tell you the truth, instead of pleading as a pre-
text poor health or disordered family fortunes -
commonplaces which no one believes.51

Griboedov, though, did not succeed in leaving Persia until
November 1821. His departure came about as a consequence
of the outbreak of war between Persia and Turkey - a major
event for which, according to available evidence, he was
partly responsible. Indeed, as we shall see below,
Griboedov himself later claimed "credit" for it.

The chain of events leading to the 1821-23 Perso-
Turkish war originated with the start of the Greek nationalist
uprising against Turkey in March 1821. At the outset
of the Greek struggle for independence, the Russian govern-
ment adopted a non-interventionist policy, since Alexander I
was unwilling to come to the aid of a nation in revolt
against its legitimate sovereign - the Turkish sultan. None-
theless, when the ramifications of the conflict, particularly
the Turkish sanctions against Greek shipping in the Black
Sea, began to impinge upon Russia's economic interests, the
tsarist government was provoked into action.52 In August
1821, St. Petersburg recalled its ambassador from Constanti-
inople, severing diplomatic relations with the Porte.

51PSS, 3: 145; the quotation above was written in
French on the back of a draft letter to another corres-
dpondent, dated November 17, 1820.

52See A. V. Fadeev, Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis
At this moment of acute tension between the Russians and Ottomans, a possibility arose for the formation of a Russo-Persian alliance. The initiative came from Tabriz. For the preceding several years, the Persians had been on very bad terms with their Ottoman neighbors due to an acrimonious dispute between Abbas Mirza and the Turkish governor at Erzerum over two wandering tribes which Persia claimed as its subjects and to which Turkey offered protection. 53 Now that Russia was also engaged in a serious quarrel with Turkey, Abbas Mirza judged the moment opportune for the creation of a joint front against their common adversary. The Persian Prince was also motivated by the thought that an entente with Russia might lead to a favorable settlement of their frontier dispute. 54 Accordingly, he made his desire known to Alexander I. However, his overture failed to elicit a positive response from St. Petersburg, 55 since both Alexander I and Nesselrode were disinclined to make an alliance with Persia. 56 A conflict between Persia and Turkey would have suited Russia at this

53 Watson, p. 197.
54 Adamiyat, p. 243.
55 Ibid., p. 244.
time only in the event of her declaring war against the latter power. But Alexander I was bent on averting war if possible. War would have jeopardized the unity of the Quadruple Alliance, inasmuch as both Britain and Austria were opposed to any unilateral action by Russia against the Turks.\textsuperscript{57} Hence, the withdrawal of the Russian ambassador from Constantinople had been meant as a warning and, as such, had the desired effect. Turkey gave way and peace between the two states was not broken in 1821.

Unfortunately, at this crucial juncture in the summer of 1821, the coordination of Russia's diplomacy toward Persia appears to have broken down completely. Whereas Alexander I clearly wished to have peace maintained between Persia and Turkey, his commander-in-chief in the Caucasus was pursuing an opposite policy. Ermolov, anticipating an imminent outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Turkey, feared that the latter power would appeal to Persia, in spite of their mutual animosity, to form an anti-Russian bloc on religious grounds.\textsuperscript{58} He therefore instructed Mazarovich, in a communication dated July 1, 1821, to "devise means of averting such consequences." Ermolov even suggested that Abbas Mirza should be made to understand that he could rise in popular esteem by expanding Persia's

\textsuperscript{57}See Fadeev, Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kh godov XIX veka, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{58}AKAK, 6, pt. 2: 242.
territorial limits at the expense of the Turks, who, with their hands tied fighting the Greeks, were powerless to block such a move. The upshot of Ermolov's directive was that the Russian legation at Tabriz instigated Abbas Mirza to attack the Turks. This was done, however, without special authority from St. Petersburg.

The testimony of Willock, who endeavored to dissuade the Crown Prince from hostilities, sheds some light on this matter. In 1825 he wrote:

... I can only recall one occasion on which Russia seemed to exercise a predominating sway or to carry any public point to which Great Britain was opposed. I allude to the invasion of Erzeroom in the autumn of 1821. ... The Prince Royal was at the ... time urged to hostilities by M. Mazarowietz. Although Russia disavowed the act of her agent there can be no doubt as to the fact. His letter to this effect was delivered to me to which was attached his seal. I translated it and sent it to the Foreign Office. ... 

The evidence for Griboedov's role in this affair comes from his own pen at a later date. On December 3, 1828, when

59 Ibid., pp. 242-43.

60 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 69.

61 PRO: F.O. 60/25, Willock to Canning, February 12 (N.S.), 1825. The "letter" to which Willock refers was dated August 29 [1821] and was sent by Mazarovich to Teheran in an attempt to justify to the Persian government the action of Abbas Mirza in invading a neighboring country without instructions to this effect from the Shah. For the text of this remarkable document, see Costello, "Griboedov As a Diplomat," p. 61, n. 28.
Russia was at war with Turkey and Persian assistance might have been useful, Griboedov, now Russia's minister pleni­potentiary to Persia, wrote to General I. F. Paskevich, the new commander-in-chief of the Caucasus:

Stir up our drowsy Ministry of External and Extraordinary Affairs. Write directly to the Emperor, giving your opinion regarding Abbas Mirza — namely, that it would be a good idea to arm him against the Turks. I can't take this upon myself, without special authority from my chiefs. In 1821 I did precisely this very successfully and received a dressing down from Nesselrode, although Ermolov fully approved me. The same thing might happen now. You will praise me, but the devils will peck me to pieces.63 (Emphasis supplied.)

A further reference to Griboedov's involvement in the outbreak of the Perso-Turkish war in 1821 appears in the diary of Murav'ev-Karskii, who recorded a conversation with Griboedov in Tiflis on February 2, 1822:

. . . He told me, among other things, about Mazarovich's behavior in Persia and the way his conduct lowers the dignity of his post and, consequently, of our Emperor. When dispatches were received from Petersburg informing the Persian court that the Turks were incurring the displeasure of the Emperor by their conduct and provoking us to war, Abbas Mirza had to be informed that the Emperor wished all nations to know that he was not moved by any desire for conquest but merely by the improper actions of the Turks toward him. Griboedov went to Abbas Mirza and explained this to him, saying that the Emperor was not asking for allies but was merely informing him of the fact. Abbas Mirza, delighted at this opportunity, promised to put 50,000 men in the field and march against the Turks, which he did do. The next day Mazarovich, meeting him in a garden, began to talk to him about the same subject; but, instead

62 In the original: Ministerstvo Inostrannykh i prestrannykh del.

63 PSS, 3: 239.
of preserving a proper decorum, he requested Abbas Mirza to be our ally, and when the Mirza expressed his consent, seized his hand and kissed it in a token of gratitude. There you have a gesture worthy of a foreigner, a hireling in our service. 64

Since it had not been the policy of Alexander I to incite Persia into attacking the Turks, Russia remained neutral during the conflict. 65 British mediation brought the warring parties to the peace table, and the Treaty of Erzerum, which ended the struggle, was concluded in July 1823. 66 The outcome was a stalemate, with each side retaining the territory which had belonged to it at the commencement of the war. Persia had suffered considerable losses of human and material resources, however. And it would have been natural for Abbas Mirza to consider that he had been let down by Russia, whose diplomats had misled him.

D. P. Costello, whose analysis of Griboedov's role in the outbreak of the Perso-Turkish war merits attention, believes that the blame for the gaffe which Mazarovich and Griboedov committed does not lie on them but upon Ermolov, from whom they received their immediate instructions. 67 On the other hand, the Soviet scholar B. P. Balaian has charged that Russia's Foreign Ministry was at fault for

64 A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 68.
65 Semenov, p. 72.
66 The text of the treaty is in Hurewitz, 1: 90-92.
67 "Griboedov As a Diplomat," p. 63.
failing to inform its mission in Persia that the breaking off of diplomatic relations with the Porte was not intended as a prelude to war. Regardless of where the blame lay, Griboedov learned a lesson from this episode. When Russia finally declared war against Turkey in 1828, Griboedov, who was then the topmost Russian diplomat in Persia, wrote to his friend F. V. Bulgarin, a journalist with close connections in the Foreign Ministry:

You keep insisting in your letters that I get Abbas Mirza to go to war with the Turks. My dear fellow, do you know whether I have permission to do so? I am surprised that someone who knows the answer to this better than you do should say that I could do this. If you are in the service of the State then the thing you have to do is, above all, to follow literally the instructions you receive from above. If at the same time you can also manage to do something that gets into the newspapers, then so much the better. I'm prepared to think up all sorts of offensive plans, but not to put them into action until I am instructed to proceed thus and not otherwise.

In November 1821, Griboedov was sent by Mazarovich to Tiflis to report on the state of affairs in Persia following the outbreak of the Perso-Turkish war. During the journey from Tabriz to the Georgian capital, he chanced to break his arm. The double fracture was so complicated that Griboedov was obliged to remain under special medical surveillance at Tiflis. He took advantage of this fortuitous circumstance to escape from Persia for good.

68 Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniiia Irana v 1813-1828 gg., p. 75.
69 PSS, 3: 232.
He managed to enlist the support of Ermolov, who appealed to St. Petersburg to have Griboedov reassigned to his administration in Georgia. Ermolov's petition was approved: in February 1822 Griboedov became his diplomatic secretary. A promotion to the rank of Collegiate Assessor occurred about the same time - also at the behest of Ermolov.

Aleksandr Sergeevich now found himself in familiar surroundings. The Georgian capital, a place of contrasting European and Asiatic cultures, had become the economic, administrative and cultural center for all of Transcaucasia. It was a fair-sized city in the 1820's: the number of inhabitants, together with the troops stationed there, ranged up to forty thousand. Most of the townspeople lived in terribly crowded quarters on the right bank of the Kura River, because the opposite bank lay exposed to the raids of the dreaded Lezghis, ferocious mountain tribesmen from Dagestan. The presence of Russian troops in the city had helped to restore some measure of public security but at the expense of further congestion. Since the arrival of Ermolov, the Russians had set to work energetically to enlarge the city by constructing an army headquarters building, soldiers' barracks, a supply depot, as well as many private dwellings.

70 See AKAK, 6, pt. 2: 255-56.

71 Ibid., p. 253; Belokurov, p. 392. Collegiate Assessor was equivalent to the rank of major.

72 Enikolopov, A. S. Griboedov v Gruzii i Persii, p. 6.
The appearance of Tiflis took on a modern look as streets were paved, the bazaar roofed over and the castle refurnished. When Griboedov first came to the city in 1818, the building program was in full swing and it would continue into the next decade. Interestingly enough, in 1827 he himself drew up a project for replanning Tiflis on improved lines.

Compared to the confining isolation of Tabriz, the atmosphere in Tiflis was far more congenial for Griboedov. His modest lodging - two rooms on the upper floor of a small house near the Armenian bazaar - contained at least one item dear to his heart: a piano which he purchased from a Russian officer acquaintance. Tiflis offered much more opportunity for social contacts. He became a frequent guest at the homes of such local grandees as Prince V. G. Madatov, the commanding general in the Moslem khanates, and R. I. Khoven, the governor of Tiflis. But most often of all, he could be found at the residence of P. N. Akhverdova, an intelligent and cultured widow, whose salon attracted the cream of the Russian and Georgian aristocracy.

73 See ibid., pp. 6-7; Lang, The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy, p. 271.

74 See his "Zapiska o luchshikh sposobakh vnov' postroit' gorod Tiflis" in PSS, 3: 251-52.


It was there that Griboedov first met his future wife, Nina Chavchavadze. Her father, Prince Aleksandr G. Chavchavadze, was the commander of the Nizhniy Novgorod Dragoons. This Georgian nobleman owned a magnificent estate not far from Tiflis called Tsinandali, which served as a rendezvous for young liberal-minded Russian officers and members of the native intelligentsia. Griboedov loved to visit Tsinandali, as much for its beautiful scenery as for the chance to engage in discussions with local luminaries.\textsuperscript{77} It should be noted in passing that this Tiflis period proved to be an important stage in Aleksandr Sergeevich's literary career. Much of his famous masterpiece \textit{Gore ot uma} was written at this time.

Griboedov could concentrate on literature in Tiflis, because his duties on Ermolov's staff did not entail much work. "Under Aleksei Petrovich I had a lot of leisure," he revealed some years later, "and, as I performed but little service, I therefore read to my heart's content."\textsuperscript{78} Some of his time was also consumed in traveling about the Caucasus, either on military expeditions against the unpacified tribes in the region, or in the company of Englishmen whom he was supposed to keep under surveillance.

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., p. 15.

\textsuperscript{78}PSS, 3: 198, Letter from Griboedov to F. V. Bulgari, April 16, 1827.
at the request of Ermolov. All these diverse activities contributed to Griboedov's ever-increasing store of knowledge about the lands and peoples of Transcaucasia. It is highly probable that with his background and interest in jurisprudence, Griboedov kept abreast of the work then in progress on a Russian translation of the Code of Tsar Wakhtang VI, which embodied the corpus of Georgia's feudal law. The special commission entrusted with this important task was headed by governor Khoven, with whom Griboedov, as previously mentioned, was in frequent contact.

The most important part of Griboedov's official duties in Tiflis dealt with commercial matters. He had already gained a certain amount of experience in this field at Tabriz, where the Russian mission was actively engaged in promoting the growth of trade with Persia. It is worth noting in this connection that the turnover in Russo-Persian trade increased almost threefold between 1815 and 1820: from 1,800,000 rubles to 4,250,000. In Tiflis Griboedov became involved in another highly important commercial project - namely, the implementation of Alexander

79 See Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, pp. 84-85.
80 See Enikolopov, Griboedov v Gruzii, pp. 13-14.
81 A. V. Fadeev, Rossiia i Kavkaz v pervoi treti XIX v. (Moscow, 1960), p. 54.
I's decree of October 8, 1821. This decree was designed to stimulate the development of trade and the investment of capital in Transcaucasia. It granted, for a period of ten years, special customs concessions and other privileges to Russian and foreign merchants, including a preferential tariff of only five percent on all foreign goods imported into Transcaucasia; it also provided for the duty-free transit of foreign goods across the territory of Georgia from the Black Sea port of Redut-Kaleh to the Persian border. The tsarist government thereby hoped to divert through Georgia the flow of European merchandise to Persia that normally moved along the caravan routes in Turkish territory - that is, via Trebizond, Erzerum and Kars to Tabriz and beyond.

The decree of 1821 helped to stimulate the economic life of Transcaucasia primarily by expanding the region's commercial ties with the foreign European market. The Georgian capital became an active center for trade between Europe and Asia. As the local French consul Gamba observed in 1822: "Sometimes there arrived in Tiflis on one and the same day wholesale dealers from Paris, couriers from

82 Enikolopov, Griboedov v Gruzii, pp. 17, 19.
83 See Fadeev, Rossiia i Kavkaz v Pervoi treti XIX v., pp. 55-56.
84 Ibid., p. 56; see also M. K. Rozhkova, Ekonomicheskaia politika tsarskogo pravitel'stvva na Srednem Vostoke vo vtoroi chetverti XIX veka i russkaia burzhuaziia (Moscow, 1949), pp. 51-52.
Petersburg, merchants from Constantinople, Englishmen from Calcutta and Madras, Armenians from Smyrna and Yezd, [and] Uzbeks from Bokhara. . . ."85

Griboedov's participation in the work connected with this large-scale, state-sponsored commercial project of 1821 provided him with a lot of valuable information on the economic life of Transcaucasia. His familiarity with the economics of the region would enable him at a later date to draw up a grandiose plan for the establishment of a Russian Transcaucasian Company - a wide-ranging private capitalist scheme designed to develop the economic resources of the area.

Among the many individuals with whom Griboedov came into contact in the Caucasus, none was more imposing than Ermolov. It has been said of him that "in person no less than in character Ermolov impressed all who came near him as one born to command."86 A giant of a man, with immense physical strength, he was admired for his incorruptible honesty, unsurpassed courage and simple, Spartan-like habits. He was always mindful of the well-being of his troops and would share his last crust with those in need. He disliked formality and addressed his men as "comrades," even in written orders. Such democratic behavior from

85 Quoted in Enikolopov, Griboedov v Gruzii, p. 19.

86 Baddeley, p. 94.
a person of Ermolov's exalted rank was unknown in the Russian army.\textsuperscript{87}

The head of Russia's entire military and civilian administration in the Caucasus was also a man of broad culture, a brilliant conversationalist and an accomplished linguist. As a youth he had been greatly influenced by Enlightenment thought, which accounts for the skeptical and rationalist cast of his mind. The obscurantism and reactionary atmosphere of the Arakcheev regime disgusted him, as did the Petersburg bureaucracy and the coterie of inept advisers at the imperial court. Ermolov's independent-mindedness and opposition to the extreme manifestations of the "Arakcheevshchina" made him extremely popular among the progressive-thinking members of the Russian officer corps - to such an extent that the Decembrists regarded him as one of their own.\textsuperscript{88}

However, it would be a misstatement to make a revolutionary of Ermolov. His was a complicated, contradictory character. He was a monarchist at heart, dissatisfied with the details but not with the fundamentals of the autocratic, serf-owning regime.\textsuperscript{89} Although he was

\textsuperscript{87} Whittock, p. 56.

\textsuperscript{88} See Nechkina, A. S. Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 197-98.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p. 197.; Fadeev, Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kh godov XIX veka, p. 223.
distrusted by the reactionaries at the imperial court, Ermolov would remain a loyal servant of the emperor. When the acid test finally came in the form of the Decembrist uprising, Ermolov kept himself and his regiments out of the fray, notwithstanding his sympathy and practical help for opponents of the regime.

In the Caucasus Ermolov was a pillar of authority, and order. He regarded all the tribes, whether "peaceable" or not, as de facto Russian subjects, or destined to be sooner or later, and in any case demanded from them unconditional submission. The methods he employed for pacification — the devastation of crops, the sacking of villages, the massacre of men and the ravaging of women — were based on calculated cruelty. As Ermolov himself said:

I desire that the terror of my name should guard our frontiers more potently than chains or fortresses, that my word should be for the natives a law more inevitable than death. Condescension in the eyes of Asiatics is a sign of weakness, and out of pure humanity I am inexorably severe. One execution saves hundreds of Russians from destruction, and thousands of Mussulmans from treason.  

The commander-in-chief inspired fear and hatred among the Asiatics but enjoyed the loyalty and affection of the officers and men under his command. From the moment of Griboedov's first encounter with Ermolov at the end of

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90 Baddeley, p. 97.

91 Quoted in ibid.
1818, he, too, became an admirer:

... What a wonderful man he is! [Griboedov notes in his *Putevye zapiski* on January 29, 1819]. It is not enough to say that he is intelligent - nowadays everyone is intelligent - but he is thoroughly Russian, qualified for everything, not for great deeds alone, nor for only minor affairs, take note of that. What's more, his eloquence is enormous, but not like the rhetoric of today - fragmentary, incoherent, Napoleonic; his words ought to be immediately set down on paper. He loves to talk a lot; however, he permits others to have, their say... . . .

Griboedov was willing at this time to defend Ermolov's brutal policies toward the tribes: "[He] pacifies the rebels with arms, hangs [them], sets fire to their villages. But what can one do? According to the law, I do not approve certain of his arbitrary actions, but remember that he is in Asia - here even an infant seizes a dagger... . . ."

That was written in 1819, when our fledgling diplomat was still spellbound by the imposing personality of the general. But as Griboedov gained experience in the years to come, he would reject the notion that Russia's authority in the Caucasus could best be maintained by a policy based on "calculated cruelty." Eventually he would become disillusioned with the Proconsul of the Caucasus.

In 1823 Griboedov was given a four-month leave of absence by Ermolov to go to Moscow and St. Petersburg "on

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92 *PSS*, 3: 35-36.

93 Ibid., pp. 36-37.
diplomatic business." Surmise has it that the purpose of this trip was to establish direct contact with the Ministry of Finance, in order to resolve some problems concerning the transit trade in Georgia. At any rate, he was not reluctant to leave, for, despite all the charm and variety of Caucasian life, Griboedov was still not content with his situation. In January we find him writing from Tiflis: "A few more days yet and I am going to abandon this city, and the boredom and aversion which persecute me here, which perhaps I'll find somewhere else." It was already the beginning of March before Aleksandr Sergeevich finally left the Georgian capital and he would not return to the Caucasus until the autumn of 1825 - more than two and a half years later.

94 PSS, 1: XLV.
95 Enikolopov, Griboedov v Gruzii, p. 20.
CHAPTER IV

THE DECEMBRIST INTERLUDE, 1824 TO 1826

In March 1823 Aleksandr Sergeevich returned to Moscow, where family and acquaintances promptly dubbed him "Griboedov the Persian."\(^1\) Evidently, he had no intention of returning to diplomatic affairs in the near future, for we find him still in his native city the following year, long after his original four-month leave of absence had expired. He was obliged to apply for an extension of leave (on the pretext of having to go abroad for a water cure) before proceeding to St. Petersburg, where he arrived on June 1, 1824.\(^2\)

During the interval spent in Moscow, Griboedov had finished writing *Gore ot uma*, which was immediately acclaimed a masterpiece.\(^3\) Thereafter, news of this

\(^1\)PSS, 1: XLVI.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. XLVIII.
\(^3\)Gore ot uma was never published in its entirety nor performed on the stage in Griboedov's lifetime, owing to its acerbic comments on Russian, especially Moscow, society. Nevertheless, since it soon circulated in innumerable copies, it may, for practical purposes, be considered as first published in 1824. The almanac *Russkaia taliia* printed excerpts from the play in 1825; the first Russian edition, cut by the censor, appeared in 1833; but not until
literary tour de force preceded Griboedov to the Russian capital so that, upon arriving, he was greeted jubilantly by writers and actors. Thus, Griboedov's second sojourn in St. Petersburg began on a note of triumph, but little could he foresee the tragic denouement which would follow, for it was at this time that our diplomat-poet became involved with the Decembrist movement.

The full extent of Griboedov's participation in the Decembrist conspiracy is not clear to this day. Because of the fragmentary and contradictory nature of the evidence, the subject has long been a source of controversy in Soviet historiography. Despite its many ramifications, the connection between Griboedov and the Decembrists will be dealt with here, albeit in summary fashion, since it nearly brought his diplomatic career to an abrupt end.

After an absence of almost six years, the newly celebrated author of Gore ot uma plunged into the world of literature upon his return to the banks of the Neva. Among his many old friends and new acquaintances, both in and out of artistic circles, there were members of the Decembrist movement. Since 1821 St. Petersburg had become

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3 (Continued)

1862 was the full text published (N. M. Lisovskii, comp., "Bibliograficheskii ukazatel' proizvedenii A. S. Griboedova, i literatury o nem" in Polnoe sobranie sochinenii A. S. Griboedova, ed. I. A. Shliapkin, 2 vols. [St. Petersburg, 1889], 1: 425, 427-28, 439).

4 PSS, 1: XLVIII.

5 See Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 27-43.
the center of the secret Northern Society, one of the two main wings of the Decembrist organization, the other being located in the south of Russia. As readers familiar with Russia's first revolutionary movement know, the Northern Society would attempt to overthrow tsardom in the ill-fated uprising of December 14, 1825. Griboedov now came into frequent contact with some of the outstanding representatives of the Northern Society: Kondratii Ryleev, Prince Evgenii Obolenskii, Petr Kakhovskii, Prince Aleksandr Odoevskii, Wilhelm Küchelbecker, Ivan Pushchin and the Bestuzhev brothers - Aleksandr and Mikhail - to name a few.  

Indeed, throughout the winter and spring of 1824-25, Griboedov lived with his relative and close friend, Aleksandr Odoevskii, whose apartment served as one of the places where members of the secret society gathered to discuss issues and plan a course of action.  

There is no doubt whatsoever that Griboedov came to know about the existence of the secret societies - both Northern and Southern - although subsequently he would stubbornly deny this under government interrogation. Russian scholars agree that Aleksandr Sergeevich was well-informed about many details of the Decembrist movement; that he knew about the membership and organization of the societies as well as their plans for the reorganization

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6See ibid., pp. 384-90.

7Ibid., p. 392.
of the state. On the other hand, it is unclear whether Griboedov was actually enrolled as a member of a Decembrist society. On this point the evidence — mostly in the form of testimony from various Decembrists obtained during the state's investigation — is conflicting and ambiguous.

The problematical nature of the evidence has given rise to differing opinions among Griboedov's Russian biographers. N. K. Piksanov believes that Griboedov told his interrogators the truth when he denied belonging to a secret society. However, M. V. Nechkina has reached the conclusion that Aleksandr Sergeevich was enrolled into the Northern Society on a conditional or "incomplete" basis by his friend Kondratii Ryleev, the poet who became the leader of the society in 1825. This was done, in Nechkina's view, to safeguard such a talent as Griboedov from danger: he could, if necessary, always disclaim formal membership in the Society.

8 See ibid., pp. 395-98; PSS, 1: CXVIII.

9 See Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 402-03.

10 PSS, 1: CXX

11 M. Nechkina, "Griboedov i ego epokha," Bol'shevik, 1945, no. 3-4, pp. 43-44; see also Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 411-13. It is worth noting that under Ryleev's direction the Northern Society was greatly enlarged in 1825 — see Anatole G. Mazour, The First Russian Revolution (Berkeley, Calif., 1937), p. 128.
To say that Griboedov belonged to a Decembrist society does not, however, reveal much about his views on political and social problems. After all, the Decembrist movement was diversified and complex. Serious disagreements kept its members at odds on political, social, philosophical and religious issues. Some favored a constitutional monarchy, others a republic; some wished to give the liberated serfs land of their own, others opposed this; some were materialists and atheists, others believers. There was also a lack of unanimity with respect to tactics: some Decembrists believed a coup d'etat by a small number of army officers would be sufficient to overthrow the autocracy, whereas others insisted the participation of the masses was absolutely essential for the success of their goal.\(^\text{12}\) In general, the Northern Society was the more moderate organization - the Southern the more radical.

Unfortunately, there is no extant record of Griboedov's socio-political views. From his correspondence and the testimony of friends, it is known that, as a poet, he particularly desired to have the right to publish without censorship; and that he also favored the introduction of public trials and impartial justice.\(^\text{13}\) Moreover, it is believed that he wished to replace the autocracy with

\[^{12}\text{For more detail on these and other differences within the Decembrist movement, see Mazour, The First Russian Revolution, passim.}\]

\[^{13}\text{PSS, 1: CXVIII.}\]
another form of government - either a constitutional monarchy or a republic.\footnote{14} It is frequently claimed that Griboedov favored the end of serfdom.\footnote{15} This viewpoint is based solely on the fact that a number of Griboedov's plays condemn the human degradation caused by serfdom. But does this mean that the dramatist necessarily rejected the institution itself? In a painstaking study of Griboedov's attitude toward serfdom \textit{per se}, N. K. Piksanov has credibly demonstrated that, whereas the poet was opposed to the abuses of serfdom, there is insufficient evidence to prove that he desired its abolition.\footnote{16} Thus, on the two burning issues which confronted the Decembrists - autocracy and serfdom - little can be said with certitude about Griboedov's views.

There is, however, one certainty: the author of \textit{Gore ot uma} was not an ardent enthusiast of the Decembrist movement. Griboedov was by nature too much of a skeptic and too intelligent not to notice the weaknesses of the secret societies. As late as the eve of December 14, 1825, the revolutionary movement was plagued with factionalism, poor organization, poor communications and poor planning.\footnote{17} Was it not Griboedov's awareness of this situation which moved

\footnote{14}Nechkina, \textit{Griboedov i debakristy}, p. 401.  
\footnote{15}See, for example, Vl. Orlov, \textit{Griboedov: Ocherk zhizni i tvorchestva} (Moscow, 1954), p. 36.  
\footnote{17}See Mazour, pp. 154-202.
him to make his well-known ironical remark about the conspirators and their illusions: "A hundred lieutenants desire to change the entire way of life of the Russian state"? He has also been quoted as saying: "I told them that they were fools." Here it would be well to quote N. M. Druzhinin, an authoritative Soviet scholar, whose words, it seems to us, aptly capsulize the essence of Griboedov's relationship to the Decembrist movement:

A. S. Griboedov, together with the young P. A. Viazemskii, Denis Davydov and other figures from the Decembrist entourage, shared the principal aspirations of the secret society but alike rejected both the armed uprising of "a hundred lieutenants" and also the prospects for an organized revolt of the masses. This lack of faith in the possibility of any kind of revolutionary upheaval isolated them from the activity of the secret society and, in a definite sense, set them apart from the Decembrist conspiracy.

Let us now resume our narrative of events. In mid-May 1825, his extended leave of absence having already expired, Aleksandr Sergeevich left St. Petersburg for the Caucasus. His return journey took him to Kiev, where he paused to spend about ten days. Here a meeting was arranged with him by four leading Decembrists - Sergei and Artamon Murav'ev-Apostol, Mikhail Bestuzhev-Riumin and Prince Sergei Trubetskoi. The purpose of this Kievan parley with members of the Southern Society is a mystery. It is thought,

18 A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, pp. 228, 269; also PSS, 1: CXX-CXXI.

however, that Griboedov was asked to serve as a liaison between the Decembrists and General Ermolov, on whose support the conspirators were counting. Apparently, questions of a most pressing kind—possibly dealing with an action planned for the summer of 1825—were debated during this gathering.  

From Kiev Griboedov went to the Crimea, where he lingered about three months before continuing to the Caucasus in October. Instead of proceeding straight to Tiflis, he joined a detachment of troops under General A. A. Vel'iaminov, Ermolov's chief-of-staff and right-hand man, who was pursuing a band of Circassian raiders. On October 27 Vel'iaminov's detachment arrived at Ekaterinogradskaja station, a link in Russia's chain of forts in the northern Caucasus. Here Griboedov remained nearly two months. At the end of November Ermolov himself arrived in Ekaterinogradskaja. The commander-in-chief was preparing to pacify rebellious tribes in Chechnia and Griboedov received permission to join the expedition. It was during this campaign in the Caucasus that Aleksandr Sergeevich would be

20See M. V. Nechkina, Sledstvennoe delo o A. S. Griboedove (Moscow, 1945), pp. 50-78; and Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 450-71.

21Griboedov's activity in the Crimea is described in PSS, 1: LIX-LXII.
arrested on January 22, 1826 at Groznaia fortress in connection with the Decembrist conspiracy.22

On December 14, 1825, the abortive uprising of the Decembrists occurred in St. Petersburg. Immediately afterwards a committee headed by the new Emperor himself, Nicholas I, launched a thorough investigation of the affair. Arrests multiplied as more and more people were implicated in the conspiracy. On December 23, during its interrogation of Prince Sergei Trubetskoi, the Committee of Investigation heard Griboedov's name mentioned for the first time. Trubetskoi aroused the suspicion of the Committee against Aleksandr Sergeevich with this statement: "I know . . . from Ryleev that he enrolled Griboedov, who is serving under General Ermolov."23 Although the following day Ryleev himself denied Trubetskoi's testimony, the Committee decided to arrest Griboedov. A special military courier was dispatched to the Caucasus to apprehend him.24

The courier caught up with Griboedov when the latter was in Ermolov's entourage at Groznaia. According to an eyewitness of the scene, after Ermolov had been handed the order for Griboedov's arrest, he arranged to give his diplomatic secretary time to destroy incriminating papers

22 Ibid., pp. LXII-LXIII.


24 Ibid., pp. 480-81.
before placing him under custody. This magnanimous gesture may have been due solely to the fact that Ermolov loved Griboedov "like a son." Yet the possibility cannot be excluded that the Proconsul of the Caucasus, in helping Griboedov, was also trying to protect himself, for he, too, was suspected of subversive activity. Any rate, Ermolov did what he could for his secretary, as can also be seen from the secret dispatch he sent to Baron I. I. Dibich, chief of the Emperor's personal staff. Dated January 23, 1926, it reads in part:

... I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that Mr. Griboedov, during his service in our mission at the Persian court and later under me, has not been found to be corrupt in either his morals or conduct and has many very good qualities.

Griboedov was brought to St. Petersburg under escort and incarcerated, together with a number of other suspects, in the guard house of the General Staff building. He

25For two accounts of Griboedov's arrest, see A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, pp. 143-52, 182-83. Both versions claim that Ermolov "saved" Griboedov.


27See A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 150, n. 2.

28Ibid., p. 151, n. 1.

29Unlike the extremely harsh physical discomforts endured by the Decembrists incarcerated in the Peter and Paul fortress, the prisoners in the General Staff building enjoyed incredibly lenient conditions - see PSS, 1: LXVI-LXIX.
would remain under investigation for nearly four months. Throughout the entire ordeal, Griboedov adhered to an attitude of outraged innocence. He categorically denied having any knowledge at all about the Decembrist societies. Under questioning for the first time on February 11, the day of his arrival in St. Petersburg, he declared:

I did not belong to a secret society and did not suspect that any existed. Upon my return to Petersburg from Persia in 1825 [sic] I became acquainted, through the medium of literature, with Bestuzhev, Ryleev and Obolenskii. I lived together with Odoevskii and was associated with Küchelbecker in Georgia. From all these people I heard nothing which could have given me the slightest idea about [the existence of] a secret society. In their conversations I often saw bold judgments about the government; I, too, took part and condemned what appeared harmful and desired something better. There were no other activities of mine which could draw suspicion upon me and I cannot comprehend why it has fallen on me.30

The interrogation evidently passed off well as will be seen momentarily. Several days later, the imprisoned poet, exasperated at finding himself still under detention, took up his pen and wrote a vehement letter to the Emperor:

Most Gracious Sire! By virtue of unfounded suspicion and the greatest injustice, I have been torn away from my friends and from the commander I adore, dragged here on relay horses from the fortress of Groznaia on the Sundzh, three thousand versts in the most severe frost, placed under strong guard, and then summoned before General Levashev.31 He dealt with me courteously and I was completely sincere with him; I was sent away from him with the promise that I would be released soon. Meanwhile, the days go by and I am [still] locked up. Sire! I know of no guilt at all on my part. On my journey here from

31 The officer who had interrogated Griboedov.
the Caucasus, I carefully concealed my name so that no rumor of my sad fate would reach my mother, who might go out of her mind if she heard. But if my confinement is prolonged, she will, of course, find out. Your Imperial Majesty Yourself nourishes the most reverent feelings toward Your Most August mother. Be so kind as to grant me the freedom of which I did not deserve by my conduct to be deprived, or send me before the Secret committee, face to face with my accusers, so that I may expose their lies and slander.

Nicholas I probably never set eyes upon this letter, since Baron Dibich refused to forward it on the grounds that "one does not write to the Sovereign in this tone."  

As early as February 25, the Committee of Investigation came to the conclusion that Griboedov "had not belonged to the society and did not know about its existence." It recommended that he be released from custody, but Nicholas I refused to accept the Committee's decision. The Emperor was evidently unwilling to set Griboedov free as long as the government had not yet determined what part,

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32 This was patently untrue. Enroute to St. Petersburg, Griboedov and his military escort stopped briefly in Moscow, where Aleksandr Sergeevich, in a note to his former tutor Ion, requested his mother and sister be advised of his arrest. Moreover, his mother was told everything by Stepan Begichev, whom Griboedov managed to see in Moscow (Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, p. 502; A. S. Griboedov v vospominanliakh sovremennikov, pp. 229-30).

33 PSS, 3: 189.

34 Ibid., 1: LXIX.

35 Ibid.; p. LXX.
In January 1826 Nicholas I had ordered Prince Aleksandr S. Menshikov and another agent, Colonel F. F. Bartolomei, on a mission to Persia. Ostensibly Menshikov was to conduct negotiations on the Russo-Persian border question, but both he and Bartolomei had also been secretly instructed to investigate all of Ermolov's activity in the East and to gather information on Griboedov. The new Emperor did not trust his commander-in-chief in the Caucasus: Ermolov's name appeared among the army officers suspected of disloyalty on a list which had been drawn up by Alexander I in 1824. Since Aleksandr Sergeevich was Ermolov's subordinate, one historian has aptly remarked that in this situation "the shadow of Ermolov had fallen on Griboedov as, in turn, the shadow of Griboedov lay upon Ermolov." It was not until the middle of May that Nicholas I received two reports from Menshikov, neither of which cast any doubt upon Ermolov's political reliability.

36 Ibid.; Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, p. 496.


39 Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, p. 57.
Furthermore, no information on Griboedov was to be found in either report. 40

On June 2 Griboedov was released from prison and given a clean bill of health in the form of a certificate which stated that he had not been a member of a secret society. (It did not claim, however, that he had not known about the Decembrist conspiracy.) As compensation, he received promotion to the succeeding grade of the civil service – Court Councillor, which corresponded to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the military – plus a year’s salary. On June 6 he, along with five other released prisoners, was presented to the Tsar. 41

This highly favorable outcome may be attributed to a number of factors. Not the least important were Griboedov’s presence of mind and the steadfastness with which he maintained his innocence during the entire investigation. But even more significant, it is believed that a number of influential people interceded behind the scenes on behalf of the author of Gore ot uma. In her searching analysis of the Griboedov investigation, M. V. Nechkina has uncovered some striking anomalies: first, the members of the Committee of Investigation did not pursue the testimony of Decembrists

40 Ibid., pp. 62-64; Bartolomei’s subsequent report also made no mention of Griboedov – see "Sekretnaia instruktsiia, dannaia Imperatorom Nikolaem I polkovniku Bartolomeiu pered otpravleniem v Persiiu s rezoliutsiei Imperatora Nikolaia I otnosit'no Griboedova i donosenie polkovnika Bartolomeia," Russkaia starina, 1910, no. 5, pp. 423-34.

41 Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 512-15.
who spoke about Griboedov's involvement in the secret society; second, despite clear discrepancies between his testimony and that of other prisoners, Griboedov never had to endure a confrontation with his Decembrist companions, although such a method was widely employed by the investigators; third, a number of obviously false statements made by Griboedov with respect to facts and dates were never verified. All this has led Nechkina to conclude that certain people connected with the investigation favored Griboedov's acquittal. The most influential among them was his relative, General Paskevich.

Paskevich had been appointed adjutant-general to the tsar in February 1825. He enjoyed the confidence of the imperial family, having been entrusted in the past to direct the education of Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich, now a member of the Committee of Investigation. Moreover, Paskevich was on terms of intimate friendship with Nicholas I himself. It is characteristic of their relationship that Nicholas always called Paskevich his "father-commander." In all likelihood Paskevich came to his relative's rescue out of family considerations, perhaps at the urgent request of Griboedov's mother. Moreover, since Paskevich had been named to the special Supreme Court which was to conduct the trial of the Decembrists, he had reason enough to

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42 See Nechkina, Sledstvennoe delo o A. S. Griboedove, pp. 79-81.
attempt to forestall the awkward situation of having a near relative among the accused. It is noteworthy that Aleksandr Sergeevich would hereafter refer to Paskevich as his "benefactor." 43

Thus, owing to a concurrence of circumstances, Griboedov managed to escape the catastrophe which befell the flower of Russia's first revolutionary movement. Of the 121 leading conspirators, five were hanged; twenty-one were exiled with hard labor to Siberia for life; and the remaining eighty-five were exiled for various terms, according to the degree of their offense. 44 Included among the condemned were numerous companions of Griboedov's. Save perhaps for Pestel, he had personally known the five who were executed: Ryleev, S. Murav'ev-Apostol, Bestuzhev-Riumin and Kakhovskii. In the course of the few short years that remained of his life, he would try, whenever possible, to alleviate the suffering of his exiled comrades. 45

After his release from confinement, Griboedov did not return forthwith to the Caucasus. He remained for a while in the capital and then spent a month in Moscow. But by

43 See ibid., pp. 83-85; also Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 509-11.

44 Mazour, p. 213.

45 See Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 519-29.
September 3, 1826 he was again in Tiflis, where an entirely new situation confronted him: Russia and Persia were at war.
CHAPTER V

THE RUSSO-PERSIAN WAR OF 1826-1828: GRIBOEDOV'S ROLE IN THE CAMPAIGNS AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

Since the signing of the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813, Russia and Persia had been at peace. But it was a fragile peace, partly because the Persians had never been able to reconcile themselves to the loss of so much territory in Transcaucasia.\(^1\) Moreover, the border separating the two states in that region remained ill-defined and this gave rise to a series of disputes. Ten years elapsed before a bilateral boundary commission was able to meet for the first time, in 1823, and then it failed to agree upon a final demarcation of the frontier.\(^2\)

In March 1825 Abbas Mirza sent a trusted agent, Fath Ali Khan, to Tiflis, where a provisional settlement of the boundary dispute was worked out. Subsequently, however, both the Crown Prince and the Shah repudiated the agreement. Persia's refusal to ratify this engagement provoked Ermolov into occupying the parcel of land which would have been

\(^1\) Watson, p. 208.

\(^2\) "Materialy k istorii persidskoi voiny, 1826-1828g.," Kavkazskii sbornik 21 (1900): IX.

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included in Russia's domains had the agreement gone into force. The territory in question consisted of the northern shore of Lake Gokcha, which had been in the undisputed possession of Persia since the conclusion of the peace at Gulistan. Ermolov was willing to evacuate the Gokcha territory only on condition that Persia surrender another patch of terrain claimed by Russia. ³

The occupation of Gokcha in 1825, on the basis of an unratified agreement, exacerbated a dangerous situation. Popular resentment against Russia had already been kindled throughout the Shah's empire by stories of how the Moslems in the lost provinces were being maltreated by the Muscovites. ⁴ Ermolov, in fact, was pursuing a reckless policy of Russification in the heavily Moslem-populated frontier region adjoining Persia. Many of the khans and district chiefs who had cooperated with Russia in the preceding Russo-Persian war were dispossessed of their lands and replaced by inefficient and corrupt administrators who then rode roughshod over the local population. The dispossessed tribal chiefs had taken refuge across the border in Persia and were now plotting for the reconquest of their lost territories. ⁵ Furthermore, the priests of Islam, the

³ Ibid., pp. IX-XI; MacNeill, pp. 64-66.
⁴ Watson, p. 208.
ulema, who had helped to raise the hue and cry, were clamoring for a holy war. The religious frenzy reached such a pitch that the Shah was threatened with everlasting perdition if he failed to take up arms in the holy cause. 6

Fath Ali Shah, however, was not among those agitating for war. 7 Doubtless he hoped eventually, by some means, to regain the territory lost in the first war with Russia, but he was old and infirm and preferred the comforts of his harem to the exertions and costs of a campaign. In his wish to avoid war, the Qajar ruler had the support of only a few courtiers: Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, the foreign minister, who, having been on a mission to Russia, was acquainted with the vast resources of that power; Mirza Abdul Wahab, the Moatamad-ud-Dowleh, 8 the principal adviser

6 MacNeill, p. 67. A recent analysis of the causes of the 1826-28 Russo-Persian war stresses the importance of the religious agitation in Persia and points out that the ulema became the de facto leaders of the nation in 1826 - see Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906 (Berkeley, Calif., 1969), pp. 82-90.

7 Many sources attest to this fact - see, for example, Algar, p. 87; and Watson, pp. 208-09.

8 Many important courtiers were often referred to by their honorific title: "Moatamad-ud-Dowleh" may be rendered in English as the Faithful of the State - see Markham, pp. 558-61 for a complete list of Persia's honorific civilian and military titles.
to the Shah; and Manuchehr Khan, the Shah's chief eunuch and treasurer.9

The war faction was led by the Shah's son-in-law and grand vizier, Allahyar Khan Asaf-ud-Dowleh, an inveterate enemy of Russia; and by Mirza Abul Qasim, the Qaim Maqam (Deputy), the principal adviser to the Crown Prince and a leading figure behind Persia's foreign policy.10 The Crown Prince himself appears to have vacillated at first, but, fearful lest he lose popularity with the military, eventually became "the loudest in exciting the Shah and the leading people of the Empire to an immediate rupture" with Russia.11 The confidence of the war faction was strengthened by wildly exaggerated reports of civil war in Russia

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9 Great Britain, India Office Library: L/P&S/9/85, John Macdonald, British envoy to Persia, to the Secret Committee of the East India Company's Court of Directors, October 28 (N.S.), 1826. (This archive is hereafter cited as IOL). In 1823 control over the British mission to Persia was transferred from the Foreign Office to the East India Company; Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonald was appointed head of the mission with the rank of envoy extraordinary (Yapp, pp. 164-70). Macdonald, however, did not take up his post until August 1826, after the start of the Russo-Persian war - see Willock to Lord Amherst, governor-general of India, August 25 (N.S.), 1826 in IOL: L/P&S/9/85.

10 Ibid., Macdonald to the Secret Committee, October 28 (N.S.), 1828.

11 Ibid., Willock to Canning, July 15 (N.S.), 1826. According to Algar, Abbas Mirza had for a long time been thinking about renewing the war with Russia, at some date and under some pretext (p. 83).
following the death of Alexander I.  

At length the Shah yielded to the mounting pressure and promised the ulema that, if the Gokcha territory was not restored, he would open hostilities against Russia.  

It was at this juncture, the beginning of July 1826, that Prince Aleksandr Menshikov, a special envoy from the Tsar, arrived at the Shah's summer camp at Sultaniya. Nicholas I urgently desired to maintain amicable ties with Teheran because of other pressing problems. He was preoccupied with the worsening crisis in Russo-Turkish relations, a consequence of the Greek rebellion still in progress; moreover, in this connection, he believed that any action directed against the Shah would serve only to antagonize the British, upon whose cooperation he was counting in dealing with Turkey.  

And at home his attention was riveted upon the investigation of the Decembrist conspiracy - an event which had aggravated his suspicions of General Ermolov and shaken his confidence in the Caucasian Corps as a reliable instrument of tsarist foreign policy.  

Hence, the Tsar had hastened to send Menshikov

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12 Schiemann, 2: 155; MacNeill, p. 67.
13 MacNeill, pp. 67-68.
14 Fadeev, Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kh godov XIX veka, p. 142.
15 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 92.
on a special mission to Persia, with instructions to preserve peace on the Araxes at any cost, including territorial concessions, if necessary. By selecting Menshikov for this mission, Nicholas in effect suspended Ermolov from the conduct of diplomatic relations with Persia.

Unfortunately, the Menshikov mission proved a complete fiasco. To Persia's demands for the immediate evacuation of Gokcha, the Russian envoy replied that he had no instructions regarding it and was not empowered to agree to its evacuation. He offered nothing concrete, apart from pressing for the ratification of the earlier engagement entered into by Fath Ali Khan at Tiflis. It appears that Prince Menshikov may have succumbed to Ermolov's influence during a stop-over in Georgia, prompting him to disregard the Tsar's instructions concerning territorial concessions.

(Such was the subsequent charge made by General I. F. Paskевич, the future commander-in-chief in the Caucasus.)

Ermolov, it turns out, was again working at cross-purposes to the policy of St. Petersburg: he opposed any territorial concessions on the grounds that this would not only

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16 Fadeev, Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kh godov XIX veka, p. 142.

17 For an account of this mission by one of its members, see F. F. Bartolomei, "Posol'stvo kniazia Menshikova v Persiiu v 1826 году," Russkaia starina, 1904, no. 4, pp. 65-92; no. 5, pp. 291-320.

18 MacNeill, p. 68; Adamiyat, p. 118.

19 See Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, pp. 73-74.
encourage more Persian claims but would also damage Russian prestige and influence in Transcaucasia. Although the causes of the impending Russo-Persian war were many and complex, it can be said that the inflexible policy of the Proconsul of the Caucasus in no small measure contributed to the outbreak of that conflict.

Having failed to obtain the return of the Gokcha territory, the Shah was now called upon to redeem his pledge. Whatever scruples he may still have had against resorting to war vanished in the wake of a threat that, if he should decline to break with Russia, his subjects would find another leader for themselves. Thus, on July 16, 1826, while Menshikov and his entourage were making their way back to the frontier, the Persian army invaded Russia without a declaration of war. Neither Nicholas I nor Fath Ali Shah desired this conflict, but each of these omnipotent autocrats proved powerless to prevent it.


22See Bartolomei, "Posol'stvo kniazia Menshikova v Persiiu v 1826 godu," Russkaia starina, 1904, no. 5, pp. 304ff. Before Menshikov and his party were able to reach Russian territory, they were detained at Erivan, where they spent twenty-three days in captivity (ibid., p. 313); they were released at the insistence of the British envoy (AKAK, 6, pt. 2: 374, Macdonald to Menshikov, September 7, 1826).
In Russian historiography the outbreak of the Russo-Persian war in 1826 has almost without exception been attributed, either wholly or in part, to British intrigue. V. A. Potto, a nineteenth century historian who wrote a voluminous study of Russia's Caucasian wars, states that "the English demanded war with Russia, threatening otherwise to deprive Persia of the almost million [ruble] subsidy which the East India Company was paying to the Shah's government." Other historians from the nineteenth century, for example, the noted Caucasian specialist A. P. Berzhe, could also be quoted, but the most strident accusations against Britain issue from their Soviet counterparts. Anatolii V. Fadeev advances an elaborate scheme purporting to show that English diplomats - especially Foreign Secretary Canning - provoked the Russo-Persian war in order "to distract Russia from the Near Eastern problems and thereby prevent the possibility of her unilateral action against Turkey." The same theme is developed by S. V. Shostakovich in his recent biography of Griboedov, and by B. P. Balaian, author of a new study on Persia's foreign


26 See Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, pp. 87-91.
relations. So persistently have these allegations of British provocation been made in Russian sources that they have occasionally crept unchallenged into American scholarship. Yet the facts speak otherwise.

Because of the unsettled state of Russo-Persian relations after Gulistan, British policymakers had to reckon with the possibility of a fresh war between those antagonists at any time. The attitude of the British government toward that eventuality may be seen in the following extract from a conversation on June 20 (N.S.), 1819 between Castlereagh and Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, who had turned up in London to plead for a resumption of British financial assistance to Persia:

Lord Castlereagh, alluding to the great and preponderating power of Russia when compared to that of Persia, said that he could not advise Persia again to enter into a state of war, and that Russia must by her position always have much influence in Persian affairs; but he was persuaded that the views of Russia did not tend further to encroach upon Persian territory, and these were assurances which he had from the Emperor himself; and that the great object of England was to conciliate Persia and Russia, and to make them live upon the most friendly terms, by the adoption of a steady pacific system. . .

Lord Castlereagh remarked that Persia must pursue either the war or the peace system, and that he strongly recommended the latter. In that case, England might be of great use to Persia, but in the former the help she could afford would not be great.


Nor would the nation be brought to support a war between England and Russia for the protection or increase of a friendly frontier in Asia.  

In a subsequent interview between the two men on July 26 (N.S.), 1819, the following exchange occurred:

In reference to the political relations of England and Persia, Lord Castlereagh explained that the basis of our Treaty was formed upon the expediency of protecting our great Empire in India. That Persia was also interested in its protection, for it was evident that Persia must first be overrun before India could be attacked... His Lordship then continued to say, that upon this basis our connection stands, but that we cannot on this account interfere in the petty quarrels of Persia and the States bordering on her frontier. That on great occasions England may come forward, but that she cannot interfere in every smaller occasion... .

Well then, said the Ambassador, does England wish that Persia should fall into the power of Russia? To this Lord Castlereagh answered, Certainly not, and that he did not believe that there was any such intention on the part of Russia. Should the case of a serious attack arise, Persia has our subsidy to look to. What he wished to impress upon the Ambassador went to this, that it is very impolitic that the Persians should press that we should act upon a continued system of interference between them and Russia.

Castlereagh died in 1822 and was succeeded by George Canning as foreign secretary. The latter desired, to a greater extent than his predecessor, to disencumber the British government of the obligations stemming from the 1814 Anglo-Persian Definitive Treaty. In 1823 he took a step in that direction by transferring control over the British mission in Persia from the Foreign Office to the

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29 PRO: F. O. 60/16.

30 Ibid.
East India Company.\textsuperscript{31} As Canning explained on another occasion, this move had been designed "to relax the bonds of a most inconvenient compact; and at the same time, if the obligations of that compact were ever unfortunately to be enforced, to throw the burdens of those obligations where they ought to lie, on the Indian Government."\textsuperscript{32} The Shah, incidentally, resented the loss of reputation involved in being compelled to deal with a subordinate government and for several years he refused to receive the new envoy from India, Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonald. In the interim, Henry Willock continued to superintend Britain's affairs at the court of Teheran.\textsuperscript{33}

In 1826 the policy of the British representative at Teheran was to avert - not provoke - the impending war with Russia. A month before the outbreak of hostilities, the Shah summoned Willock to a private audience and bade him state his unreserved opinion of the worsening situation. In a dispatch to Canning of June 27 (N.S.), 1826, Willock reported his remarks as follows:

I told his Majesty that he must have observed that the relations between Great Britain and Persia had only been strictly preserved since the Russians had obtained a footing in Asia, and he must know that we

\textsuperscript{31}See above, p. 103, n. 9.

\textsuperscript{32}PRO: F. O. 60/29, Canning to Charles Wynn, president of the Board of Control, October 24 (N.S.), 1826.

\textsuperscript{33}See Yapp, pp. 167-68.
did not encourage the extension of their dominion in this quarter of the globe; therefore, if we saw the prospect of their retreat behind the Caucasus as a likely result from a renewed war between Persia and Russia, perhaps in secret we should not be displeased at such an event. But that the object of Great Britain was to strengthen Persia, and in the present state of the world we anticipated nothing but loss to His Majesty, in whose welfare we take so great an interest, from engaging in such a contest, and therefore opposed it. I recommended to H. M. in all cases to come to a definitive settlement of the frontier even if he was obliged to make some sacrifice.

Willock's efforts to preserve the peace, though fruitless, were warmly applauded by the British foreign secretary:

I have great satisfaction in informing you that the advice which you tendered to the Court of Persia, and the earnestness with which you endeavored to avert the commencement of the hostilities so rashly undertaken are entirely approved of by your Court.

It would have been a cause of great regret if any Agent of H. M. had encouraged or connived at a course of Policy so mischievous [sic] to the interests of Persia.

The British recognized what the war faction in Persia could not see: that the empire of the Qajars was too weak and decrepit to prevail in a contest with a state as powerful as Russia.

Surprisingly, the Persian invasion caught the Russian military unprepared. Ermolov had foreseen the possibility of war but he was under the illusion that no attack would occur as long as the Menshikov embassy was still on Persian

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34 IOL: L/P&S/9/85.

35 IOL: L/P&S/9/86, Canning to Willock, November 10 (N.S.), 1826.
Within three weeks the Persian army led by Abbas Mirza overran almost all of eastern Transcaucasia, taking by surprise and, in many cases, exterminating the Russian forces who were scattered in small detachments over a vast and difficult terrain. The invaders were aided by the local Moslem population who rose in rebellion against the infidels. The Persian flood approached the gates of Tiflis itself: the German colony at Katerinenfeld, located in the vicinity of the capital, was destroyed and its surviving inhabitants carried away into captivity. Ermolov ordered his commanders to retire to Tiflis so as to protect the city until reinforcements could arrive. At this moment of acute danger, the Russian commander-in-chief, in the words of one historian, "sat as if spellbound in his capital, he whose boast it had been that his very name struck terror into the hearts of his enemies." The only exceptions to the Russian rout occurred at the port of Baku and at the fortress of Shusha, the latter in Karabagh khanate, where a small garrison withstood all attempts by the bulk of the Persian army to capture it. The siege of Shusha, which lasted over six weeks, allowed

36 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 93; Baddeley, p. 154.

37 Enikolopov, A. S. Griboedov v Gruzii i Persii, p. 47; Baddeley, pp. 155-56.

38 Baddeley, p. 157.
Ermolov to regroup his forces and prepare for a counterattack.  

In the meantime, news of the Persian invasion reached Nicholas I while in Moscow for his coronation. The Emperor was incensed at the poor performance of his army and ordered Ermolov to take the offensive before reinforcements arrived. To underscore his displeasure at the course of events, the Tsar empowered Adjutant General Paskevich to proceed to the Caucasus and take control of field operations. Ermolov was retained as supreme commander, but the impending arrival of the Tsar's favorite at the scene of battle must have appeared as a bad omen to the commander-in-chief.

Persia did not keep for long the upper hand on the battlefield. Already on September 3, Prince Madatov, though outnumbered nearly four to one, scored a brilliant victory over the invader near Shamkhor. By this time Paskevich had taken up his post as field commander. On September 13, he engaged Abbas Mirza's main army at Elizavetpol, and, with only eight thousand men and twenty-four guns, put to flight the vastly superior enemy force, estimated at sixty thousand men. The rout dealt a crushing blow to the morale of the Persians, causing them to withdraw across the Araxes.

39Ibid., p. 155; Fadeev, Rossiia i Kavkaz pervoi treti XIX v., pp. 206-07.

40Schiemann, 2: 157-59; Baddeley, pp. 156-57.
into Azerbaijan. Paskevich was all in favor of pursuing the enemy as far as Tabriz in hopes of forcing the Shah to sue for peace. However, he was restrained by Ermolov, who ordered him to remain in place and pacify the frontier provinces. Nevertheless, by October 1826, the invader had been driven from all of Russia's possessions except for portions of Talish khanate. With the onset of winter, both belligerents suspended military operations so the outcome of the war would have to await next year's campaign.

When the war with Persia erupted, Aleksandr Griboedov was in Moscow. He had paused there to visit his family on his way back to the Caucasus. He was still in the city when it became known that General Paskevich was being sent to the assistance of Ermolov. For unknown reasons, it appears that Griboedov now contemplated quitting the diplomatic service. Did he foresee the inevitable conflict between those two generals, both of whom had strong, ambitious characters - a conflict which would place him in an exceedingly difficult position, inasmuch as each commander would have a claim on his loyalty? Perhaps there were other reasons. At any rate, Anastasiia Fedorovna, Griboedov's strong-willed mother, viewed the matter

41 Fadeev, Rossiia i Kavkaz pervoi treti XIX v., pp. 206-07; Schiemann, 2: 159-62; Baddeley, pp. 157-58.

42 See PSS, 1: LXXIII-LXXIV.
differently. She was determined that her talented son should continue his career and expunge the stain of his arrest. Moreover, in her eyes the posting of Paskevich to the Caucasus could not but be to her son's advantage. As related by Griboedov's sister, Anastasiia Fedorovna insisted on having her way and resorted to a strategem in order to achieve it:

One day mother invited [Aleksandr] to attend the prayer service at the Church of the Iverskaia Virgin. They arrived and sang a Te Deum. Suddenly mother fell on her knees before my brother and began to demand that he agree to what she was going to say. Deeply moved and alarmed, he gave his word. Then she declared to him that he must go and serve under Paskevich. There was nothing more to do - he went.43

Aleksandr Sergeevich returned to Tiflis at the beginning of September 1826. His arrival coincided with the start of the Russian counteroffensive, but he did not participate in the campaign. However, he soon found himself in the middle of another kind of conflict: the growing antagonism and rivalry between Ermolov and Paskevich. The two generals could not get along from the start. When, in December, Paskevich returned to Tiflis from operations in the field, his relations with Ermolov grew terribly strained. Confident that he enjoyed the favor of the Emperor, Paskevich forwarded a long report to Nicholas on

his experiences in Transcaucasia. He blamed Ermolov for having allegedly spoiled the campaign by preventing the march on Tabriz after the battle at Elizavetpol. He went so far as to accuse his rival of having pursued irresponsible policies which provoked the Persian invasion: "All here are agreed that Gen. Ermolov is the cause of the war by his various manipulations." 

Griboedov was in an uncomfortable position. He had returned to the Caucasus as Ermolov's diplomatic secretary but his enchantment for the Proconsul had begun to diminish. On December 9, 1826 he wrote from Tiflis to Begichev: "My dear friend! My life here is bad. I did not get into the war, because A. P. [Ermolov] himself did not participate. But now there is a different kind of war. The two senior generals are quarreling and feathers are flying from subordinates. With A. P. my former friendship has cooled off. . . ." 

What had intervened to dampen the close relationship between the diplomat and general? As far as can be determined, Griboedov had started to question Ermolov's ruthless policy of employing fire and sword to uphold Russia's authority in the Caucasus. This emerges from a letter which Griboedov penned to Begichev on December 7, 1825, while

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44See Curtiss, pp. 27-28 for a summary of Paskevich's report.

45PSS, 3: 195.
accompanying Ermolov on the expedition into Chechnia. Aleksandr Sergeevich views the campaign as "a struggle of drum-beating enlightenment against the liberty of the mountains and forests." He takes note of the harsh treatment meted out to the princes and noblemen defying the Russians: "Two were shot in my presence; others were put into stocks, [or] driven through the gauntlet; I came upon one ... across a river - hanging and swinging slowly in the wind." Obviously such scenes trouble his mind, for he goes on to say: "To operate with fear and bounties is possible only for a time; only the most scrupulous justice reconciles pacified peoples to the banners of the conquerors." Such sentiments reveal a more self-confident and independent-minded Griboedov than the one who, years before, was willing to excuse Ermolov's brutal policies toward the tribes for lack of any alternative. By now it is evident that he has matured to the point of taking a stand contrary to the Proconsul's on what constituted a proper course of policy for Russia vis-à-vis the Caucasian peoples.

After his return to Georgia in 1826, Griboedov discovered other shortcomings in his hero. He criticizes Ermolov's timid conduct in the early states of the war: the commander-in-chief had displayed too much respect

46 Ibid., pp. 185-86; emphasis supplied.
toward the enemy - respect which the Persians did not
deserve. The Soviet scholar S. V. Shostakovich believes
that there may also have been other causes which gave rise
to controversy between the two men. He hypothesizes that
Griboedov tried unsuccessfully to influence Ermolov with
respect to some, as yet undetermined, subject.

The quarrel between Ermolov and Paskevich lasted more
than seven months. Each general had his group of partis-
san supporters. To the surprise and dismay of Ermolov's
adherents, Griboedov gravitated toward the rival camp.
According to General Denis V. Davydov, one of Ermolov's
friends, Aleksandr Sergeevich started to curry favor with
Paskevich by drafting the latter's official and private
correspondence. (Paskevich was such a poor speaker and
ungrammatical writer that Ermolov once described him as a
man who "talked in commas and wrote without them.")

47 Ibid., p. 195, Griboedov to Begichev, December 9,
1826.

48 See Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova,
p. 95.

49 An account of the Ermolov-Paskevich conflict ap-
ppears in Curtiss, pp. 24-36; Schiemann, 2: 158-65; A. P.
Shcherbatov, General-Fel'dmarshal Kniaz' Paskevich: ego
zhizn' i deiatel'nost', 7 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1888-
1904), 2: chapters 2-6 passim.

50 See A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov,
pp. 178, 182-84.

51 Quoted in Whittock, p. 56.
Davydov claims that ambition swayed Griboedov to move closer to Paskevich, but in the present author's view selfish motives of that kind have nothing to do with this matter. Griboedov was never a careerist - at the first opportunity he was ready to jettison the diplomatic corps and return to literature. The nineteenth-century Griboedov-scholar, D. A. Smirnov, believes that the above-mentioned promise which Aleksandr Sergeevich's mother so cunningly extracted from him - namely, that he serve under Paskevich - represents an adequate explanation for this affair. But such an explanation is not wholly satisfactory; rather, it is likely that Griboedov was losing faith in Ermolov as an effective leader. As noted earlier, he not only objected to the Proconsul's despotic treatment of the Caucasian tribes, but also deplored his excessive caution in prosecuting the war against Persia. It is conjecture, but Griboedov probably voiced his opinions on these matters to his chief. Since both men tended to be obstinate and unbending by nature, the result was a falling-out between them.

Meanwhile, the feud between Russia's two top commanders in Transcaucasia was disrupting the organization and work of the military establishment. When an investigation by Baron Dibich failed to straighten matters out, Nicholas

52 Smirnov, "Biograficheskie izvestiia o Griboedove," p. 25.
at last intervened and, on March 28, 1827, Paskevich was appointed to succeed Ermolov as governor-general of the Caucasus. For the latter, the change in command terminated a brilliant, if controversial, career as a soldier and administrator; for Paskevich, it represented a major step on the way to becoming the supreme military figure in Russia. And for Griboedov, it also had important consequences: he was about to embark on the most active and successful phase of his diplomatic career.

The new commander-in-chief at once set about reorganizing the Caucasian command. New officers were summoned from St. Petersburg to replace Ermolov's inner circle. However, since Paskevich himself, as a relative newcomer on the scene, suffered from a lack of local knowledge, he could not dispense with all of his predecessor's associates. Among the few he retained was his family relative - Griboedov. On April 4, Griboedov was assigned to superintend relations with Turkey and Persia. In that capacity he would participate in planning political strategy for the upcoming campaign against Persia, and, as the campaign unfolded successfully, he would also play


54 Enikolopov, A. S. Griboedov v Gruzii i Persii, p. 52.

55 See Paskevich's instructions to Griboedov in AKAK, 7: 2.
a major role in organizing the administration of occupied territories. Indeed, throughout the remainder of the Russo-Persian war, Griboedov was to distinguish himself as a key political adviser to the commander-in-chief.

Shortly after Griboedov assumed his new post, he wrote to his friend, the St. Petersburg publicist, F. V. Bulgarin. The following extract from the letter, dated April 16, 1827, refers to the volume of work his new duties entail, but, more importantly, also clarifies his attitude toward the diplomatic profession:

Don't expect any verses from me. Mountaineers, Persians, Turks, administrative affairs and the huge correspondence of my present chief devour all of my attention. Of course, not for long: the campaign will end and I shall take my leave. In normal times, I don't fit in anywhere - and it's not my fault; people are petty, their affairs are stupid, one's heart grows callous, reason becomes obscured and morality perishes without benefit to one's fellow man.

I was born for a different profession.

As a diplomat, Griboedov could commit himself totally and selflessly to the work at hand in a crisis situation but, as the above passage reveals, he absolutely abhorred the humdrum, debilitating routine of "normal times."

At Paskevich's headquarters preparations were now in progress to resume military operations in the spring of 1827. An invasion of Persia was being planned. To enhance the prospects of the Russian army, it was necessary to

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56PSS, 3: 199.
deal with a number of political problems. One of the most important concerned the policy to be adopted vis-à-vis the tribal chiefs who controlled the people inhabiting the regions where Russian forces would be operating. It was essential to gain the support of these khans, or at least to neutralize them, so that the Russian army would not have to contend with a hostile civilian population. During the 1804-13 Russo-Persian war, the tsarist military had managed to win the allegiance of numerous Moslem khans by concluding treaties which acknowledged their positions as feudal lords. However, under Ermolov this policy was reversed. Anticipating renewed warfare with Persia, the Proconsul had undertaken a vigorous policy of Russification in the border provinces and expelled those khans whom he considered unreliable or hostile to Russia. The upshot of Ermolov's actions was, as we have seen, a general uprising of the Moslem population in support of the Persian invasion.

Now that Ermolov was gone, the whole matter was reconsidered once more. Out of the deliberations at Russian headquarters emerged a new policy, the inspiration for which has been attributed to Griboedov. The policy aimed at creating inside Persia what in modern parlance would be termed a fifth column. Agents were to be sent into eastern

57 See Shostakovich, *Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova*, pp. 97-98, 105-06.
Armenia and Azerbaijan for the purpose of winning over the influential khans of those regions to the Russian side. In particular, contacts were to be made with those inhabitants and authorities of Tabriz who were known to be dissatisfied with Persian rule. It was proposed to arrange so-called peaceful accommodations with the knans and tribes, whereby, in exchange for their allegiance or neutrality, Russia's authorities would pledge not to interfere with the property and institutions of the tribal communities. A number of proclamations to this effect would be drawn up by Griboedov and distributed to various tribal chiefs in the course of the campaign.

It should be noted that Paskevich chose to exercise considerable restraint and discretion in implementing the policy of "peaceful accommodations." In the final analysis, such a policy aimed at severing the bond between a legitimate monarch (the Shah) and his subjects, and this did not accord well with the legitimist principles espoused by Nicholas I. Apart from that, there was a genuine concern in the Foreign Ministry that such measures might lead to the break-up of the Persian empire and to the overthrow of the Qajar dynasty. It was feared that this, in turn, could embroil Russia in a conflict with Great Britain. Consequently, St. Petersburg expressly forbade officials in

58 See ibid., pp. 99-100.
59 Ibid., p. 107.
Transcaucasia from making any kind of promises to the khans and peoples living beyond the Araxes which would entail obligations on the part of the Russian government. Nonetheless, the exigencies of a campaign oftentimes do not allow a commander-in-chief to adhere scrupulously to rules laid down by distant authorities: Paskevich would find it expedient to make commitments with tribal leaders on a number of occasions.

Another political matter which was reassessed at Paskevich's headquarters was his predecessor's policy toward Crown Prince Abbas Mirza. Ermolov had never recognized Abbas Mirza as the heir apparent of Persia. It will be recalled that the Treaty of Gulistan obliged Russia to support Persia's heir apparent in the succession to the throne. This was important to Abbas Mirza, since the death of Fath Ali Shah was likely to touch off an internecine struggle for power. Abbas Mirza had an older brother, Mohammad Ali Mirza, whom many Persians considered to be the legitimate heir apparent, since it had long been the custom of Persia to recognize the eldest male as next in line to the throne. But Mohammad Ali had been passed over by the Shah, because he was the offspring of a slave and, according to the custom of the ruling Qajars, the heir apparent could only be a son born of a noblewoman belonging to the Qajar tribe.  


61 See "Materialy k istorii persidskoi voiny, 1826-1828 g.," Kavkazskii sbornik 21 (1900): V.
Therefore, Abbas Mirza had been designated the Crown Prince - but Mohammad Ali had not acquiesced in his father's choice.  

Troubled waters beget foreign interference. Since Ermolov always regarded Abbas Mirza as a British tool and an irreconcilable enemy of Russia, he preferred to back Mohammad Ali as the legitimate successor to Fath Ali Shah.  

Even after Mohammad Ali's unexpected demise in 1821, Ermolov continued to withhold recognition from Abbas Mirza. The question which Paskevich now had to decide was whether the Proconsul's policy should be continued after the war. Did it promote Russia's interests in the Middle East? The new governor-general did not think so, as the following excerpts from his report to Nesselrode of May 12, 1827 show:

I see from the official correspondence which I have now examined that since the time of our mission [to Persia] of 1817, so modest in useful results, we have considered it a crime for the English to solicit the friendship of the one son of the Shah who has always shown affection toward Europeans; and it has aroused indignation on our part that Abbas Mirza preferred not us, who have denied him even the title of heir to his father (which was solemnly guaranteed to him by treaty), but a nation which has offered him support with money, arms and officers to train his troops; however, who more than Russia has to be interested in strengthening the monarchical principle in a country to which she is so closely connected by her recently acquired possessions? . . .

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62 Watson, p. 171.

63 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, pp. 101-02.

64 Mohammad Ali was stricken by a fatal illness during the Perso-Turkish war of 1821 (Watson, pp. 198-99). The same fate would befall Abbas Mirza: he died in 1833, one year before the death of his father (ibid., pp. 268-69, 274).
The information which I have taken into consideration and which has been furnished to me by our employees from the Persian mission, by our interpreters and many other individuals more or less informed about our previous relations with Tabriz and Teheran, leads me to believe that if we had sincerely accorded our protection to Abbas Mirza, things would not have reached their present impasse; and that, in the future, if . . . we establish beyond the Araxes the respect due to the authority of our August Sovereign, generosity vis-à-vis Abbas Mirza and the active protection which our government could accord him, would be, it seems to me, the most reliable means of making our enemies seek the alliance and friendship of the Russian Empire. 65 (Emphasis supplied)

Paskevich therefore deemed it advisable to abandon yet another of Ermolov's policies. Recognition of Abbas Mirza, in his view, would help restore and consolidate Russian influence in Persia in the postwar period. It may well have been Griboedov who inspired Paskevich in this direction, since he, Aleksandr Sergeevich, firmly believed that Russia could strengthen its influence in the Middle East with a policy based on respect for native customs and institutions. 66

In April 1827 military operations against Persia were resumed. Advance units of the Caucasian Corps marched south from Georgia into the khanate of Erivan, captured the ancient center of the Armenian church at Echmiadzin, and then proceeded to invest the nearby fortress of Erivan. On May 12, Griboedov, in company with Paskevich and the general staff, set off from Tiflis in the direction of the

65 AKAK, 7: 542; translated from French.
66 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 104.
Armenian capital. Hardships abounded at every step of the way: barren, mountainous terrain; terrible, unabating heat; annoying delays; sleepless nights devoted to official correspondence; administrative worries; attacks of fever; quarrels between Paskevich and other commanders - all of this Griboedov has recorded in his Putevye zapiski and in a series of letters to P. N. Akhverdova in Tiflis. When Paskevich arrived before the walls of Erivan, he found that the advance Russian troops had been so weakened by hunger and disease that he had to abandon his original plan to take the fortress. After regrouping his forces, he made a difficult march southward across a hot and waterless desert to the town of Nakhichevan, the capital of the khanate bearing the same name. On June 26 he entered the town unopposed.

During the march across Nakhichevan, Paskevich undertook to win the confidence of the indigenous population by issuing those proclamations to the khans and tribes wherein the Russian command promised to respect their lives and property. In so doing, Paskevich induced the local inhabitants to come forward and provide sustenance to the army. Up to this point military operations had been hampered by the difficulties of obtaining provisions in a barren and hostile territory. But now that problem was alleviated.

67PSS, 3: 82-88, 200-05.
On June 27 Paskevich wrote a glowing report to Nesselrode from Nakhichevan, stating that local tribes were supplying his troops daily with sheep, oxen, vegetables, butter, cheese and fowl:

> We have paid for everything. Of those inhabitants who have remained [here] no one avoids us any longer. Strict punishments for the slightest offense done to them have instilled in them a high regard for our justice which is nowhere so appreciated as in the East, because it is more scrupulous here than anywhere.\textsuperscript{68}

No doubt the tribes could sense which way the wind was blowing. At any rate, a major diplomatic success was scored when the hereditary chief of Karabagh, Mekhti-Kuli Khan, one of those chiefs who had fled to Persia under Ermolov's administration, returned to the Russian side with three thousand families on June 8.\textsuperscript{69}

An even greater diplomatic coup soon followed. A short distance to the south of the town of Nakhichevan lay the strategic fortress of Abbas-Abad, which guarded a ford across the Araxes River. In order to secure his position at Nakhichevan, Paskevich laid siege to that fortress. It was known that among the commanders of the fortress was a certain Eksan Khan and that this individual had a score to settle with the Persians, since years ago his father had been blinded on the orders of the sadistic Qajar ruler,

\textsuperscript{68}AKAK, 7: 549.

\textsuperscript{69}Griboedov noted this event in his \textit{Putevye zapiski} - see \textit{PSS}, 3: 85.
Agha Muhammad Khan. Communications were opened with the Khan in which Griboedov played an active role. The result was that on July 6 the followers of Eksan Khan rose up and disarmed the remainder of the Persian garrison. The next day the gates of Abbas-Abad were opened to the besiegers. One of Paskevich's staff officers, N. Murav'ev-Karskii, in commenting on this incident in his memoirs, stated that, Eksan Khan "had been in contact with us and had shown an inclination to surrender; so that this success (the taking of the fortress) can in no way be attributed to the skill of our commander."  

It was at Abbas-Abad that Griboedov came under enemy fire for the first time in his life. Although as a non-combatant he could easily have avoided danger, he deliberately sought it out by joining the Russian cavalry units skirmishing with the enemy in the vicinity of the fortress.

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70 See Enikolopov, A. S. Griboedov v Gruzii i Persii, pp. 68-69; and Enikolopov, Griboedov i vostok, pp. 75-76.

71 Quoted in Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 109. The British envoy to Persia, although probably unaware of Russia's contacts with Eksan Khan, attributed the surrender of Abbas-Abad "entirely to chance, to the cowardice of the commandant, the treachery of his officers and the disaffection of the Tribe of Kangerloo, who delivered up the Fort, with their arms, its cannon and its stores, before even a trench had been opened or the garrison exposed to loss or privation" (IOL: L/P&S/9/86, Macdonald to George Swinton, secretary to the government at Ft. William, Bengal, August 12 [N.S.], 1827).
Paskevich complained to Griboedov's mother: "Our blind-
man\textsuperscript{72} does not listen to me in the least: he is constantly
riding about all over the place under the bullets!"\textsuperscript{73}

Apparently, boredom had overcome our diplomat at staff
headquarters, for, as he wrote to a friend, he participated
in the cavalry action in order to "enliven" his life: "It
is better than growing mouldy in the towns."\textsuperscript{74} One begins
to suspect that even during the campaign there were moments
which too closely paralleled the enervating routine of
"normal times" for Griboedov's liking. In any case, the
war produced another incident which provides such an inter­
esting glimpse into the character of our hero that is worth
quoting in full as he himself recounted it to his St.

Petersburg friends a year later:

\ldots In the last Persian campaign, during one engage-
ment, I happened to be together with Prince Suvorov.
A cannon ball from an enemy battery struck beside the
Prince, covering him with earth, and, in a flash I
thought he was killed. This filled me with such fear
that I began to tremble. The Prince had only been
bruised, but I was quivering against my will and I
could not shake off the disgusting feeling of pusil-
lananimity. This pained me no end. Was I perhaps a
coward at heart? An unbearable thought for a respect­
able man, and I decided, whatever the cost, to cure
myself or cowardliness. \ldots I did not want to
tremble before cannon balls, or at the sight of death,
so at the first opportunity I stood in a spot where

\textsuperscript{72}Griboedov was very nearsighted.

\textsuperscript{73}Quoted in Smirnov, "Biografisheskie izvestiia o

\textsuperscript{74}Griboedov describes his experiences at Abbas-Abad
in a letter to Akhverdova, dated July 3, 1827 - see PSS,
3: 201-03.
the shells from an enemy battery were falling. There I counted the shells until they reached a number which I had pre-determined and then calmly turned around my horse and rode away. Do you know that this drove away my fear? Afterwards I did not lose courage in any dangerous military situation. If you give in to the feeling of fear, it will increase and grow stronger.75

With the fall of Abbas-Abad, the Russian army had taken possession of all Persian territory north of the Araxes, save for the city of Erivan and the fortress of Sardar-Abad. Paskevich might have next pushed onward to Tabriz, but the devastating heat of July and malaria were ravaging his troops, and so he was compelled to withdraw from the lowlands around Abbas-Abad. Leaving a small garrison at the fortress, Paskevich moved his main body of troops northward into the cooler mountain climate at Karababa.76 Nevertheless, the capture of Abbas-Abad presented an opportunity for peace negotiations. The commander-in-chief had been instructed by St. Petersburg to offer peace terms to Persia after his first major victory in the new campaign,77 because the Russian government was eager to settle with Teheran in order to devote its attention to matters involving Turkey and the Near Eastern conflict. Because Abbas

75 A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, pp. 188-89. According to F. V. Bulgarin's recollection of Griboedov's story, the latter counted 124 enemy shells before moving out of danger (ibid., p. 33, n. 3).

76 Baddeley, pp. 165-66

77 Shcherbatov, 2: 291.
Mirza had tried in vain to arrange a cease-fire on several previous occasions, \textsuperscript{78} Paskevich considered the present moment opportune to enter into negotiations with the Crown Prince. He instructed Griboedov to go to the Prince's camp at Karaziadin in order to explain the conditions on which Russia was willing to make peace.

Altogether Griboedov was to spend five days at Karaziadin - from July 21 to 25 - as the sole Russian negotiator. The comprehensive report on his conversations (which he subsequently prepared for Paskevich) makes very interesting reading. \textsuperscript{79} Written at times in the form of a lively dialogue with Abbas Mirza, the document leaves one with a good impression of Aleksandr Sergeevich's firmness and finesse in parleying with Oriental potentates. Furthermore, it represents another good illustration of the difficulties encountered by European diplomats in those years in trying to reach an understanding with the Persians. For example, James Morier, an experienced British diplomat, once characterized the negotiations behind the Anglo-Persian Definitive Treaty of 1814 in this way:

Unacquainted as the Persians are with the law of nations, and unaccustomed to the discussion of great

\textsuperscript{78} See Balaian, pp. 146-50, 157-58.

\textsuperscript{79} Dated July 30, 1827, Griboedov's "Donesenie" was first published in Russkaia starina, 1873, no. 6, pp. 799-814. Subsequently it appeared in the following works: AKAK, 7: 553-60; PSS, 3: 252-67; and Orlov, A. S. Griboedov: Sochineniia, pp. 594-609.
political questions, we found their ignorance a great impediment to the progress of business. Whatever demand we made, however clear and self-evident, they always thought that it had, or might have, some recondite meaning, which they could not understand; consequently they never acceded to it without discussions so long and violent as frequently to end in a quarrel.80

Griboedov, too, met with so much evasiveness and argumentation that he represents the Persians as indulging in "the dialectic of the thirteenth century." The debates did not let up even when he fell ill with fever: "I was very sick at Karaziadin, and the officials of His Highness assembled around my bed for deliberation"; he was compelled to continue with the talks from early morning to late at night until losing his voice.81

On July 21 Griboedov had his first audience with Abbas Mirza. The Prince opened the conversation by complaining long and bitterly about the actions of General Ermolov, whom he considered the chief instigator of the present war. Griboedov replied that both sides had reason for complaints about the frontier dispute but that Russia would never have taken up arms if the Prince himself had not invaded Russian territory. More than an hour was spent rehashing the origins of the war until Griboedov broke off by saying that he had not been instructed to investigate what preceded

80Morier, p. 184.

81Griboedov recorded this in a separate letter to Paskevich of July 26, 1827 - see Evgeniia Nekrasova (ed.), "Neizdannye pis'ma A. S. Griboedova," Dela i dni, 1921, no. 2, p. 61.
the war: it was not his affair. To which the Mirza answered:

"That is how all of you talk: 'it's not my business' - but is there really no judge in this world?"

"Your Highness [retorted Griboedov] set yourself up as judge of this matter at issue and preferred to resolve it with arms. Without detracting from your wisdom, bravery and strength, I wish to make note of one thing only: whoever is the first to start a war can never say how it will end."82

At length Griboedov began to explain what was demanded from the Persians as the price of peace: 1) the cession of Erivan and Nakhichevan khanates; and 2) the payment of an indemnity of ten crores of tomans$^{83}$ (equivalent to twenty million silver rubles) as compensation for military expenditures and the losses sustained by Russian subjects since the start of the war. It should be noted that the Russian government was especially eager to obtain an indemnity because of the deplorable condition of the state treasury. In 1825, before the outbreak of the war, Russia's public amounted to 335 million silver rubles.$^{84}$ In view of the likelihood of war with the Sultan, the Russian government wished to replenish its impoverished coffers by taking money from the Shah.

82 PSS, 3: 254.

83 Since one crore equals 500,000 tomans, the indemnity amounted to 5,000,000 tomans.

84 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 124.
After Griboedov had explained the peace terms, Abbas Mirza nearly jumped from his seat and the following exchange occurred:

"So they are your conditions. You dictate them to the Shah of Iran as if he were your subject! The cession of two provinces, a monetary tribute! But since when have you heard that the Shah of Persia had become the subject of another sovereign? He himself distributes crowns. Persia has not yet perished."

"Persia, too, has had her days of happiness and glory [answered Griboedov]; but I shall venture to remind Your Highness about Husain Shah Safavid, who was deprived of his throne and conquered by the Afghans. I leave it to your own enlightened mind to judge how much stronger the Russians are than the Afghans."

"But who is there who praises Husain Shah for that? He acted disgracefully - ought we to follow his example?"

"I'll name for you a great man and ruler - Napoleon - who brought war within Russia's frontiers and paid for it with the loss of his throne."

"And he was a true hero: he defended himself to the utmost. But you, like world conquerors, want to seize everything, demanding provinces and money, and will not accept any excuses."

"At the conclusion of every war unjustly begun against us, we displace our frontiers, together with the foe who had dared to cross them. That is why, in the present circumstances, the cession of Erivan and Nakhichevan provinces is demanded. Money is also a kind of weapon, without which it is impossible to wage war. This [tribute] is not a deal, Your Highness, not even compensation for losses incurred: by demanding money, we deprive the enemy of the means to harm us for a long time."

Griboedov's first audience with Abbas Mirza lasted six hours. Neither then nor during the lengthy discussions which took place on the following days could the Crown Prince be

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85 A reference to Shah Sultan Husain (1694-1722), the last ruler of Persia's Safavid dynasty, who was deposed by an Afghan invasion in 1722.

86 PSS, 3: 256.
moved to accept the peace terms proffered by Russia. Griboedov attempted to play on the Mirza's fears by warning that, if hostilities continued, all of Azerbaijan would soon be in Russian hands, in which case the Prince would lose stature in the eyes of his countrymen. For his part, Abbas Mirza insisted that a cease-fire be concluded for ten months and pleaded for permission to go to St. Petersburg for a personal audience with the Emperor, at which he would beg for forgiveness and grant everything Nicholas desired in return for his friendship and protection. This counter-proposal was constantly repeated with numerous variations and each time Griboedov would remind the Prince that General Paskevich was no longer in a position to grant such a request; that it would have been much more convenient to fulfill this desire the previous year during the Emperor's coronation, but that the Prince had preferred to take up the sword. Aleksandr Sergeevich suspected that the endless discussions were merely a pretext to detain him in camp. He declared at last that the Russian command saw no need to terminate military operations and that the Persians were free to accept or reject the conditions which had been proposed.

On July 25, Griboedov had a final audience with Abbas Mirza. The latter was exceedingly frank in his remarks and Griboedov observed that the recent defection of Mekhti-Kuli Khan had seriously disturbed the Persians on
account of the confidence it would inspire in those who
desired to submit to the protection of Russia. In this con-
nection, he quotes the words of Abbas Mirza:

I consider Paskevich's most dangerous weapon to be the respect for human life and justice which he
displays toward his Moslems and ours. We all know his
count toward the nomadic tribes from Erivan to
Nakhichevan; his soldiers offended no one and he re-
ceived everybody in a friendly spirit. This method of
acquiring the trust of an alien people is also known
to me - unfortunately, I am the only one who under-
stands this in all of Persia... General Ermolov,
like a new Djenghis Khan, would have taken revenge on
me by laying waste to the hapless provinces and would
have ordered everyone put to death who fell into his
hands - and then, from that time onward, two-thirds
of Azerbaijan would have risen with weapons in hand,
demanding neither pay nor provisions from the treas-
ury.87

By recording these frank comments, Griboedov undoubtedly
hoped to impress upon St. Petersburg the correctness of the
policy of "peaceful accommodations," for it is known that
he urged his report to be brought to the attention of the
Emperor.88

The meeting at Karaziadin failed in its purpose. Abbas
Mirza was not yet prepared to accept Russia's terms; nor
could Griboedov agree to a prolonged cease-fire. In retro-
spect the meeting appears as premature: Persia did not yet
have her back against the wall. Moreover, Griboedov's
negotiating position had been undermined inadvertently by
the precipitate withdrawal of the Russian infantry from

87Ibid., p. 264.

88See Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost'
A. S. Griboedova, p. 126, n. 2.
their forward position at Abbas-Abad. The Persians mistook the fall-back to Karabada for a full-scale retreat.\(^89\)

Griboedov came away from Karaziadin convinced that it would require another demonstration of Russia's superiority on the battlefield in order to bring the adversary to terms.

His report to Paskevich concludes:

> I left the Persian camp with the encouraging impression that the enemy does not want war . . . ; from repeated failures everyone has lost courage, everyone is dissatisfied. . . . However, it is impossible to expect that they would now purchase peace at the price of the conditions proffered to them, and for this, resoluteness is necessary; it is their natural inclination to stall for time in negotiations. In the Shah's council the voices which prevail at present are those of Allahyar Khan and the Sardar\(^90\) and his brother; they still stand firmly against peace: the former adheres to his initial opinion and is afraid that he may have to pay the consequences for the war of which he is the chief instigator; the Sardar and his brother would lose a significant source of their wealth if Erivan province is ceded to us. Only when Erivan falls and the Persians see themselves threatened in the capital of Azerbaijan . . . may one, it appears, expect peace to be concluded on the terms which we now offer them.\(^91\)

Griboedov's assessment of the situation would have an influence on the future course of Russia's military operations.

So far no mention has been made of the British response to the outbreak of the Russo-Persian war. It will be recalled that under the terms of the 1814 Definitive Treaty, Britain was bound, in the event of a war between Persia and

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\(^89\) Ibid., p. 128; Balaian, pp. 161-62.

\(^90\) A reference to the Persian ruler at Erivan, Hassan Khan.

any European power, either to assist the Shah with an army from India or to pay an annual subsidy of 200,000 tomans for the duration of the war. However, an important proviso stated that no subsidy would be granted if the war had been provoked by Persian aggression. As could have been expected, the Persians wasted little time in applying for assistance to the Indian government, claiming that Russia's unjust and violent occupation of the Gokcha territory furnished a legitimate casus belli. But the British authorities in India refused to offer their Asian ally any aid whatsoever until the Home government had decided which of the belligerents was the actual aggressor. On March 27 (N.S.), 1827 the governor-general of India instructed his envoy in Persia that if Persia's claim is denied "no application for ... assistance could for a moment be entertained." 92

Thus, it was left to London to decide the issue. Opinions differed within the Home government. C. W. Wynn, president of the Board of Control, the governmental agency charged with overseeing the affairs of the East India Company, believed that Russia was the real aggressor and that Persia was entitled to claim the subsidy. But George Canning, the foreign secretary,93 took the opposite view.

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92IOL: P/345, A. Stirling, deputy secretary to the governor-general, to Macdonald.

93Canning served as foreign secretary from September 1822 to April 1827, when he became prime minister until
In a confidential letter to Wynn of October 9 (N.S.), 1826, Canning stated the grounds for his position. It would be well to quote this document in its entirety, since it represents the rationale behind the policy ultimately adopted by the British government with respect to the Russo-Persian war:

My dear Wynn,

I am sorry (or rather I am happy) to say that I cannot agree with you in thinking that the casus foederis has occurred, under the last [i.e., the Definitive Treaty] of the incredibly foolish Treaties of which I inclose Copies.

A case of encroachment on the part of Russia there may have been - probably has been - and no doubt always will be, in those Caucasian neighbourhoods.

But encroachment is subject to negotiation. Attack, such as this of the Persians, is not justified by it, until redress had been refused: and whatever it may have been heretofore, redress was not in the act of being refused now, for Prince Menzikoff was sent to Persia for the very purpose of negotiating upon this point. The truth evidently is (from Willock's despatches) that the Persians thought Russia in a state of embarrassment, partly from internal embarrassment, partly from the Turkish War, which afforded them an opportunity of striking a blow - and they seized it. With a view to making the blow more decisive, they roused their people into a phrenzy of fanaticism, from which - when the Shah began to suspect the truth - (i.e. that he had better let the war alone) he found it too late to recover them. The Priests had gotten ahead, and his forty shillings (?) were incurably warlike. Willock endeavored to sober them in vain: and when reproached by the Prince Royal with doing so "to save his tomauns" he answered (if I am not mistaken) that "no tomauns would be due, in case of aggression on the part of Persia."

93 (Continued)

his death five months later. He was succeeded by Lord Dudley as foreign secretary; and by Lord Goderich as prime minister, who, in turn, was replaced by the Duke of Wellington in January 1828.
I am clearly of that opinion. I agree that you will do very right to send Instructions to Macdonald. Those Instructions, I imagine, can only be "Point de tomauns" but plenty of offers of intervention under Art. 6 [of the Definitive Treaty].

"Point de tomauns" - no tomans whatsoever for Persia: Canning's voice prevailed and the decision of the British government was duly communicated to Persia in the following terms:

Upon the original causes of dispute His Majesty [George IV] does not feel himself called upon to pronounce an opinion; but it appears to be an undisputed fact that the actual commencement of Hostilities was on the side of Persia, contrary to the advice and representations of the British Agent at Tehran. His Majesty therefore is satisfied that the engagement of Great Britain, under the Treaty of Tehran [i.e., the Definitive Treaty] to assist Persia with troops or money, in the event of a War of aggression being commenced against Her, does not in the present instance apply.

The rejection of Persia's subsidy claim did not end the matter as far as London was concerned. The British had found themselves in the awkward situation of being asked to finance a war against a friendly power - one with whom they were also trying to work in concert to resolve the Greco-Turkish conflict. Suddenly the Home government awoke to the dangers and entanglements of the Definitive Treaty - an "incredibly foolish" treaty in the words of Canning - which might again cause embarrassment. In the summer of

94 PRO: F. O. 60/29; emphasis in the original.

95 IOL: L/P&S/5/545, Wynn to Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, September 14 (N.S.), 1827.
1827 the Board of Control decided that the engagements under Article IV (the subsidy clause) were "so onerous and inconvenient that it would be highly desirable if a favorable opportunity could be taken to procure the assent of Persia to its abrogation, even at the expense of a considerable pecuniary sacrifice on our part"; the Board was willing to pay as much as 200,000 tomans to have the obnoxious article canceled; the time and manner of negotiating this deal was to be left to the discretion of the British envoy in Persia. Unknown to all at the time, a "favorable opportunity" to strike such a bargain lay just around the corner.

The Russo-Persian war also raised the issue of British mediation. According to Article VI of the Definitive Treaty, the British had pledged themselves to mediate should Persia become engaged in a war with any European power at peace with Britain. There was some question as to the interpretation of Article VI: it was not clear whether Britain should offer to intervene if Persia was the aggressor. Canning initially hoped to evade mediation; other Cabinet officers, notably Wynn at the Board of Control and the Duke of Wellington, favored intervention. Eventually

96Ibid., Board of Control's draft of a dispatch from the Secret Committee to the governor-general at Ft. William, Bengal, September 14 (N.S.), 1827.

97Yapp, p. 170; see the letters exchanged between Canning and Wellington on this subject which have been
Canning came round to the latter viewpoint, as can be seen from the last paragraph in his letter to Wynn of October 9 (N.S.), 1826, quoted above. In November Canning informed Willock that "if in process of time, H. R. M. [Fath Ali Shah] shall be desirous of terminating a war so imprudently begun . . . . the British Government will be ready to fulfil the stipulations of the 6th Article of the Treaty of November 25th, 1814, by offering its good offices with Russia to bring about a Peace." It did not take long for His Royal Majesty to solicit British intervention. After the reverses sustained by the Persian army in September 1826, Fath Ali Shah sent a representative to London to implore the English to restore peace with Russia. Accordingly, Canning first broached the question with Prince Lieven, the Russian ambassador, in December 1826 but received no encouragement. Undeterred, Canning subsequently directed the British minister at St. Petersburg to make a formal offer of mediation to the Russian government. It met with no acceptance on the grounds that it was an "axiom" of Russian policy not to admit the intervention of any European power in her transactions with

97(Continued)

98IOL: L/P&S/9/86, Canning to Willock, November 10 (N.S.), 1826.

99Balaian, p. 151.
Asiatic states. In spite of Russia's unwillingness to tolerate British interference, we shall soon see that Paskevich would find it useful to accept the services of Macdonald as an unofficial mediator.

After the departure of Griboedov from Karaziadin, Abbas Mirza attempted to take advantage of Paskevich's inactivity at Karababa by marching into eastern Armenia, with thirty thousand men. His plan was to recapture the monastery at Echmiadzin and then advance on Tiflis. Had this venture succeeded, Georgia would have again been exposed to devastation. However, the Persian troops were intercepted by a small Russian force under General Krasovskii, who, though outnumbered ten to one, beat back the invader at heavy cost in the most heroic struggle of the war. After this battle, which took place on August 17, Abbas Mirza's army retired to Azerbaijan and would never re-emerge. The Persians had shot their bolt. A series of defeats came in rapid succession: the fortress of Sardar-Abad fell on September 20; Erivan surrendered to Paskevich on October 1; and Tabriz capitulated on October 13. The advance on Tabriz marked the first time the Russians had appeared in force in Azerbaijan. They

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100 PRO: F. O. 65/168, Confidential memorandum from Prince Lieven, February 26 (N.S.), 1827; see also Balaian, pp. 151-56.

101 A detailed account of this battle appears in Glynn R. Barratt, "A Note on the Russian Conquest of Armenia (1827)," The Slavonic and East European Review 50 (July 1972): 386-409.
were welcomed as deliverers by many elements of the local population. Indeed, the inhabitants of Tabriz turned against the Persian garrison upon the approach of the invader, and the city surrendered without opposition to Prince Eristov, the Russian commander. 102

To understand the warm reception of the Russian army in Azerbaijan, a few important facts must be mentioned. Most of the population of this province - the most populous and richest in Persia - consisted of non-Iranian stock. Almost all trade and local industry were in the hands of the numerically small but vigorous Armenians, who, having long been persecuted by the Persian authorities, were completely loyal to Russia, a coreligionist state.103 About sixty thousand Armenians lived in Azerbaijan. Most of the remaining population, nearly a million strong, belonged to tribes of Turco-Tatar stock, from which the ruling Qajars themselves derived. However, the tribes of Azerbaijan had had to bear almost the entire burden of the war and whatever enthusiasm they once possessed at the

102 For more detail on this last phase of the war, see Baddeley, pp. 166-74. The victorious Russian march through Azerbaijan is described in Shcherbatov, 3: 1-23. On the capitulation of Tabriz, see Algar, pp. 91-92.

103 On the active support rendered the Russian army by the Armenian people of Transcaucasia at this time, see Z. Grigorian, "Uchastie Armian v russko-persidskich voinakh nachala XIX veka," Voprosy istorii, 1951, no. 4, pp. 16-25.
war's outset had since turned to passive indifference, if not outright opposition. In the mountains of the province lived nomadic Kurdish tribes. The Kurds refused to regard themselves as subjects of Persia or any other state, although Abbas Mirza had managed to recruit some of them for his cavalry regiments. As a rule, the majority of Kurds avoided all contact with either the Persian or Russian troops.

Soon after its uncontested entry into Tabriz, the Russian army took possession of most of Azerbaijan. It was now necessary to organize an administration for the occupied territory and this task was entrusted to Griboedov. Having spent three years at the Russian mission in Tabriz before the war, he was well-informed about the laws and customs of the province. Moreover, he was also familiar with Russia's administrative practices in Transcaucasia. During his stint of duty under Ermolov, he had witnessed firsthand the abuses stemming from the

104 After the fall of Abbas-Abad, the British envoy reported on the situation in Azerbaijan: "The Government is daily becoming more and more inefficient. The Shah is now encamped within a few miles of this City [Tabriz], after having made with an army of Seventy or Eighty Thousand men the tour of Azerbaijan, where he has roused the indignation and inflamed the passions of the inhabitants by wantonly surrendering whole districts to the indiscriminate pillage of his disorderly troops" (IOL: L/P&S/9/86, Macdonald to the Secret Committee, August 20 [N.S.], 1827).

imposition of Russian bureaucratic methods on peoples with no knowledge of the Russian language or of European administrative formulas. That Griboedov had reflected on the errors of such a system may be seen from a report on the Persian province of Gilan which he submitted to Paskevich in the summer of 1827. Russia had her eyes on this part of Persia's Caspian littoral, since it had formerly been under tsarist control after the conquests of Peter the Great. In his report, Griboedov drew attention to Gilan's wealth in silk and timber, to its geographical isolation from the rest of Persia and to the disaffection of its inhabitants to the reigning dynasty. But in pointing out its potential importance to Russia with respect to trade and strategic considerations, he emphasized that the province would "yield its true value only if administered according to its own customs, independently of our ministries."  

Griboedov's philosophy about the importance of governing conquered peoples with the most scrupulous justice and of tailoring policy to fit local customs is reflected in his "Statute on the Administration of Azerbaijan." It contained a set of General Rules, prescribing the practices to be followed in the work of the administration. Since

106 The text of the report is in PSS, 3: 249-50.

107 Ibid., p. 250; emphasis supplied.
the text of the "Statute" has been lost, scholars base their analysis of it on a report describing the operations of the administration during the four months which Azerbaijan was under Russian occupation. This document was presented to Paskevich at the end of February 1828 by General D. E. Osten-Saken, the officer placed in charge of the Azerbaijan administration.  

According to the Osten-Saken report, the provincial administration's executive authority was vested in a council consisting of Russian military officers and native authorities: the latter included mujtahid Mir Fattah, the ecclesiastical leader who organized the surrender of Tabriz; and the begler-beg, or governor of Tabriz, Fath Ali Khan. The administration of Tabriz itself was placed in the hands of the elders who had managed municipal affairs before the occupation. Their work was supervised by the Russian commandant, however. To help retain the pro-Russian sympathies of the inhabitants, the tax burden throughout the province was reduced by one-fourth, in view of the impoverishment wrought by the war. Villages which

\[108\] For the text, see AKAK, 7: 597-601. It was first published in D. Osten-Saken, "Upravlenie Adderbidzhanom vo vremia poslednei persidskoi voiny, 1827-1828 godov," Russkii invalid, 1861, no. 79. In the Russkii invalid article, Osten-Saken mistakenly attributed the authorship of the "Statute" to P. M. Sakhno-Ustimovich, head of Paskevich's chancery - see Sakhno-Ustimovich, "Poiasnienie k state'e 'Ob upravlenii Aderbizhanom vo vremia persidskoi voiny' pomeshchennoi v No. 79 Russkogo invalida cego goda," Russkii invalid, 1861, no. 136.
had suffered severely from foraging were freed altogether from taxation. (Despite a certain amount of dislocation in the tax collecting system, it is interesting to note that the Russians collected the equivalent of nearly 500,000 silver rubles in tax revenue during the occupation of Azerbaijan.) In matters of civil and criminal litigation, the strictest impartiality was observed in all cases involving disputes between Russians and local natives. Certain Russian judicial procedures were introduced in the administration of justice: no one was punished except by sentence of a court; and the degree of punishment meted out never exceeded that which was applied in Russia. (No doubt because Griboedov had observed numerous past instances of wanton arbitrariness and cruelty in the administration of Persian justice, he paid special attention to judicial procedures in the "Statute.")

The Osten-Saken report notes that the entire province remained quiet throughout the duration of the Russian occupation and attributes this success to the efficacy of the General Rules (drawn up by Griboedov). By setting up such an enlightened model of an occupational regime, the Russian command wished not only to win the confidence of the Azerbaijani, but also to arouse pro-Russian sympathies among nations living outside the occupied territory. To quote from the concluding section of Osten-Saken's report: "The administration . . . has striven to implant the embryo
of new ideas and to imprint the spirit of a beneficent Russian government in the province of Azerbaijan, by means of which Russia might in future influence not only Persia and Turkey but also the remotest parts of Asia. 109

The fall of Tabriz, with its large arsenal and the country's only foundry, marked the nadir of Abbas Mirza's fortunes. Only a short time before, the Prince had complained bitterly of his predicament in an interview with Captain John Campbell, a member of the British mission:

At this momentous crisis I find myself involved in a war with a powerful and inveterate enemy without the means of opposing his efforts or of obtaining ultimate success. The integrity and independence of the Empire are to be supported by my feeble resources. The whole burden of the war is thrown upon the single province over which I rule. The King refuses to provide me with funds to furnish my arsenal or pay my troops. England has deserted me and withheld those resources which formerly enabled me to stand before my enemies. . . . Tell the Envoy [i.e., Macdonald] I am much in want of money and that I wish him to conclude peace for me. . . . 110

Indeed, the legendary avarice of Fath Ali Shah had seriously handicapped the Crown Prince's ability to wage war. 111

The entire burden of the war had been placed on the resources of Azerbaijan, 112 a territory now in the hands

109AKAK, 7: 600.

110IOL: L/P&S/9/87, Extract from Campbell's private journal, September 21 (N.S.), 1827.

111See IOL: L/P&S/9/86, Macdonald to the Secret Committee, February 11 (N.S.), 1827.

112The annual net revenue of Azerbaijan did not exceed 700,000 tomans, "a sum scarcely equivalent to the current
of Persia's adversary. Consequently, the impoverished heir apparent had no alternative but to seek an end to hostilities.

To arrange for negotiations, Abbas Mirza sent the Qaim Maqam, Mirza Abul Kasim, to Paskevich's camp on October 21, a week after the capitulation of Tabriz. He was received at Kara-Malek by A. M. Obrezkov, a St. Petersburg diplomat who had been deputed to the commander-in-chief by the Foreign Ministry for the purpose of assisting in negotiations with Persia. 113 Obrezkov informed the Persian envoy that Russia's peace terms had increased since the parley between Griboedov and Abbas Mirza at Karaziadin. In addition to the territory of Erivan and Nakhichevan, Persia now had to relinquish the remaining portion of Talish khanate still in her possession. Moreover, the size of the indemnity was raised to fifteen crores or 7,500,000 tomans (equal to thirty million silver rubles) and exact conditions for its payment were specified. A first installment of five crores had to be paid within one month and the

112 (Continued)

expenditures of its administration" (IOL: L/P&S/9/85, Macdonald to Swinton, December 21 [N.S.], 1826).

113 Obrezkov bore the rank of Actual State Councillor (equivalent to that of major-general in the armed forces). Nearly the same age as Griboedov, Obrezkov had had more diplomatic experience, having served at various posts in Europe and in Constantinople, but was completely unfamiliar with Persian affairs. Although he enjoyed the special favor of the Emperor, his relations with Paskevich became strained - see Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaiia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, pp. 119-20.
remaining ten crores within three months. Until the full indemnity was defrayed, all of Azerbaijan would remain occupied and under the control of the Russian government. If Persia did not pay the second installment of ten crores within the specified period, Azerbaijan would become a Russian protectorate and the first installment of five crores would be forfeited and not restored. No peace treaty would be signed until the delivery of the first installment of five crores. Abbas Mirza was given six days to accept these terms, as a pre-condition to the convocation of a peace conference which was to be held at Dei-Kargan, a village southwest of Tabriz.114

The Qaim Maqam agreed in principle to these demands but made it known that Abbas Mirza was broke. The millions of tomans demanded by Russia would have to be paid by the Shah. But, warned the Persian, without the assistance of the British envoy, it would be impossible to convince the old monarch to part with his treasure.115 Thus, the question of British intervention, a most unwelcome subject for the Russians, was raised at the outset of the peace negotiations.

114 IOL: L/P&S/9/87. "Draft of the Conditions of Peace offered by the Russian Plenipotentiary General Obreskoff to the Kaim Mukam at the conference held at Kara-Malek on 3[N.S.] November 1827"; also AKAK, 7: 569-73, Paskevich to Nicholas I, October 29, 1827.

Since the fall of Abbas-Abad, the British envoy had been trying to bring the warring parties to the peace table. Paskevich suspected that Macdonald was maneuvering for a seat at the peace conference. To forestall such an eventuality, the commander-in-chief sent Griboedov to call upon Macdonald at the British mission in Tabriz after the Russians had entered that city. Aleksandr Sergeevich told the British envoy that while his past endeavors to restore friendly relations between Russia and Persia had been appreciated by the Russian commander, Nicholas I was determined not to allow any mediation in Russia's dealings with Oriental powers. The Emperor's decision, said Griboedov, was attributable in part to the "embarrassment" St. Petersburg had suffered as a result of Sir Gore Ouseley's intervention in the Russo-Persian peace negotiations at Gulistan in 1813.116

Macdonald replied that he did not intend to proffer his mediation in any shape whatsoever, as he was unauthorized to do so by his own government. His aim all along had been to assist in bringing the two sides together, since no Persian minister would have incurred the odium of recommending the conclusion of peace on the terms offered by Russia. Once the negotiations were set on foot, his interference would no longer be necessary. At the same

116 See above, p. 38.
time, he could not refrain from telling Griboedov that Russia's demands were too great and should be moderated in order to insure the speedy termination of the pending negotiations. To this Griboedov answered:

I do not think them unreasonable, considering the treatment we experienced from Persia, when our defenceless provinces were wantonly invaded, not only without provocation, but without a declaration of war. We come to revenge past injuries, to punish a perfidious race, and to show by the extent of their chastisement that His Imperial Majesty is not to be insulted with impunity by a people like the Persians. 117

Despite Paskevich's unwillingness to tolerate British intervention, he soon discovered that Abbas Mirza would not proceed with the peace conference unless the British representative were present. Consequently, a few days after Griboedov's interview, the general himself visited Macdonald and said, as the latter put it, that "he now felt convinced of the difficulty of dealing with the Persians without the intervention of a third party, that they were a strange people, that they could neither make war, nor peace, and that he must be a beggar for my interference. . . ." 118

In short, the British envoy was invited to come to Dei-Kargan.

117 An account of this interview appears in Macdonald's private journal under the entry for November 2 (N.S.), 1827 - see IOL: L/P&S/9/87. Since this was the first face-to-face meeting between the two men, Macdonald noted in his journal that Griboedov was "a lively, clever, well-informed man, and is said to play on the Piano Forte with more taste than any man in Russia" (ibid.).

118 Ibid., Entry for November 13 (N.S.), 1827.
On November 6, 1827 the Russian and Persian pleni- potentiaries met at Dei-Kargan for the purpose of drawing up a peace treaty. This conference was fated to drag on for several months and end unsuccessfully, much to the chagrin of the Russians, who were growing increasingly worried about the possibility of war with Turkey. The Eastern question had reached a turning point the month before, when, on October 8, a combined fleet of Russian, British and French warships annihilated a Turkish fleet at Navarino Bay. Since, subsequently, the new British government under Wellington would hasten to express regret for British participation in this incident, Russia became the sole object of Turkish wrath. Preparations for war began, but Russia was in a partial bind, for as long as Paskevich's main army was employed in the occupation of Azerbaijan, it could not safeguard Russia's Caucasian provinces against a Turkish attack. Therefore, the Russians wished to end hostilities with Persia as soon as possible.

The Russian delegation at Dei-Kargan was led by Paskevich. Besides Obrezkov and Griboedov, it also included as assistants A. K. Amburger and N. D. Kiselev, along with two interpreters. Present on the Persian side were Abbas Mirza, the Qaim Maqam, Fath Ali Khan and several other functionaries. Since none of the Persians
knew Russian, it was agreed to use French and Persian as official languages.\textsuperscript{119}

The conference was organized on two different levels. Formal sessions were held at irregular intervals with all the plenipotentiaries present.\textsuperscript{120} The topics discussed in these gatherings related mainly to Russia's territorial and pecuniary demands. But in between the formal sessions, the work of the conference proceeded in private talks where the two sides thrashed out their differences on the other points to be included in the peace treaty. It was at this level that most of the work on the treaty was completed. Usually the delegation heads did not participate in these talks.

Russia's territorial claims were settled in the earliest stages of the conference. Abbas Mirza agreed first to the cession of Erivan and Nakhichevan khanates, and, then, in the face of a Russian threat to break off the negotiations, relinquished Persia's claim to the remainder of Talish khanate still occupied by his troops.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{119}Enikolopov, A. S. Griboedov v Gruzii i Persii, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{120}Altogether six formal sessions were convened at Dei-Kargan. Copies of the protocols of the first five sessions (the sixth broke up in a quarrel and nothing was recorded) were forwarded to London as enclosures in a dispatch from the British envoy - see IOL: L/P&S/9/89, Macdonald to the Secret Committee, March 16 (N.S.), 1828.

\textsuperscript{121}See the protocols of the first and second sessions of the conference, dated November 10 and 11, 1827, respectively (ibid.); also, the entry in Macdonald's journal for November 23 (N.S.), 1827 (IOL: L/P&S/9/87).
However, the main point of contention — the one which ultimately wrecked the conference — was Russia's enormous pecuniary demand: fifteen crores of tomans (thirty million silver rubles). Paskevich had previously been warned by Macdonald that the Shah would rather surrender three Azerbaijans than deplete his treasury by such a huge sum. Nevertheless, as the Russians insisted upon full payment, interminable and fruitless wrangling resulted. A Soviet scholar has undoubtedly hit upon the truth by remarking that more was involved here than the Shah's phenomenal stinginess. By stalling on the indemnity issue, the Qajar monarchy hoped to obtain, if not a considerable reduction in the size of the contribution, at least more favorable terms for payment. If several years were granted to pay off the sum owed Russia, the political situation might change for the better in the interim, in which case the Persians might escape from paying whatever portion of the indemnity remained outstanding.

The discord occasioned by the indemnity question threatened to disrupt the negotiations. After a session in which the contracting parties had been unable to agree on the scope of the contribution, Abbas Mirza informed the British envoy that they had decided to solicit his

122 Shcherbatov, 3: 32.
123 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost', A. S. Griboedova, p. 137.
"interposition" so as to avoid for the future "all such intemperate and useless discussions." Macdonald replied that he was ready as he had always been to bring about an accommodation. Thus, the two sides found it necessary to use the British envoy as a go-between on the indemnity matter.

Macdonald in fact came to play an essential part in the negotiations which led to the conclusion of the peace treaty. On the one hand, he constantly urged the Persians to face up to the realities of the situation in which through their own fault they now found themselves and, on the other, he endeavored to moderate the demands of the Russians. For his services in helping to bridge the gap between the belligerents, he would receive letters of appreciation from both Abbas Mirza and General Paskevich.

In order to hasten the conclusion of peace, Paskevich at length reduced the amount of the indemnity to twelve crores. (Eventually he would settle for ten crores in all.) Persia, however, would still have to pay a first installment of five crores immediately - and the peace treaty could not

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124 IOL: L/P&S/9/87, Entry in Macdonald's journal for November 27 (N.S.), 1827.

125 See the entries in Macdonald's journal for November 23 and 25 (N.S.), 1827 for his specific recommendations to both sides on the indemnity question (ibid.).

126 For these letters, see IOL: L/P&S/9/88, Abbas Mirza to Macdonald, 24 Shahban 1244 (March 1828); Paskevich to Macdonald, February 14/26, 1828.
be signed until the money was received. To further sweeten the pill, Paskevich was willing to allow more time for the remainder to be paid; but all of Azerbaijan would remain under Russian administration until eight crores were received, after which the province would be partially evacuated. A full withdrawal would occur only upon payment of ten crores.\footnote{127} Abbas Mirza accepted these conditions.

And on November 28, Macdonald received word from Teheran that at last the Shah had paid five crores of tomans to Dr. John McNeill,\footnote{128} the British chargé d'affaires in the capital, for delivery to any person appointed by Paskevich to receive them.\footnote{129} Paskevich thereupon sent an officer, Captain Vol'khovskii, to Teheran in order to take possession of the five crores.\footnote{130}

\footnote{127}For more detail on the terms of the indemnity, see the entry in Macdonald's journal for November 28 (N.S.), 1827 \textit{(IOL: L/P&S/9/87)}.

\footnote{128}John McNeill, a physician by training, was the British resident attached to the court of Teheran. He enjoyed the special confidence of the Shah by having cured one of the monarch's favorite wives from a serious illness. Thereafter, McNeill had access to the royal harem, as a result of which he was regarded as the most influential and knowledgeable foreigner in Persia. In 1836 he was named British envoy to Persia and served six years in that capacity. His influence was recognized by the Russians - see V. S. Tolstoi, "Ser Dzhon Maknil'," \textit{Russkii arkhiv}, 1874, no. 4, pp. 890-92.

\footnote{129}\textit{IOL: L/P&S/9/87, Entry in Macdonald's journal for December 11 (N.S.), 1827}.

\footnote{130}Shcherbatov, 3: 51.
It now appeared as if peace were in sight. On December 9 Abbas Mirza signed all the articles to be included in the peace treaty.\footnote{See the protocol of the fifth session of the conference - IOL: L/P&S/9/89.} The Russian signature would follow as soon as Vol'khovskii confirmed receipt of the crores. This confirmation never arrived. Instead, on December 17, Paskevich received a communication from the Shah, announcing that a special emissary, Foreign Minister Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, had been empowered to conduct the peace negotiations and was en route to Dei-Kargan. It soon became known that Fath Ali Shah declined to accept the peace terms already agreed upon by Abbas Mirza and would not pay any part of the indemnity until the Russian army got out of Persia.\footnote{See Balaian, pp. 193-94.}

What caused this sudden and unexpected demarche? It appears that the Shah had fallen under the influence of the Ottoman government and had been led to believe that Turkey would come to his aid if he would reject the peace treaty and resume hostilities against Russia.\footnote{See ibid., pp. 200-02.} The air was rife with rumors to the effect that the Turks were about to declare war against Russia. Moreover, another circumstance reinforced the Persian monarch's determination to pursue the new course. On December 25 his son Hasan-Ali
Mirza, governor of Khorasan province, made a sensational appearance in Teheran. McNeill reported from the capital that the populace hailed the Prince as a liberator: "The people of all classes threw themselves upon him, kissing the hems of his garment and even the prints of his horse's feet." Hasan-Ali Mirza vowed to drive the Russians out of Azerbaijan and declared he would rather die than permit any money to be delivered to the infidels. The Shah placed Hasan-Ali in command of all his forces and talked publicly of making him heir to the throne.

Meanwhile, at Russian headquarters, Paskevich and his advisers debated what to do in response to the unexpected turn of events. Several documents concerning these deliberations have been brought to light recently by the Soviet scholar, S. V. Shostakovich. They are of especial interest to Griboedov's biographers. One document is in the form of a memorandum listing a set of recommendations for the future conduct of the Russian delegation at Dei-Kargan. It was authored by Obrezkov and is dated December 22, 1827. The other document represents a list of critical comments which Griboedov pegged to Obrezkov's proposals. An examination of these source materials shows that, of the


135 Ibid.

136 Both documents have been published in S. V. Shostakovich, "Novye materialy o Griboedove," Novaia Sibir' 34 (1956): 309-11.
two diplomats, Griboedov was more willing to drive the Persians to the wall at once.

Obrezkov put forward two alternate proposals. Their essence boiled down to the following: in one, it was recommended to sign the peace treaty immediately, without waiting for the first installment of the indemnity, and then disband and await the arrival of Mirza Abul Hasan Khan; the other suggested that the Russian delegation draw up the final version of the treaty but refrain from signing it and then disband and await the appearance of the Persian foreign minister. In both cases Obrezkov considered it essential to negotiate with the Shah's new plenipotentiary for the purpose of obtaining the delivery of the money.

Griboedov objected most strenuously to the idea of meeting with Mirza Abul Hasan Khan: "That is only a waste of time, food for indecisiveness, and it will involve us again in those empty, absurd, stupid talks with which the Persians have been amusing themselves at our expense for more than fifty days." He complained that the Russians were becoming the "laughing-stock" of the conquered enemy. Insisting that an immediate rupture of the negotiations would "not postpone but accelerate the delivery of the money," he closed his remarks with the categorical assertion that only armed force would induce Mirza Abul Hasan Khan to accept Russia's peace terms.137

137 See ibid.
Shostakovich has also uncovered another document which further reveals Griboedov's uncompromising, belligerent attitude toward the negotiations with Persia. It is a memorandum which was prepared by Aleksandr Sergeevich for Paskevich's perusal probably on the eve of the Dei-Kargan conference. The full text follows:

Do not receive the enemy's emissaries before the Shah has given his written consent to all our conditions which are already known to him.

Do not receive them with great respect until there is a guarantee that military operations will not be renewed.

Threaten them with an uprising [in retaliation] for the disorder which they have incited on our side. They will no longer fear anything when they still have Isfahan, Shiraz and other [cities] to which they can flee. It is enough that we do not resort to seditious methods, and, upon the conclusion of peace, we shall tell them that we had this reliable instrument in our hands but did not direct it against them.

In conversation and in correspondence do not maintain a tone of moderation, which the Persians will ascribe to weakness, to exhausted resources, to the impossibility of further extending our conquests. Every respectful, friendly word - especially assurances about the Sovereign's desire for peace, etc. - are apt to be immediately proclaimed by Abbas Mirza to his people as proof that his affairs are not so bad after all.

Threaten them that we shall take the provinces beyond the Kaflan-Koo, a pass across the mountain chain separating southern Azerbaijan from Persia's other provinces, that we shall occupy Astarabad from the [Caspian] Sea, and so on. Tell the English the same thing at a favorable opportunity (but not in writing, however).

The terms of the preliminary accords [should be]: the immediate payment of a sum in cash and the return of all our prisoners. Do not forget also an article in favor of the Turkomans, Kel'b-bey, and others who undertook raids against the Persians at our suggestion - consequently, to turn them over to the revenge of the enemy would be unconscionable.\(^\text{139}\)

\(^\text{138}\) The pass across the mountain chain separating southern Azerbaijan from Persia's other provinces.

\(^\text{139}\) Ibid., p. 312.
It was Griboedov who recommended to Paskevich not to sign the peace treaty until Persia had paid part of the indemnity. The purpose of such a pre-condition was to guarantee a speedier fulfillment of Persia's financial obligations. Whereas Griboedov favored the resumption of hostilities, if necessary, to assure Persian compliance with this demand, Obrezkov advocated an opposite policy. In early December he began to urge Paskevich to sign the treaty first and obtain the money afterwards by occupying the province of Gilan as a pledge. Such advice was rejected out of hand by the commander-in-chief. The interesting point about this disagreement between Paskevich and Obrezkov is that the general distrusted the latter's motives. He suspected that Obrezkov wanted to accelerate the signing of peace because of purely personal considerations - specifically because he was in a hurry to return to St. Petersburg in order to get married.

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140 Paskevich confirms this in a report to the Tsar, which is quoted below in another connection - see p. 178.

141 Obrezkov explained his views in a memorandum to Paskevich of December 7, 1827 - see Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, pp. 138-39.

142 Ibid., p. 139.

143 See Shostakovich, "Novye materialy o Griboedove," p. 313. In this regard the British envoy noted in his journal for December 26 (N.S.), 1827 that most of the officers at Russian headquarters were perfectly sick of the campaign and were "panting for permission" to return to the pleasures of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Griboedov was no
On January 6, 1828, the Shah's new plenipotentiary arrived at Dei-Kargan. Expecting to reopen the negotiations from the beginning, Mirza Abul Hasan Khan was greeted the following day by Paskevich's point-blank refusal to alter one word in the draft treaty already accepted by Abbas Mirza. Worse yet, the Russian general announced that the negotiations were at an end and that he was recommencing hostilities in consequence of the Shah's sudden about-face. Thus, Paskevich had embraced Griboedov's recommendation that only armed force would persuade the Persian government to accept Russia's peace conditions. It was Paskevich's intention to advance in the direction of Teheran until such time as the first installment of crores was received.\footnote{144}

The Russian army was set in motion. Although the roads were clogged with snow, the troops pushed forward and, as they encountered no opposition, three towns were occupied in short order: Urumiya, Ardabil and Mianeh.\footnote{145} Teheran, although still some distance away, was exposed to danger.

Undoubtedly the Russians would have occupied the capital - but matters did not proceed that far. The news of

\footnote{143}{Continued}

less eager to leave than Obrezkov. However, the latter, according to Macdonald, was engaged to be married in February. If he could not get away before the end of January, his nuptials would have to be postponed until after Lent, since no marriages take place in Russia during this fast (IOL: L/P&S/9/89).

\footnote{144}{See Balaian, pp. 203-04.}

\footnote{145}{See Shcherbatov, 3: 65-72.}
the rupture of the negotiations caused "the greatest sensation" at Teheran and struck Fath Ali Shah "like a thunderbolt."\textsuperscript{146} This, together with pressure applied by Macdonald, at last persuaded the aged monarch to proceed with the delivery of five crores. At the Shah's instructions, the money was to be transported\textsuperscript{147} to the British mission at Tabriz and placed under the custody of Macdonald, who would surrender it to Russia upon the signing of the peace treaty.

The British envoy acted in this crisis because he feared the Persian monarchy was about to be toppled: "Nothing indeed short of a positive conviction of this fact, combined with a dread of the unpleasant consequences likely to accrue to us from the overthrow of the reigning family could have induced me to press with so much urgency the payment of the first instalment as the only means of obtaining the signature of the Treaty."\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{146}IOL: L/P&S/9/88, Macdonald to Swinton, February 14 (N.S.), 1828.

\textsuperscript{147}It was a cumbersome task to deliver so much money. Three crores were in gold and two in silver. Men were kept at work night and day packing the treasure, which required some 1,600 pack animals to transport - see Memoir of the Right Hon. Sir John McNeill and of His Second Wife Elizabeth Wilson by their Grand-Daughter (London, 1910), pp. 100-01.

\textsuperscript{148}IOL: L/P&S/9/88, Macdonald to Swinton, February 14 (N.S.), 1828. McNeill was of the same opinion concerning the consequences of a Russian entry into Teheran: "I cannot believe it possible that His Majesty the Shah would remain in the city, for it certainly could not be defended; and if His Majesty should depart, not only the destruction of much property, and the loss of such part of the Royal Treasure as H.M. could not carry with him, but the total overthrow of
When Macdonald received word that the crores were en route to Tabriz, he urged Paskevich to reconvene the peace conference. However, the commander-in-chief said he was inclined to adopt a suggestion put forward by Griboedov to the effect that all further discussions with the Persians be studiously avoided and that the Russian side simply sign the treaty and send it to Abbas Mirza. Griboedov feared that another session of the conference would turn into "a second edition of Dei-Kargan": endless discussions and further delay. Nevertheless, Macdonald was able in this instance to induce Paskevich to appoint a place for the reunion of the plenipotentiaries.\textsuperscript{149}

Accordingly, Paskevich summoned the Persians to meet at Turkmanchay, a "miserable hamlet" (Macdonald's description) eighty miles southeast of Tabriz on the road to Teheran. Abbas Mirza and Mirza Abul Hasan Khan led the Persian delegation, which was augmented by two new members: Manuchehr Khan and Allahyar Khan.\textsuperscript{150} Russia was represented by the

\textsuperscript{148}(Continued)
the Government would be an almost inevitable consequence: a creature of Russia would probably be set upon the vacant throne, and the present family excluded forever" (PRO: F. O. 248/56, McNeill to Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, November 26 [N.S.], 1827).

\textsuperscript{149}See IOL: L/P&S/9/89, Entry in Macdonald's journal for February 2 (N.S.), 1828.

\textsuperscript{150}Allahyar Khan had been in charge of the defense of Tabriz and was captured by the Russians when they entered the city. He was allowed to be present at Turkmanchay at the request of Abbas Mirza (Shcherbatov, 3: 81-82).
same delegation as at Dei-Kargan. The British envoy was also present.

The conference opened on February 7, 1828. Contrary to the apprehensions expressed by Griboedov, the proceedings met with no delay, since Abbas Mirza had received a royal firman to conclude the peace on the terms agreed to at Dei-Kargan. The treaty was signed at midnight on February 9-10 - the hour deemed the "most propitious" by a Persian astrologer.\textsuperscript{151} Macdonald described the scene in his private journal:

In the dead of the night, a royal salute of one hundred guns announced to the inhabitants of Toorkoomanchaee, that Persia had again become the ally of Russia. The whole of this morning was passed in the mutual shaking of hands, and in the interchange of congratulations. The Prince held a levee in a chamber about six feet square, and the General gave a grand dinner in a barn, so dark that candles were required many hours before the setting of the sun. The healths of the Emperor, George the 4th and of the Shah were drunk in champagne with great applause. His Excellency [Paskevich] appeared to be in great pain, having while on a visit to the Assuf-oo-Dowleh [Allahyar Khan] fallen into a tunnoor (oven), and inflicted a scald as well as a dangerous wound in his leg.\textsuperscript{152}

The Treaty of Turkmanchai,\textsuperscript{153} which superseded that of Gulistan, warrants close inspection, because it outlined

\textsuperscript{151}Ibid., p. 82.

\textsuperscript{152}IOL: L/P&S/9/89, Entry for February 23 (N.S.), 1828.

\textsuperscript{153}For the text of the treaty and the commercial protocol signed on the same date, see Hurewitz, 1: 96-102.
the relations between Russia and Persia which were to exist for nearly a hundred years.\textsuperscript{154}

Territorially, Persia ceded to Russia the khanates of Erivan and Nakhichevan, as well as all of Talish. In Article IV Russia dictated the frontier line which today (apart from several minor adjustments) separates the two countries in Transcaucasia. By Article VI the indemnity to be collected from Persia was fixed at ten crores of tomans (twenty million silver rubles).\textsuperscript{155} The terms of payment were set forth in a separate protocol (described below). Article VII designated Abbas Mirza as the heir to the Persian monarchy and Russia agreed to recognize him as Shah from the date of his accession. Both countries, in Article VIII, were granted the right of free navigation for merchant vessels on the Caspian Sea, but Russia alone was to be allowed to maintain ships of war on that body of water. Article X accorded Russia the right to appoint consuls or commercial agents "wherever the good of commerce will demand it." Commercial matters were dealt with in a separate protocol which was to be an integral part of the treaty.

\textsuperscript{154}In January 1918 the new Soviet regime unilaterally repudiated all tsarist privileges which infringed upon the sovereignty of Iran; in 1921 a Soviet-Iranian treaty of friendship was signed in Moscow, recognizing the independence of Iran — see George Lenczowski, Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-1948 (Ithaca, New York, 1949), pp. 48-51.

\textsuperscript{155}This was equivalent to 17,500,000 dollars (Hurewitz, 1: 96).
Article XIII specified that all prisoners-of-war, as well as the subjects of either power in captivity, were to be liberated within four months; moreover, the two governments reserved to themselves the right of claiming at any time POWs or civilian captives who might, from some accidental reason, not be repatriated within the specified time. In Article XV the Shah was obliged to grant an amnesty to all the inhabitants and officials of Azerbaijan for disloyal acts committed during either the war or Russia's temporary occupation. Furthermore, the inhabitants of this province were to be allowed to resettle in Russia within the space of one year, if they chose to do so. (This provision was mainly intended for the benefit of the Armenians living in Azerbaijan.)

No less significant than the peace treaty was the commercial protocol. It allowed the merchants of each country to trade and travel freely within the confines of the other power. Goods passing from one country to the other were to be subjected to just one customs duty of five percent ad valorem, levied at the frontier. The protocol gave to Russia privileges of extraterritoriality and consular jurisdiction which infringed upon the sovereignty of Persia. Although Persia's laws and customs forbade foreign nationals from renting or owning immovable property, Russian subjects were granted the right to rent or purchase buildings for living quarters and the storage of merchandise.
Entry into the premises of such property by employees of the Persian government could not be undertaken by force unless authorized by the Russian minister or consul. Persian subjects employed by tsarist officials were to enjoy Russian protection. All disputes between Russian subjects in Persia were to be submitted to the Russian minister or consul for settlement in accordance with Russian law. On the other hand, disputes between Russian and Persian subjects were to be brought before the hakim or governor of a province for abjudication, but a Russian diplomatic official had to be present during the hearing of each case. It was also specified that the Persian authorities of any locality who violated the provisions of the protocol could be dismissed from their posts.

In other words, Persia was saddled with a capitulatory regime. In fairness to Russia, it should be borne in mind that she was not the first foreign power to have extracted capitulations from Persia. In the period from 1623 to 1715, Dutch, English and French merchants were granted various privileges by the rulers of the Safavid dynasty.\^{156} With the fall of the Safavids in 1722, all of these capitulatory arrangements came to an end, however. During the chaos which engulfed Persia for much of the remainder of the eighteenth century, European trade with her languished. The British alone retained an active interest, and in 1763 the

\^{156} See Hurewitz, I: 16-20, 32-38, 40-42.
East India Company received special privileges from Karim Khan (1750-79) to erect a factory at the Persian Gulf port of Bushire. After the establishment of the Qajar dynasty in 1796, the East India Company's privileges were reaffirmed by the 1801 Anglo-Persian treaty of alliance. However, this pact was repudiated by both sides in less than six years so that, for a number of years thereafter, Persia remained free of capitulations to foreign powers.

Given the despotic and arbitrary features of Persia's system of administration and justice, it is not surprising that Russia's diplomats, like those of other European nations before this time, should want to establish legal guarantees to safeguard the interests and property of their nationals in such a backward Asiatic state. Nonetheless, not only did the Turkmanchai commercial protocol give Russia's subjects rights and privileges similar to those accorded to other foreigners at various times in the past, it also established the first fully-developed system of extraterritoriality in Persia. Moreover, it represented the first time that a foreign power was able to establish a capitulatory regime under the Qajar dynasty. Therein lies its significance and humiliation for Persia: throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century other powers would use the Turkmanchai Treaty as their model to demand - and receive - the same.

157 Ibid., pp. 52-54.
privileges enjoyed by the most favored nation.\textsuperscript{158}

The Treaty of Turkmanchai was drawn up on the basis of instructions from St. Petersburg.\textsuperscript{159} The treaty was not, however, merely a copy of a draft prepared by the Foreign Ministry, since, in the course of the prolonged negotiations, it proved necessary to emend many articles and even add new ones.\textsuperscript{160} The extent to which Griboedov participated in determining the contents of the treaty is difficult to assess because of a lack of documentation. At the peace conference Griboedov was entrusted with the task of drawing up the protocols. It is believed that in this capacity he may have composed the final text of the treaty. Also, credit has been given to him for the inclusion of Articles XII, XIV and XV, protecting the interests of all the people of Azerbaijan who supported Russia during the war.\textsuperscript{161} It appears that Griboedov's principal achievement at the peace negotiations was to assist Paskevich in working out the tactics pursued by the Russian plenipotentaries. After all, he was the only member of the Russian delegation who had had any substantial experience in dealing with the adversary; both Paskevich and Obrezkov were neophytes by comparison.

\textsuperscript{158}Sykes, 2: 420.

\textsuperscript{159}AKAK, 7: 540, Nesselrode to Obrezkov, April 19, 1827.


\textsuperscript{161}See Semenov, p. 124.
N. Murav'ev-Karskii, who knew Griboedov well but personally disliked him, has written that without Griboedov's help Paskevich might not perhaps have been able to cope with the difficult situation in Georgia in 1826 and 1827 and "could not have concluded such an advantageous peace with Persia." 162

The value of the treaty for Russia was very great. It left her hands free in the Caucasus to prepare for a showdown with Turkey. Beyond this immediate advantage, the treaty consolidated the tsarist regime's grip on Transcaucasia. It also created favorable conditions for further political and economic penetration of Persia. Whether Russia would reap the benefits from her advantageous position vis-à-vis the Qajar empire remained to be seen. 163

Turkmanchay, in the words of a present-day historian, "has gone down in Iran's diplomatic history as the most

162 A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 95.

163 A recent study of Russo-Persian commercial relations in the nineteenth century reveals that Russian trade with Persia failed to respond to the more favorable legal conditions provided by the Turkmanchay Treaty. A short-term increase in trade volume did occur until 1830, owing largely to the disruption of European exports to Persia by the 1828-29 Russo-Turkish war. Thereafter, Russian exports to Persia plummeted precipitously and more than fifty years passed before Russia regained the level of 1830. Moreover, Russia would not enjoy a favorable balance of trade with Persia until 1900. The study attributes Russia's commercial failure in part to non-enforcement of the treaty - see M. L. Entner, Russo-Persian Commercial Relations, 1828-1914 (Gainesville, Florida, 1965), pp. 6-16.
humiliating treaty ever signed with a foreign power." Nevertheless, as severe as the terms were, it is interesting to note that the British envoy considered the conclusion of peace was of "inestimable importance" both to Persia and to England, since it saved the former from what he feared was impending destruction:

To seize upon Gilan and Mazenderan, to revolutionize the Government, and to dismember the Empire into a number of petty principalities, or khanats, as they are styled, was, I have just reason to imagine, the intention of the Russians, had their army once crossed the Kizil-Ouzum [river], nor would it have been difficult, in the present unsettled state of men's minds, to have carried that plan into immediate effect. Macdonald was partially right. Paskevich, in November 1827, had been authorized by the Tsar to occupy all of Talish, Gilan and Astarabad if the Persians refused to make peace and, if need be, to create out of Gilan and Azerbaijan independent khanates under Russian protection which were to serve as a buffer between the two empires.

To conclude this discussion of the Turkmanchai Treaty, mention must be made of the indemnity protocol, which laid down precise terms for the liquidation of Persia's financial obligations (ten crores or five million tomans). Half

164Ramazani, p. 46.

165IOL: L/P&S/9/88, Macdonald to Swinton, February 22 (N.S.), 1828.

166See Shcherbatov, 3: appendix II, 22-25, Dibich to Paskevich, November 6, 1827.
of the money due was to be handed over to the Russian authorities within fifteen days of the signing of the treaty.\textsuperscript{167} Three additional crores were due by April 13, 1828 and the remaining two had to be paid by January 13, 1830. The evacuation of Azerbaijan would commence upon receipt of seven crores but, as a pledge for the liquidation of the remaining three, Russian troops would occupy the districts of Khoi and Urumiya.\textsuperscript{168}

These terms were soon modified as a result of several weeks of negotiations which represent a sequel to the peace conference at Turkmanchay. Difficulty arose due to the determination of the Shah not to contribute more than six crores to the indemnity.\textsuperscript{169} This meant that Abbas Mirza would have to foot the rest of the bill but his finances were in a ruinous state, compounded by his inability to collect any revenue from Azerbaijan as long as it remained under Russian control. This predicament presented the British envoy with that "favorable opportunity" for which his government had been searching. Macdonald offered to pay Persia 200,000 tomans to help defray the indemnity on two conditions: first, that Paskevich evacuate all of Azerbaijan upon receipt of 6-1/2 crores, not seven; and, second, that

\textsuperscript{167}It will be recalled that this sum – five crores – had already been delivered to the British mission at Tabriz prior to the signing of the treaty.

\textsuperscript{168}Ibid., 3: 79; Watson, pp. 241-42.

\textsuperscript{169}Balaian, p. 198.
Abbas Mirza cancel the subsidy article of the Anglo-Persian Definitive Treaty. Paskevich accepted Macdonald's proposal with the proviso that the districts of Khoi and Urumiya would remain under Russian control until a full eight crores were paid. Abbas Mirza also consented, since otherwise the enemy would have continued to hold all of his territory. Thus, by taking advantage of Abbas Mirza's financial distress, the British managed to purchase the abrogation of the clauses in the Definitive Treaty relating to the subsidy payment. To sum up: after the first week of March 1828, when these transactions were completed, Persia, that is to say, Abbas Mirza, still owed Russia 1,800,000 tomans. The onus of collecting this sum from the penniless Prince would fall upon Griboedov, who was soon to be appointed Russia's envoy to Persia.

Meanwhile, Griboedov had been selected by Paskevich to convey the treaty to the Emperor for ratification. In a report to Nicholas of February 11, 1828, the commander-in-chief said of his diplomatic secretary:

I venture to recommend him as a man who has been extremely useful to me on the political side. I am indebted to him for the idea of not proceeding to the conclusion of the treaty without previous receipt of part of the money; and the event has

170 See Paskevich's report to Nicholas I of February 18, 1828 (AKAK, 7: 596).

171 IOL: L/P&S/9/88, Macdonald to Amherst, March 12 (N.S.), 1828; Balaian, pp. 208-09.
MAP II
THE TOWNS OF NORTHERN PERSIA - 1828
shown that, had it not been for this, we should not for a long time have achieved in this matter the success desired.172

Coming from a man as vain as Paskevich, this was high praise indeed.173

Aleksandr Sergeevich quitted Turkmanchay the day after the treaty was signed and reached St. Petersburg on March 14, 1828. In marked contrast to his last arrival two years before, the city welcomed him with a salute of cannon,174 and on the following day the Tsar granted him a private audience. As Russia was preparing to go to war with Turkey, the news of the peace with Persia came as especially opportune. In a letter to Paskevich, Nesselrode expressed satisfaction that after a careful scrutiny he "found that all the articles of the Treaty of Turkmanchay, down to the

172Quoted in Shcherbatov, 3: 95.

173Paskevich's vanity had no bounds. A telling episode occurred at Dei-Kargan. About ten days after the start of the conference, Abbas Mirza told Macdonald that he had received "a confidential, though somewhat singular message from Paskevich" to the effect that he (Abbas) by his frequent conferences with Griboedov and Obrezkov appeared to place more reliance on the good offices of those gentlemen than in the friendship of His Excellency. That he was the chief, they only subordinates, and that consequently His Highness would do well to trust more in him and confer less with the others (IOL: L/P&S/9/87, Entry in Macdonald's journal for November 28 [N.S.], 1827).

smallest detail, have been thought out with the most scrupulous exactitude. . . . "175

In recognition of Griboedov's contributions to the peace of Turkmanchaj, the Emperor awarded him the rank of State Councillor (equivalent to the military grade of brigadier), the Order of St. Anne second class with diamonds, and forty thousand rubles.176 By contrast, Paskevich received the title "Count of Erivan" and one million rubles.177

The treaty of Turkmanchaj, as we know in retrospect, brought to an end the succession of Russo-Persian wars in the nineteenth century. It ushered in a new chapter in the relations between the former adversaries - one in which Griboedov was destined to play a leading part, albeit for a brief interval.

175AKAK, 7: 607, Nesselrode to Paskevich, March 16, 1828.


177Ibid.; the Emperor also distributed awards to the British diplomats who helped arrange the reconciliation between Russia and Persia: Macdonald received the Order of St. Anne first class and an expensive snuff box; McNeill got the Order of St. Anne second class without diamonds (AKAK, 7: 612, Nesselrode to Paskevich, April 12, 1828).
CHAPTER VI

THE MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY TO THE COURT
OF TEHERAN, 1828 TO 1829

After having returned in triumph to the plaudits of St. Petersburg, Griboedov intended to resign from government service. Although his star was rapidly rising in the diplomatic corps, this was not his sought-after vocation. To S. N. Begichev, whom he met briefly in Moscow upon his return from Persia, Griboedov confided: "Everything with which I have occupied myself up to now has been of secondary importance to me. My calling is the life of a thinker. My head is full and I feel an urgent need to write."¹

The author of Gore ot uma also discussed his future with F. V. Bulgarin, who later recalled that Griboedov "intended to go into retirement, devote himself completely to scholarly study and literature and settle down with me, at least for awhile, next to academic Dorpat in my cloistered refuge."² We consoled ourselves with this thought, planned how we would spend our time, how we would go on

¹A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, pp. 13-14.

²A reference to Bulgarin's estate at Karlovo on the Baltic coast.
visits to Moscow, Petersburg and to S. N. Begichev in the countryside, and so on." There was talk even of going abroad. Griboedov very much wanted to see Europe; and it is known that arrangements were made to travel to London and Paris in company with three other renowned compatriots: A. S. Pushkin, I. A. Krylov and P. A. Viazemskii. A long vacation must have been especially appealing after the arduous labors of the Persian campaign. When asked by friends how he had gotten along in Persia, Griboedov replied: "I have grown older there - not only have I been tanned, become darker, and lost almost all my hair, but also in my soul I don't feel the youthfulness of former times." It is quite certain that, whatever else Russia's newest diplomatic hero desired to do, returning to Persia was not part of his plans.

Circumstances, however, dictated otherwise. With the conclusion of peace, the tsarist government was eager to restore diplomatic relations with Persia, but the post of chargé d'affaires was vacant, since Mazarovich had resigned in 1826 and no one had been appointed to succeed him. In fact, it was necessary to reconstitute the entire mission

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3A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 34.

4See the extract from P. A. Viazemskii's letter to his wife, dated April 21-26, 1828 in Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, p. 109.

5Quoted in PSS, 1: LXXXI.
to Persia and to select as its head an experienced diplomat familiar with the country and its rulers. It is possible to say that in 1828 the Persian assignment had assumed an importance greater than at any other time since the inception of permanent relations between the two countries. Not only would the new envoy have the difficult task of enforcing the provisions of the Treaty of Turkmanchay, but also, owing to Russia's declaration of war against Turkey in April 1828, he would have to see to it that the humiliated and embittered Persians did not join forces with the Turks. The individual best suited to cope with these tasks was Griboedov. Consequently, it was announced on April 25 that he had been appointed to the newly-created post of minister plenipotentiary to the court of Teheran. General Paskevich was informed of this appointment by K. K. Rodo­finikin, director of the Foreign Ministry's Asiatic Depart­ment, who wrote:

Griboedov's knowledge of the Persian language, his intimate familiarity with local affairs, finally the ability and zeal which he displayed in past negotiations are sufficient proof that the Emperor's choice has fallen on the official most capable to fulfill the important duty assigned to him.6

There was perhaps yet another consideration behind the Emperor's selection. It has been recently established that Griboedov dared to intercede before the Tsar on behalf of

6AKAK, 7: 622, Rodofinikin to Paskevich, May 8, 1828.
the Decembrists at the time of his private audience in March 1828. Although nothing came of this courageous act to alleviate the plight of his exiled comrades, it probably helped to seal Griboedov's own fate. Having already suspected Aleksandr Sergeevich of pro-Decembrist sympathies, Nicholas I must have considered it unwise to allow him to remain in the capital or even in Russia proper and therefore banished him to the remote East, where there was less opportunity for mischief. The fact that Griboedov himself later referred to his presence in Persia as "political exile" lends credence to this line of thought.

Aleksandr Sergeevich attempted in vain to avoid being posted to Persia. He employed tactics which recall to mind the ploy adopted by him ten years earlier in a similar situation:

I tried to escape from this mission [he later told Begichev]. The minister at first suggested that I go as chargé d'affaires; I told him that Russia needed there a minister plenipotentiary [polnomochnyi posol] in order not to fall behind the English envoy. The minister smiled and said no more, supposing that I, out of ambition, desired to have the title of ambassador [posol]. However, I thought that the danger

7 See Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, pp. 528-29.

8 He used this expression in a letter to Bulgarin from Tabriz in November 1828 - see PSS, 3: 232.

9 See Nechkina, Griboedov i dekabristy, p. 529.

10 The Russian word posol is almost invariably rendered into English as "ambassador." To avoid confusion, it should be noted that Griboedov was really referring to polnomochnyi posol or "minister plenipotentiary." The three highest grades in the Russian diplomatic corps, in ascending order, were (to use the French designations): chargé d'affaires; envoyé extraordinaire et minister plenipotentiaire; and ambassadeur.
had passed and that they would appoint someone higher-ranking than I, but after a few days the minister sent for me and announced that I had been appointed minister plenipotentiary by will of the Emperor. There was nothing more to do! To refuse this under any pretext, after all of the Tsar's favors, would have been the blackest ingratitude on my part. What's more, I must regard it as a favor for a man of my rank to be appointed a minister plenipotentiary. . . .

Thus, Griboedov felt obliged to submit to the fait accompli.

Among the other members of Russia's mission to Persia, chosen at the same time as Griboedov, were Ivan Sergeevich Mal'tsov, the first secretary; and Karl Fedorovich Adelung, second secretary. Whereas both of these individuals were without previous diplomatic experience, Griboedov's old colleague, A. K. Amburger, was appointed to the newly-established post of consul-general at Tabriz. Additional personnel such as translators were to be obtained from the Foreign Ministry's employees who were serving under Paskevich since the Persian campaign.12

As minister plenipotentiary, Griboedov was placed under the direct control of the Emperor and Vice Chancellor Nesselrode.13 This marked a change from the days when Russia was represented in Persia by a chargé d'affaires: Mazarovich, it will be recalled, had been subordinate to both the Foreign

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11 A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 15.
12 See Rodofinikin to Paskevich, May 8, 1828 (AKAK, 7: 622). For more biographical information on Mal'tsov and Adelung, see Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 163.
13 See Griboedov's letter to Amburger, August 1828 (PSS, 3:223).
Ministry and the governor-general of the Caucasus. However, though Griboedov could have acted independently of the governor-general if he desired, a reading of his diplomatic correspondence reveals that he chose not to do so. Not only would Griboedov report fully on his activities to Paskevich, he would also submit to the latter's instructions. He evidently wished to remain in the good graces of his, powerful relative whose influence outweighed his own in the councils of St. Petersburg.

In April 1828, at the request of his superiors, Griboedov drew up a set of instructions for Russia's new envoy to Persia. Known as the "Draft Instruction to * * *, Envoy to Persia," it was completed prior to his appointment to that


14To locate all of Griboedov's extant diplomatic correspondence published to date - in the form of both official reports and private letters - the reader should consult the following works: AKAK, 7: 640-63 passim; "Materialy dlia biografii Aleksandra Sergeevicha Griboedova," Kavkazskii sbornik 30 (1910): 1 - 214 passim; PSS, 3: 207-46; Orlov, A. S. Griboedov: Sochineniia, pp. 610-40. A large number of documents relating to Griboedov's diplomatic career, including much of his official correspondence, may also be found in Ad. P. Berzhe, "Aleksandr Sergeevich Griboedov. Deiatel'nost' ego kak diplomata, 1827-1829," Russkaia starina, 1874, no. 11, pp. 516-34; 1874, no. 12, pp. 746-65; 1876, no. 12, pp. 727-58.

15It irritated Paskevich that his control over Russia's representative in Persia had been diminished. On this, Murav'ev-Karskii commented: "Griboedov, . . . being invested with the rank of minister of our court in Persia, had to comply with the instructions given to him from Petersburg and could not blindly follow the orders of Paskevich. Griboedov's direct relations with the Foreign Ministry, bypassing Paskevich, displeased the latter" (A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 95).

16The text is in PSS, 3: 271-78.
post, so, in effect, it was destined for his own guidance, although he did not know this at the time of writing. The "Draft Instruction" represents a concise account of Griboedov's views on the policy which ought to be pursued vis-à-vis Persia in the wake of Turkmanchay.

Among the subjects covered by the "Draft Instruction" was the question of the indemnity. Griboedov wanted the envoy to enjoy substantial freedom of action with respect to collecting the balance of the money owed to Russia. Accordingly, the envoy was granted the right to determine from the condition of the Crown Prince's finances, whether or not to demand the balance by the designated deadline, or to reduce the amount of the sum still to be paid, or to cancel the debt altogether if it proved to be beyond the ability of the Prince to pay.

Another important question centered upon the expediency of maintaining Persian neutrality in the war which had just erupted between Russia and the Ottoman empire. Griboedov noted that, according to the latest reports from Paskevich, Abbas Mirza was eager to take up arms against Turkey, hoping that with Russia's aid he could gain compensation for the territory recently lost to the latter power. Because the Russo-Turkish conflict was expected to be of short duration, Griboedov felt that it would be disadvantageous to allow Abbas Mirza to form an alliance with Russia, since Persia's participation would make it
more difficult for St. Petersburg to reach a peaceful settlement with the Porte. If, on the other hand, the war proved to be a long one, the assistance of Persia might be useful in the future. To cover both eventualities, the "Draft Instruction" directed the envoy to discourage Abbas Mirza's "fanciful hopes" for Russian aid but, at the same time, "not . . . to incline him toward peace" should he, find it in his own interest to fight the Turks without forming an alliance with Russia. Despite the cautious phraseology, Griboedov's recommendations on this question clearly allowed for the possibility of another Perso-Turkish conflict. Indeed, we shall see that after arriving at his post in Tabriz, he would press for Persia's entry into the war.

The "Draft Instruction" also considered the means by which Russia could acquire a commanding influence in Persia. The key to this goal was Abbas Mirza. If Russia could gain the friendship and confidence of Persia's designated future ruler, she stood a good chance one day of supplanting the British from their preponderating position in the councils of Persia. The question of how to make the Crown Prince seek the alliance of Russia had already been canvassed by Paskevich on the eve of the Persian campaign in the spring of 1827. As noted previously, the commander-in-chief at that time, probably at Griboedov's prodding, had recommended that Abbas Mirza be accorded the active protection of the
Russian state in the postwar period.\textsuperscript{17} Now, in the "Draft Instruction," Aleksandr Sergeevich further developed this proposed policy to the point where he envisaged armed intervention in support of Abbas Mirza, in the event his succession to power should be disputed:

Under article [VII] of the Treaty, Abbas Mirza has been recognized by us in the quality of Heir to the Throne of the Shahs, but this recognition is simple and unconditional. We have not assumed the obligation to support his right by armed force. However, the Asiatic mind is such that only that Power is respected by them which, in cases of emergency, makes them feel the force and weight of its might by intervention in the affairs of a neighboring, and even of a remote, State and by armed reinforcement of its protection or its unfriendliness. Thus, all Persia, and Abbas Mirza himself, expect that Russia will, on the death of the Shah, decide the question of the succession to the Persian Throne. You can easily employ this widespread opinion in furtherance of the affairs entrusted to you. While adhering literally to the sense of the above-mentioned article, you can, however, point out to Abbas Mirza that Russia's assistance at the time of his future succession to the Throne is a goal which he must seek by his straightforward conduct in relations with us. The appearance in Azerbaijan of two Russian infantry regiments with an adequate quantity of artillery will always suffice to re-establish Abbas Mirza's rights to the Throne even though he should already have suffered setbacks in the struggle with his rivals. It is, further, possible to take steps to this end in good time by the issue of appropriate instructions to our military officers in command on the Persian frontier, in order that upon the death of the Shah, at your first summons, effective aid may be given to Abbas Mirza; and that you do not allow yourself to be forestalled by the East India Company, whose military means are much farther removed, but it of course will hurry with the organization of an Expedition in aid of Abbas Mirza, according to the system which it has established in Asia in order to make Eastern Powers everywhere feel the presence of its strength and treasury.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17}See above, pp. 125-26.

\textsuperscript{18}PSS, 3: 274-75.
As Great Britain was the only other European power represented in the Shah's domains, the "Draft Instruction" contained a section prescribing the conduct which the Russian envoy should adopt toward his English counterparts:

The Embassy of Great Britain at the Court of Persia was established with the remote aim of averting, through alliance with the Shah and superintendence of his policy, any attack by an aggressive European Power upon the English possessions in India. . . . Consequently, this System is entirely defensive and it is the one which inspired Russia with the idea of establishing a Mission at the Persian Court with the difference that our interests - the preservation of peace in our Transcaucasian provinces - are based on the closest utility and necessity; for the reason that these provinces, most of which have been torn away from Persia, are in constant contact with her and abut her frontier along a span of more than a thousand versts, and, at their nearest point, are located a distance of three days' journey away from the capital of Abbas Mirza. Therefore, so long as the System of the two European Missions remains unchanged, you can have no views that might conflict with those of the English officials or any disagreeable friction in your dealings with them. This was manifested quite recently on their part in the conversations preceding the conclusion of our peace with Persia. Mutual personal services and the utmost courtesy in your behavior will mark your future conduct with them.19

Although characterizing the present relationship in Persia between Russia and England as harmonious, Griboedov did allow for the possibility of conflict if the two powers were to get into a dispute over European affairs. Should this occur, he advised that England might attempt to bolster Persia's military resources for possible action in the Transcaucasian theater. However, the envoy would be forewarned by St. Petersburg about any hostile turn in Britain's

19 Ibid., pp. 275-76.
European policy which might lead to repercussions in Persia; and the presence of Russian troops on the frontier, together with the greater financial resources which would then be placed at the envoy's disposal, would enable him to counteract the influence of a hostile England at the court of Persia.

Griboedov's "Draft Instruction" was scrutinized by Rodofinikin, who was obliged to alter the document in a number of essential points in order to bring it in line with the views of Nicholas I and Nesselrode. A comparison of the "Draft" with the final set of instructions issued by the Foreign Ministry for Griboedov's guidance in Persian affairs reveals that the scope of flexibility and initiative which Aleksandr Sergeevich had proposed for the envoy was practically eliminated by the formulators of Russia's foreign policy.

Concerning the indemnity, the Foreign Ministry adamantly insisted that Persia must be made to pay all the money still owed Russia within the stipulated deadlines. The envoy was deprived of the discretion to reduce or cancel Persia's debt, depending on circumstances. This alteration in his instructions would cause Griboedov considerable difficulty subsequently.


21 The text of these instructions, dated May 1, 1828 is in AKAK, 7: 622-24.
Furthermore, Rodofinikin eliminated everything from the "Draft" which might have adverse consequences on Russia's relations with Great Britain. A Soviet historian has explained the rationale for this by noting that "Nicholas I and his vice chancellor had not lost hope that Russia would succeed in coming to terms with the English on the Near Eastern question. ... To antagonize relations with England by excessive activity of Russian policy in the Middle East was regarded by them as completely undesirable, especially during the war with the Turks." Therefore, the director of the Asiatic Department deleted the passage in the "Draft" which enjoined the envoy not to discourage Abbas Mirza from taking up arms against Turkey. Also cut out was the passage authorizing the envoy to request Russian military intervention in support of Abbas Mirza's succession to the throne. Another deletion negated the possibility for the envoy to take independent action against the British in the event of a breach in Anglo-Russian relations in Europe.

In one area only - trade relations - did Rodofinikin enlarge upon the activity prescribed for Russia's diplomatic representative in Persia. Apart from urging the envoy to determine what products the Persians would be most likely to purchase from Russia's Transcaucasian provinces, Griboedov's "Draft" did not say much more on this subject.

22 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaiia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 170.
defining it as a matter of "secondary" concern. By contrast, the Foreign Ministry attached great importance to the expansion of trade with Persia, which was described as an age-old objective of the Russian government. The envoy was directed to make every effort to see that all obstacles restricting commercial intercourse between the two countries were eliminated. In particular, he was urged to establish a Russian trade depot in Astarabad for the purpose of attracting Indian commerce to the shores of the Caspian Sea. Moreover, he was expected to gather all kinds of intelligence on Persia, Afghanistan, Khiva, Bokhara and the Punjab relating to their domestic and external affairs, as well as to their trade and relations with each other, especially with India. Particular emphasis was laid on ascertaining the nature of the connections between Persia and the nomadic tribes living in neighboring Turkestan and Khiva, over which the Shah claimed suzerainty. These instructions show that the Russian government was becoming increasingly interested in Central Asia, an area whose vast power vacuum invited tsarist expansionism.

By the beginning of June the preparations involved in organizing the Russian mission to Persia were completed and Griboedov was urged to make his departure. Numerous friends who saw Aleksandr Sergeevich during his final

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23 See PSS, 3: 277.
weeks in the capital assert that the poet-diplomat expressed the worst forebodings about his new assignment. The dramatist Andrei A. Zhandr later recalled that Griboedov had roused him from bed late at night on the very day of his appointment, exclaiming: "Farewell, friend Andrei! I have been appointed minister plenipotentiary to Persia and we shall see no more of each other." The same gloomy feelings were conveyed to others, among them, to Pushkin, who reminisced about Griboedov in A Journey to Erzerûm:

I parted from [Griboedov] last year in St. Petersburg before his departure to Persia. He was melancholy and had strange forebodings. I was about to console him, but he said to me: "Vous ne connaissez pas ces gens-là: vous verrez qu'il faudra jouer des couteaux." And when conversing with Bulgarin about Persia, Griboedov often lamented: "There is my grave. I feel that I shall see no more of Russia."

Aleksandr Sergeevich left St. Petersburg - never to return - on June 6, 1828. The last known letter which he wrote in the capital on the eve of his departure further reveals his frame of mind on this occasion. Dated June 5, 1828, it was addressed to the German-born wife of Bulgarin, Elena Ivanovna:

24 Quoted in PSS, 1: LXXXIV.


26 Ibid., p. 34.

After spending several days in Moscow with his mother, he paid visits to his beloved sister, now living as a married woman on an estate in Tula province, and to his life-long friend Stepan Begichev.28 Griboedov's closest comrade remembered this event years later:

The whole time of his stay with me, he was extremely gloomy. I remarked upon this to him, whereupon he took me by the hand and said with deep sorrow: "Farewell, brother Stepan, it is unlikely that you and I shall see any more of each other!" "Why these thoughts and this hypochondria?" I protested. "You have been in combat but God has spared you." "I know the Persians," he replied. "Allahyar Khan is my personal enemy, he will kill me. He will not forgive me for the peace concluded with the Persians. . . . I have this presentiment that I shall not return from Persia alive."29

The route to the Caucasus was by now quite familiar to our diplomat. On June 24 he complained to Zhandr from Novocherkassk about the "flies, dust and heat" and then added: "One can become stupefied on this cursed road over

27PSS, 3: 208-09.

28See ibid., p. 211, Griboedov to Zhandr, June 24, 1828.

which I'm traveling for the twentieth time without pleasure or desire, because it is against my will." However, his mood soon changed for the better. In Stavropol' he learned of the first victory of Russian arms over the Turks: the capture of the fortress of Anapa. News of an even greater success - the storming of Kars - reached him in Vladikavkaz: "All of us here are mad with glory." He, believed these victories were bound to produce a salutary effect on the Persians as well. By this stage of his journey, he had been joined by two traveling companions - Mal'tsov and Adelung - who would be serving under him in Persia. Together they crossed the hazardous Caucasian mountains and arrived in Tiflis on July 5.

Having been briefed on the situation in the Middle East, Griboedov summarized the current state of Russia's relations with Persia in a letter of July 10, 1828 to his immediate superior, Rodofinikin. There was no need to worry about Persia, he reported. She was in such an exhausted condition that she could not take up arms against anyone, even if Russia were to supply her with the means to fight.

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30 PSS, 3: 211.

31 Ibid., pp. 213-14, Griboedov to Bulgarin, June 27-30, 1838.

32 Their journey through the Caucasus is described in detail by Karl Adelung, whose letters to his father contain many references to Griboedov - see O. Popova, "Griboedov v pis'makh K. F. Adelunga k ottsu," Literaturnoe nasledstvo 47-48 (1946): 247-51.
the Turks. Disobedience was making it difficult for the Persian authorities to return all of their Russian prisoners-of-war. In retaliation nearly 1,600 Persian officers and men were being detained in Tiflis. The resettlement of the Armenians had begun and more than 8,000 families already crossed the Araxes into Russian territory. The Turkmanchay Treaty had not yet been ratified by the Persians, nor had all the latter's troops withdrawn from Talish khanate. The plague had broken out on the Russo-Turkish frontier. Finally, Griboedov advised that he was going to obtain more information on Persia from Paskevich, who was at present directing field operations in Turkey.33

On July 13 he set off together with Mal'tsov and a convoy of Cossacks for the commander-in-chief's field headquarters but was forced to turn back, owing to the impassable condition of the roads and a shortage of relay horses.34 No sooner had Griboedov returned to Tiflis than there occurred the last great change in his life. On July 16 he became engaged to a beautiful young Georgian girl, Princess Nina Aleksandrovna Chavchavadze.35 Nina


35 See PSS, 1: LXXXVII-LXXXVIII.
was only sixteen - eighteen years younger than Griboedov - but he had known her ever since his first tour of duty in Tiflis. She was the daughter of Prince Aleksandr Chavchavadze, who, besides being a tsarist officer and administrator in the Caucasus, was one of the most distinguished of modern Georgian poets. Griboedov's last letters bear eloquent testimony to the love and happiness he found in this girl. We know from one of these letters that it was now his intention "within two years at the most" to become "the hermit of Tsinandali" - that is, to retire from the diplomatic service and settle down with Nina on her father's magnificent Georgian estate, where he could devote himself entirely to his favorite pursuits.

Meanwhile, a second journey to Paskevich, whom Griboedov at last managed to reach at the Turkish fortress of Akhalzike, consumed the latter's time between July 17 and August 4. Upon returning to Tiflis, he was stricken with yellow fever, which kept him confined to a sick bed for more than a week. "I have become so emaciated, yellow and weak that I think there was not a drop of healthy blood left in me," he wrote

36 The career and accomplishments of this outstanding Georgian nobleman are described in Shaduri, Dekabristskaya literatura i gruzinskaia obshchestvennost', pp. 489-516.

37 PSS, 3: 221, Griboedov to Akhverdova, July 29, 1828.

to Bulgari in early September.\textsuperscript{39} He had not yet fully recovered by the day of his wedding, which took place in the Georgian capital on August 22.\textsuperscript{40}

By this time the Foreign Ministry in St. Petersburg had become irritated at Griboedov for lingering so long in Tiflis. According to Bulgari, who kept Aleksandr Sergeevich informed about all the gossip and happenings in the northern capital, Rodofinikin was spreading "malicious rumors around the city" to the effect that Griboedov had forgotten the service and was thinking only about love-making in Tiflis. Bulgari noted with dismay that officials were saying that "poets should not be entrusted with important affairs" and that "when there is a war in Asia on the frontiers of Persia, the envoy must be at his post." Another complaint making the rounds concerned the indemnity, which, it was alleged, would have been paid long ago if Griboedov had been in Persia.\textsuperscript{41}

As far as the indemnity was concerned, matters stood as follows. The seventh crore had been paid the previous March, as a result of which Russian troops were withdrawn

\textsuperscript{39}PSS, 3: 224.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid.; see Orlov, A. S. Griboedov; Sochineniia, pp. 622-23.

\textsuperscript{41}See Bulgari's letter to Griboedov of September 28, 1828 in A. Mal' shinskii, "Iz zhizni i otnoshenii A. S. Griboedova," Russkii vestnik, 1894, no. 3, pp. 199-201.
from Urumiya. However, five battalions continued to occupy the fertile district of Khoi as a pledge for the liquidation of the eighth crore which was now overdue. In March Abbas Mirza informed Paskevich that he would be able to collect only 250,000 tomans toward the next installment and requested that the deadline be extended seven months, starting from April 4, 1828, to allow more time to defray the balance of 150,000 tomans. This did not suit Paskevich at all, who impatiently demanded that the eighth crore be paid as soon as possible so that he could strengthen his army in Turkey with the five battalions from Persia.

In point of fact, once Griboedov had arrived in Georgia from St. Petersburg, he was in no hurry to proceed to Persia. But his tardiness was based on a sound political motive: he deliberately did not wish to appear in Persia before the next installment of the indemnity had been entirely liquidated, for fear lest Abbas Mirza should think him authorized to waive the payment of the eighth crore. Events were to show that this "diplomatic maneuver," as he called it,

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42See AKAK, 7: 613.
43See his letter to Griboedov of July 31, 1828 in Kavkazskii sbornik 30 (1910):40; also AKAK, 7: 614.
44Letter of mid-August 1828 to A. K. Amburger (PSS, 3: 223). Amburger had been looking after Russia's interests in Persia from his post at Tabriz since the conclusion of the Turkmanchai Treaty.
45In a letter to Paskevich of September 6, 1828 (Orlov, A. S. Griboedov: Sochineniia, p. 626).
might have succeeded had it not been for the interference of authorities in St. Petersburg. But, on the imperative instructions of the Foreign Ministry and against his better judgement, Griboedov had to leave Georgia and arrive in Persia before all of the next installment had been collected.

A few days before his departure, Aleksandr Sergeevich sent Paskevich a comprehensive plan for the establishment of a Russian Transcaucasian Company. This was to be a grandiose project designed, among other things, to develop the natural resources of Transcaucasia. Before discussing some particulars of this project, it would be useful to trace its antecedents.

Griboedov's interest in the economic potentialities of the Transcaucasian area date from his early involvement in commercial affairs as Ermolov's diplomatic secretary. Most likely the idea of setting up a private commercial enterprise for the purpose of trading with Persia occurred to him at that time. We know that upon returning to Russia proper in 1823, our energetic diplomat turned entrepreneur and attempted to organize such a venture with the aid of two business partners: Aleksandr V. Vsevolozhskii, a well-to-do landowner who had a stake in several industrial

46 See Griboedov's letter to Paskevich of September 6, 1828 in ibid., p. 625.

47 See above, pp. 76-78.
enterprises; and Theodor Hettier, a French expatriate whom Griboedov had befriended in Persia. Despite the persistent efforts of these three to establish the trading company, their project never got off the ground, owing to a lack of sufficient funds; and with the arrest of Griboedov in January 1826 and the subsequent outbreak of war with Persia, it was shelved altogether.\footnote{For an excellent account of this commercial venture, see N. Kal'ma, "Kommercheskie zamysly Griboedova," Literaturnoe nasledstvo 19-21 (1935): 143-76. A sequel to Kal'ma's article appears in S. V. Shostakovich, "Neizvestnoe pis'mo A. S. Griboedova A. V. Vsevolozhskomu," Trudy irkutskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta imeni A. A. Zhdanova, 1956, no. 3, pp. 160-64.}

This first failure in no way deterred Aleksandr Sergeevich: his enterprising mind had conceived vast possibilities for the development of Transcaucasia's abundant but as yet untapped natural resources. After bringing the Turkmanchai Treaty to St. Petersburg in March 1828, he sought the assistance of an old acquaintance, P. D. Zaveleiskii, in order to develop a much bolder economic project. Zaveleiskii was employed by the Finance Ministry as an expert on tariffs and custom-duties; moreover, in February 1828 he had been appointed the chief financial administrator in Georgia. (A year later he would become governor of Tiflis.)\footnote{See O. P. Markova, "Novye materialy o proekte Rossiiskoi Zakavkazskoi Kompanii A. S. Griboedova i P. D. Zaveleiskogo," Istoricheskii arkhiv 6 (1951): 340.} Together with Zaveleiskii, Griboedov set to work on the Russian Transcaucasian Company.
The plan for the organization of the Company took final shape in the summer of 1828, when both men were present at Tiflis. Three documents comprise the plan in toto:  

1) an "Introduction to the Draft Charter of the Russian Transcaucasian Company," signed by Griboedov and Zaveleiskii on July 17, 1828;  
2) the text of the Draft Charter itself;  
3) a "Memorandum on the Establishment of the Russian Transcaucasian Company," signed by the two men on September 7, 1828. Whereas the initiative behind the whole project belonged to Griboedov, his partner Zaveleiskii is said to have written significant portions of the Draft Charter and "Introduction."

According to the Russian scholar A. P. Shcherbatov, Griboedov and Zaveleiskii modeled their own Company project after the then-existing Russian American Company and even to some extent after the British East India Company. The Charter of the Russian American Company should have been

50 See Nechkina, A. S. Griboedov i dekabristy, p. 538.

51 The text of the "Introduction" is in Orlov, A. S. Griboedov: Sochinenia, pp. 477-95.

52 Curiously, this document has never been published and may now be lost, although the nineteenth-century scholar, A. N. Mal'shinskii, summarized some of its points in his "Neizdannaia zapiska A. S. Griboedova," Russkii vestnik, 1891, no. 9, pp. 3-17.

53 The text is in Orlov, A. S. Griboedov: Sochinenia, pp. 471-77.

54 See Enikolopov, Griboedov v Gruzii, pp. 60-61.

55 Shcherbatov, 3: 333.
familiar to Zaveleiskii, since, though formally a private enterprise, it had been under government supervision from its inception in 1799 and in 1819 came under the jurisdiction of the Finance Ministry. Furthermore, Griboedov could easily have found out about the Charter from other sources, most likely from his Decembrist friend, Kondratii Ryleev, who since 1824 served as the Company's office manager in St. Petersburg. And it goes without saying that British diplomats in Persia could have provided Griboedov with excellent information about the East India Company.

The Griboedov-Zaveleiskii plan envisaged a far-reaching transformation of the Transcaucasian economy, which in turn would entail other progressive social and political changes. A remarkably frank passage in the "Introduction to the Draft Charter" presented a somber picture of the deplorable state of affairs prevailing in Transcaucasia since the annexation of that region by Russia. Georgia had suffered enormous hardships as a consequence of recurrent warfare and although the imperial decree of 1821 had helped to stimulate local trade, it did not encourage the growth of native industry: "Not one factory was started, nor have agriculture

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57 Ibid., p. 108; see also Enikolopov, Griboedov v Gruzii, p. 62.

58 See above, pp. 76-77.
or horticulture prospered." Such a situation, however, was "unnatural and cannot last." Therefore, the co-authors outlined a broad range of Company activities designed to place the region "on a respectable level of civilization and well-being." 59

Plantations were to be established for the cultivation of grape vines, silk, cotton, tobacco, sugar cane and plants yielding medicines and dyes. New factories would be built to process these products so that Russia could be supplied with all these items hitherto imported at vast expense from abroad. Trade with Persia and other eastern countries would be greatly expanded. The transportation network was to be improved and enlarged. The Company would also function as a kulturträger by building its own schools and introducing new technical skills into native agriculture and handicrafts. It was expected that all of this manifold activity would consolidate the incorporation of Transcaucasia into Russia, for, as the "Introduction to the Draft Charter" noted: "Nothing will so firmly and inseparably strengthen the bonds uniting the Russians with their new fellow-citizens on this side of the Caucasus as the pursuit of mutual and common interests." 60


60 Ibid., p. 493.
In order to realize these extensive plans, Griboedov and Zaveleiskii calculated that shareholders would have to provide an initial capital investment of over one hundred million rubles. Furthermore, they intended to petition the government to grant the Company numerous special privileges and monopolies. One of the most far-reaching privileges would have necessitated the annexation of the Turkish port of Batum, which was to be placed under the Company's exclusive control for use as an entrepôt on the Black Sea. Because of an anticipated labor shortage, permission would be sought to employ the Armenians who were resettling in Russia as a result of the Turkmanchay Treaty; also, the Company was to be allowed to purchase Russian serfs who would be freed upon entering its employ on condition that they work as hired laborers on its plantations for fifty years.

It is possible that the activity of the Russian Transcaucasian Company as envisaged by its organizers was to be


62 According to Murav'ev-Karskii, Griboedov insisted upon the conquest of Batum when he visited Paskevich's headquarters in July 1828 (A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 90).

63 For more detail on these and other significant privileges sought by the Company, the reader should consult Orlov, A. S. Griboedov: Sochinenia, pp. 471-77; and Markova, "Novye materialy o proekte Rossiiskoi Zakavkazskoi Kompanii," pp. 365-84.
even greater than what was outlined in the documents submitted for review to Paskevich. This assumption is based on the following passage from the memoirs of Murav'ev-Karskii:

When Griboedov went to Petersburg [in 1828], having been swept away by his imagination and designs, he drew up a project for the transformation of all of Georgia, whose government and complete manufacturing system were to belong to a company as was the case in East India. Even the commander-in-chief and the troops were to be subject to the orders of this company's committee, in which Griboedov appointed himself director and the commander-in-chief a member; at the same time he granted himself the right to declare war against neighboring nations, to build fortresses, to deploy troops and [to conduct] all diplomatic relations with adjoining powers. All of this was put forth in writing in an eloquent and fervent manner, and, it is reported, recorded by Z[aveleiskii] at Griboedov's dictation. . . .

At least one Soviet historian does not discount the possibility that Griboedov may have more fully revealed the designs of his project in private conversations with Paskevich and others and that the above-quoted passage, though perhaps exaggerated, reflects what was said in those discussions.65

In any event, the projected Russian Transcaucasian Company did not appeal to the commander-in-chief.66 The marginal comments which Paskevich jotted down on the Griboedov-Zaveleiskii "Memorandum" show that he was taken aback and dismayed by the extensive rights and privileges sought for

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64 A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 90.
the Company. He noted, for example, that the roads leading to the port of Batum would have to be protected and that, consequently, "the Company must have its own troops." The Company would be too powerful and its powers would impinge upon the authority of the Count of Erivan.

Paskevich asked two of his subordinates - Colonel I. G. Burtsov and Quartermaster General M. S. Zhukovskii - to review the project. Whereas the former offered a cautious and inconclusive evaluation, Zhukovskii subjected nearly all facets of the project to withering criticism, characterizing the Company as nothing less than a "state within a state." The result was that the grandiose scheme was rejected by Paskevich, perhaps after he had received a negative reaction from St. Petersburg. (The tsarist government had stopped supporting monopolistic privileges since the end of the eighteenth century; those enjoyed by the

67 Ibid., p. 13.

68 Murav'ev-Karskii alleged that the Company would "almost completely destroy" Paskevich's authority - see A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 91.

69 The opinions of Burtsov and Zhukovskii may be found in Enikolopov, Griboedov v Gruzii, pp. 128-57.

70 According to K. F. Adelung, Paskevich corresponded with Nicholas I about the Company - see Literaturnoe nasledstvo 47-48 (1946): 261.
Russian American Company were an exception and could not serve as a model.)

Griboedov perhaps never learned about the fate of his project. On September 9 he had already departed for Persia. Accompanied by his young wife, the personnel of the diplomatic mission and a Cossack escort, Russia's minister plenipotentiary made his way ceremoniously toward Tabriz. Throughout the journey recurrent attacks of fever plagued Griboedov, causing considerable delay in the progress of his embassy. When he finally reached the capital of Azerbaijan on October 7, Griboedov confessed that he felt just "half-alive." The British envoy, who was present in the city at the same time, reported that Griboedov was received at the court of Abbas Mirza "with great and unusual distinction."

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72 The letters of Adelung describe the receptions accorded Griboedov at every stop on the road to Tabriz — see Literaturnoe nasledstvo 47-48 (1946): 255-61.

73 Instead of the usual six to eight days required for the trek between Tiflis and Tabriz, Griboedov's party consumed four weeks (ibid., p. 260).

74 PSS, 3: 228, Griboedov to Rodofinikin, October 30, 1828.

75 IOL: P/354, Macdonald to Stirling, Ft. William, Bengal, October 23 (N.S.), 1828. In an earlier dispatch, the British envoy referred to the impending arrival of
We come now to a description of Griboedov's diplomatic activity during the two months he was to spend in Tabriz before journeying on his ill-fated mission to Teheran. The envoy had to cope with an exceedingly difficult assignment - one which required him to enforce the onerous terms of the Turkmanchai Treaty without sacrificing the opportunity to strengthen the fragile bonds of friendship between the erstwhile belligerents. To attain these well-nigh irreconcilable goals, he categorically insisted upon "respect for Russia and for her demands," while at the same time tempering this firm policy with fairness and justice. For it was only by gaining the trust and respect of the vanquished nation that he could hope to expand Russia's influence on the Persian government.

As an illustration of Griboedov's evenhandedness, one can cite the role he played in the demarcation of the Russo-

75 (Continued)
Griboedov as follows: "The scale of his Mission, which is sufficiently splendid, consists of two assistants or secretaries, two gentlemen attaches, one surgeon, one chaplain and a Persian secretary. He has a numerous suite of domestics, with an escort, composed, I am told, of forty or fifty Cossacks of the Guard, well mounted and superbly dressed. If I may judge from the preparations now making, he will be received by Abbas Meerza with unprecedented honours and distinction, indicative of His Highness's intentions to court the alliance of Russia, or his apprehensions of the power of that State" (ibid., Macdonald to Stirling, October 15 [N.S.], 1828).

76 See PSS, 3: 240, Griboedov to Paskevich, December 3, 1828.
Persian frontier. As usual, squabbles had broken out between the Russian and Persian commissioners over the precise location of the boundary as stipulated by the peace treaty. To help resolve these disputes, Griboedov discussed the matter with Colonel William Monteith, one of the British officers assisting the Persians. The following excerpt is taken from Monteith's account of the interview:

Having referred to the map sent by his [Griboedov's] Commissioners and the treaty signed at St. Petersburg [sic], I pointed out what I considered as a decided deviation from the terms of the latter; where it was clearly laid down that the Eastern branch of the Audina Bazar formed the frontier. . . . He appeared to be convinced of the justice of these remarks and offered if Persia would withdraw her claims to the range of hills above mentioned that he would make a strong representation to the General in Chief [Paskevich] on the subject; not having powers himself to settle a question of this nature. . . .

Although unauthorized to settle at his own discretion an issue as important as the correct location of the frontier, Aleksandr Sergeevich acted as a moderating influence upon the Russian side. He advised Colonel P. Ia. Rennenkampf, chief of the Russian boundary commission, to "desist from any pretension to enlarge our possessions contrary to the stipulations of the treaty." Moreover, he told the same official that Russia, being the more powerful state, could

77 A river in Talish khanate, one of several disputed points.

78 PRO: F. O. 248/58, Monteith to Macdonald, January 3 (N.S.), 1829.

always fix upon whatever frontier she desired but that this would constitute "a violation of justice." 80

Another problem requiring Griboedov's intervention at Tabriz concerned the Armenian exodus from Persia. It will be recalled that the peace treaty (Article XV) had granted any inhabitant of Azerbaijan the right to resettle in Russia. In the course of 1828 more than 35,000 Armenians chose to flee across the Araxes into Russia's newly-annexed khanates of Erivan and Nakhichevan, which were later amalgamated to form the province of Armenia. 81

The loss of so many people, consisting for the most part of hard-working artisans and farmers, dealt a blow to the economy of Azerbaijan and deprived its government of considerable revenue. 82 In view of this it is not

80 Ibid., p. 244, Letter of December 11, 1828.

81 Z. T. Grigorian, Prisoedinenie vostochnoi Armenii k Rossii v nachale XIX veka (Moscow, 1959), p. 159. The British representatives in Azerbaijan found that the Armenians were motivated to leave Persia for a variety of reasons: a desire to escape from oppression, heavy taxes, and the "unequal rights" of living among Moslems; a fear of reprisals for having aided the Russians during the recent war; a belief that their possessions would be confiscated to replace the sums advanced to Russia; the inducements propagated by Russian agents (the émigrés were told they would receive fertile lands and be accorded a tax-exempt status for up to six years in Russia); strong religious feelings re-enforced by Narzef, Archbishop of the Armenian Church at Echmiadzin, who was said to have threatened with excommunication anyone who did not flee from the yoke of their Moslem rulers - see IOL: L/P&5/9/89, G. Willock to Macdonald, April 19 (N.S.), 1828.

82 Griboedov estimated the annual tax income lost to Azerbaijan at 1,600,000 paper rubles; Persian estimates placed the loss much higher at 32,000,000 rubles - see Pashuto, p. 142.
surprising that the Persian authorities, in defiance of the treaty, tried to impede the exodus mainly by making it difficult or impossible for the Armenians to sell their immovable property.\footnote{Article XV allowed the emigrants to take all their movable possessions with them and to sell their immovable property within a period of five years - see Hurewitz, 1: 99-100.} Griboedov was obliged to defend the interests of the Armenians in this matter:

You can imagine [he reported to Rodofinikin in December 1828] how many daily requests I receive on this subject, how many mediations, notes and negotiations are involved. Just counting the Armenian émigrés alone, up to eight thousand families have come over to us, and I am now their common attorney; I have to look after their affairs, their houses, gardens and mills!! I have already succeeded in getting a lot straightened out. But the Government here always has the underhanded means to prohibit the purchase of the property left behind, and what measures can I take against such cunning?\footnote{PSS, 3: 234.}

Griboedov's intercession in Tabriz on behalf of the Armenians represented only part of his efforts to solve the problems stemming from their relocation. Earlier, while en route to his post in Persia through the khanates of Erivan and Nakhichevan, he was thoroughly dismayed by the disorganized manner in which the newly-arrived immigrants were being received in Russia. He complained that the Resettlement Committee, whose function it was to provide the Armenians with new homesteads,\footnote{For more particulars on this Committee set up by the Russian government, see Grigorian, Prisoedinenie vostochnoi Armenii k Rossii v nachale XIX veka, p. 156.} was carrying out its assignment
"absurdly, negligently and inexcusably." These remarks appeared in Griboedov's memorandum to Paskevich, analyzing the shortcomings of the Committee's work and recommending a number of corrective measures.86

Coincidentally, Aleksandr Sergeevich was startled to discover on the same journey through Erivan and Nakhichevan khanates that the indigenous Moslem population had become exceedingly agitated. "Ferment and dissatisfaction in the minds of the Tatars have reached the highest level," he informed Paskevich on October 1, 1828 from Nakhichevan.87

Since part of the trouble was traceable to the severe congestion in the Moslem frontier villages caused by the influx of large numbers of the Armenian immigrants, Griboedov urged that some of the new settlers be dispersed in the sparsely populated interior.88 Also contributing to the local unrest was the meddlesome activity of the Russian judicial authorities who were interfering in "all the minor lawsuits and inconsequential affairs of the new citizens."89

Having always taken a keen interest in jurisprudence, Griboedov recommended that Moslem judges be allowed to settle

86 Entitled "Zapiska o pereselenii armian iz Persii v nashi oblasti," the text is in PSS, 3: 267-70.

87 AKAK, 7: 647.


89 Ibid., p. 648.
such matters on the grounds that they had been chosen by
the people themselves and therefore enjoyed the latter's
confidence. The envoy's intervention in these problems
illustrates his concern to correct the injustices inflicted
upon the peoples of Transcaucasia - both Christian and
Moslem - by an inert and heavy-handed Russian bureaucracy.

One of the most troublesome tasks to bedevil the Rus­
sian envoy in Persia concerned the implementation of Article
XIII of the Turkmanchay Treaty. This provided for the re­
patriation of all prisoners-of-war and civilian captives,
regardless of when they had fallen into enemy hands. Since
the conclusion of the peace treaty, the Russian authorities
had been unable to make much progress in securing Persian
compliance with this provision. From Tabriz Amburger com­
plained to Paskevich in May 1828: "I have employed the
strongest entreaties concerning the release of the captives,
but so far without success. The Persians do not obey the
orders of the government and hide the prisoners obtained by
them in the course of the last war, perhaps because the heir
apparent himself and other princes are setting an example
for that."91

The problems were complex, especially since the Russian
military was also demanding the return of all deserters who

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid., p. 625.
had fled to Persia.\textsuperscript{92} Despite the strictest precautions adopted by Russian commanders, desertion had continued unabated both before, during and after the recent war.\textsuperscript{93} Many of the deserters who had been recruited into Abbas Mirza's elite "Russian battalion," or who had taken up service with other influential Persians, later converted to Islam and married native women. It is not surprising that the Persians did not want to extradite these useful soldiers and resorted to all kinds of strategems to conceal them from the Russian authorities. Furthermore, the soldiers themselves sometimes went into hiding, because they did not want to abandon the country which had given them refuge. Much the same can be said of the captive Russian subjects, especially the women among them. Many of these had since been married to Persians, had borne children and become reconciled with their new situation. Moreover, repatriation would involve separation from their children. Nonetheless, there were other captives - both men and women - who were just waiting

\textsuperscript{92}This Russian demand was based on weak legal ground, because Article XIV of the Turkmanchai Treaty stated that "the High Contracting Parties will not demand the extradition of fugitives and deserters who shall have passed under their respective jurisdiction before or during the war" (Hurewitz, 1: 99). However, a subsequent agreement did provide for the return of Russian soldiers who had deserted during the occupation of Azerbaijan - see AKAK, 7: 634, Paskevich to Nesselrode, June 1, 1828.

\textsuperscript{93}See the report of September 8, 1828 from General Pankrat'ev, commander of the Russian troops occupying the district of Khoi (ibid., p. 642).
for an opportunity to return to Russia. Sometimes in searching for people of this kind, the Russian mission inadvertently seized those who did not want to return, thereby provoking a clash with the Persians. It was a risky business and one misstep could be fatal.  

At Tabriz Griboedov made practically no headway in demanding the extradition of Russia's fugitive soldiers. He also encountered considerable resistance in obtaining the release of the prisoners, as the following excerpt from his report to Nesselrode of October 20, 1828 demonstrates: "The liberation of our captive subjects causes me incredible trouble; even the assistance of the government is practically insufficient to take them away from their present owners. Only by accident do I succeed in discovering the location of their unjust confinement, and only then does my intervention have success." The envoy later went to Teheran partly in order to search for prisoners being held there.

One other treaty provision which Griboedov had to enforce - perhaps the most intractable task of all - dealt with the payment of the next installment of the indemnity. As

94 The above information is based largely upon the discussion of these problems in PSS, 1: XCIV-XCV; see also Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, pp. 137-38.

95 See AKAK, 7: 659, Griboedov to Paskevich, November 29, 1828.

96 Ibid., p. 653.

97 PSS, 1: XCIV.
noted previously, the envoy had been forced by his impatient superiors to abandon the tactical maneuver which he believed would induce Abbas Mirza to speed up the payment of the eighth crore (500,000 tomans). The result of St. Petersburg's interference is best told in Griboedov's own words:

From the point of view of the tasks assigned to me, I got here too soon [he reported to Rodofinikin on October 30, 1828 from Tabriz]. I knew this in advance, but was afraid to have to answer to the authorities, who in our country measure success and zeal in the execution of tasks by reference to the greater or less speed at which officials travel. From Tiflis I could have threatened Abbas Mirza that I would not come at all if he did not pay in full the money he owed us. This was the line I took to begin with, and he, knowing that my arrival was the guarantee of his security and of Russian protection, hastened to begin payment. If I had waited for another month before coming here and had continued my maneuver, the whole of the 8th crore would by now have been in our hands. As things are, what has happened? I am pestered from morning until late at night with absurd proposals; I am urgently requested to let them off, first 200,000, then, 100,000 then 50,000 tomans. Their arguments are irrefutable: they are utterly ruined. I, of course, don't agree to anything they propose. But things do not get any further ahead. Before my arrival here 200,000 was extracted from them, before I reached Erivan, and 100,000 since then. But once they heard I was in Nakhichevan, they refused outright to pay any more. Such is the outlook of the people and government of this country; they greet every newly arrived diplomatic agent as someone invested with far-reaching powers, whose function it is to make them all sorts of concessions, dispensations, gifts and so forth. In the course of twenty-five days I managed with the utmost difficulty to squeeze 50,000 out of them over and above the 300,000.

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98 See above, p. 142.
99 PSS, 3: 228.
To satisfy Griboedov's unyielding pecuniary demands, Abbas Mirza resorted to such extraordinary measures as melting down into gold and silver ingots the candelabras and other valuable metallic objects from his harem and handing over as a pledge all of his jewels, including even the diamond buttons from his wives' garments. The people of Azerbaijan also had to endure extraordinary sacrifices as the Prince's tax collectors wrang them bone-dry in the effort to collect the eighth crore. All of this could not but antagonize the local population and exacerbate Griboedov's relations with the court of the Crown Prince. To a private correspondent he revealed that everyone in Tabriz regarded him as a menace and called him a sakhtgir. Conversely, most annoyed Aleksandr Sergeevich about the indemnity question was the fact that he was being compelled to carry out a policy which he considered inexpedient. On this score he did not hesitate to express his chagrin to Rodofinikin: "Your Excellency, consider the difficulty of my position. The war with Turkey is not yet over, and the circumstances now are by no means such as to allow us to

100AKAK, 7: 653, Griboedov to Nesselrode, October 20, 1828.

101Ibid.

take a strong line and to fall out with an unreliable neighbor." Nonetheless, since the Foreign Ministry continued to insist upon prompt and full payment, a further 50,000 tomans were collected by the end of November, leaving 100,000 outstanding.

In the process of gathering this money, Griboedov was not averse to using the good offices of the British diplomatic mission. The latter was willing to help in this unpleasant endeavor in order to get all of the remaining Russian troops out of Azerbaijan. (The district of Khoi was still occupied pending the payment of the eighth crore.) Thus, the influential Dr. McNeill undertook to talk the Shah into paying what remained of the eighth crore—but his mission was to no avail. On another occasion, the Russian envoy insisted on having Abbas Mirza empower an English officer—Major Hart—to collect 50,000 tomans from the hard-pressed taxpayers of Azerbaijan. As Aleksandr Sergeevich explained to Nesselrode:

I didn't want to employ one of our own people for this task so as not to arouse hatred in the country where we are living. It was necessary to choose between a Persian and an Englishman, and, it goes without saying, the choice fell upon the latter, since nothing will induce me to trust a Persian.

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103 In a letter of October 30, 1828 (ibid., p. 229).
104 AKAK, 7: 661, Griboedov to Nesselrode, November 30, 1828.
105 Ibid.
At one stage in all of these proceedings, the head of the British mission offered to guarantee the payment of 100,000 tomans, but Griboedov declined on the grounds that Macdonald would have been personally responsible for the money, because the British government had not authorized such a guarantee. Incidentally, these two rival diplomats enjoyed a very cordial relationship. Of Macdonald, Aleksandr Sergeevich wrote at this time: "With [him] we are living on the most intimate terms, because in private life this is the most loyal and the most estimable person whom I have met for a long time." And the British minister echoed similar sentiments about his Russian counterpart:

I learn from M. Grebayedof that the most friendly and confidential relations continue to subsist between the Courts of London and Petersburgh, and that he has in consequence been instructed by the Count de Nesselrode to cultivate the best understanding with the British Mission. In this I apprehend he will experience little difficulty since His Excellency and myself have long been on terms of personal intimacy, and so far as my knowledge of his character entitles me to judge, there are few men who have less of that little jealousy usually to be found amongst the Russian functionaries than M. Grebayedof.

To discuss the indemnity question in all its ramifications and particulars would require an unwarranted degree of detail. One must read all of Griboedov's diplomatic

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107 Ibid., p. 661, Griboedov to Nesselrode, November 30, 1828.

108 Ibid.

109 PRO: F. O. 249/27, Macdonald to A. Stirling, acting secretary to the government at Ft. William, Bengal, February 2 (N.S.), 1829.
correspondence from this Tabriz period in order to comprehend fully the problems and frustrations attendant upon "squeezing" the eighth crore out of the Persians. Suffice it to say that this task nearly drove Griboedov to despair. Writing to a confidante (P. N. Akhverdova) in November 1828 from Tabriz, he expressed his innermost feelings thus:

All my time is taken up with this accursed contribution, which I still can't completely collect from the Persians. The task is inexhaustible, and, it seems to me that I'm not good enough for my post; more savoir faire, more sang-froid are required. This business puts me out of humor. I'm becoming morose, sometimes the desire to call it quits comes over me and then I really act stupidly. No, I'm not worth anything for the service, and my appointment has not turned out well. I'm not sure I'll be able to get through all the assignments entrusted to me; many others would carry them out a hundred thousand times better. 110

The passage just quoted illustrates the poet-diplomat's penchant to underrate, even at times to disclaim, the talent and skill he exercised in the service of the tsar. Here is another example of this characteristic, in a letter to Paskevich of December 3, 1828, describing his situation in Tabriz: "Thank God (and I attribute this not to my own ability but to the fear which has overtaken everyone from the successes of our arms) I have placed myself on such a footing that I am feared and respected." 111 Lest the reader be tempted to accept Griboedov's self-disparagement at face value, it would be well to quote the judgement of Murav'ev-

110 PSS, 3: 231; translated from French.
111 Ibid., p. 240.
Karskii, who, though no great admirer of the envoy, justly gave him his due: "I remain convinced that in Persia Griboedov was in absolutely the right place, that he replaced for us there by his presence alone a twenty-thousand-man army and that one will perhaps not find in Russia a man as capable to occupy his post. . . . If he had returned safely to Tabriz, our influence in Persia would have been consolidated for a long time."  

As Russia's first envoy to Persia in the aftermath of war, Griboedov also attempted to strengthen the re-established bonds of friendship between the two countries. This was no easy task either, considering that he was obliged simultaneously to press unrelentingly for the fulfillment of the peace treaty's burdensome provisions. There was always the danger that the vanquished nation might be driven to seek an alliance with Turkey against its tormentors. Nonetheless, the envoy had one weapon in his diplomatic arsenal which could prove efficacious in attaining this other goal — namely, the protection which Russia could render Abbas Mirza at the time of his succession to power. In the wake of Turkmanchai, the Crown Prince was in a vulnerable position, as the British envoy made clear in a report to London:  

[Abbas is] broken in mind as well as in constitution. His misfortunes, or misconduct, have so much lowered him in the estimation of the people at large,

112 An allusion to Griboedov's tragic demise in Teheran.  

113 A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, pp. 95-96.
that I think his succession to the throne in the utmost degree doubtful, unless his pretensions be upheld by England or Russia, whose good offices it is manifestly his interest to cultivate.\textsuperscript{114}

Here indeed was a golden opportunity to cement the foundations of tsarist influence in Persia and Griboedov did everything in his power to orient the Prince toward Russia. In a private letter to Paskevich of December 3, 1828, he recommended that "we should solemnly promise that we shall elevate him [Abbas Mirza] to the throne, since this will cost us nothing - a peacetime exercise for the troops with expenses paid by him - while our influence in Asia will become predominant over that of any other Power."\textsuperscript{115} That this prognosis was no idle boast can be seen from the following comments of the British envoy, who speculated on the probable consequences of Russia's intervention in support of the Crown Prince:

> If . . . the aid of Russia be called in, we may, from that moment, withdraw from the scene. She will, under the pretext of crushing rebellion . . . soon extend her dominion to the East as well as to the West; her troops and her agents will spread themselves in every direction, in the manner they now do in Armenia and Koordistan, and new schemes will be proposed and new expeditions undertaken, until by the reduction of the weak and refractory lords of Khorassan, she suddenly finds herself in actual possession of Herat, decidedly the most important position between Persia and the Indus.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114}IOL: L/P&S/9/89, Macdonald to the Secret Committee, December 14 (N.S.), 1828.

\textsuperscript{115}PSS, 3: 240.

\textsuperscript{116}IOL: L/P&S/9/90, Macdonald to the governor-general in India, February 9 (N.S.), 1829.
As another means to fostering closer ties between Russia and Persia, Griboedov also urged that Abbas Mirza be allowed to visit the Emperor in St. Petersburg. During the fall of 1828 the Prince himself had been importuning Aleksandr Sergeevich for permission to make such a journey. "He is dreaming now about nothing except the support and protection of the Emperor," Griboedov informed Nesselrode in November. "I don't know how long this will last; probably as long as our successes in Turkey." However, he went on to say:

If it comes to deliberating about whether this trip would have good or bad results for us, I think that it may turn out to be useful for our Eastern affairs. As the heir to the Persian throne, Abbas Mirza, in the course of the entire journey through the greater part of Russia, would have a chance to estimate more accurately the dimensions of her might and vastness, as well as the power of the Emperor, which is the same in all corners of the empire - in a word, everything about which he does not have a correct understanding.

All the while Griboedov was in Persia, war continued to rage between Russia and Turkey. Although having no instructions from the Foreign Ministry to encourage Persia's all-too-eager Crown Prince to participate in that conflict, he became convinced, some time after arriving in Tabriz, that it would be desirable to have Abbas Mirza invade the Ottoman empire. A pretext for such a move was soon at hand. In October the Prince confidentially informed Griboedov

118 Ibid.
that he had received a summons from Arab sheiks and other
notables of Baghdad, promising to revolt against the Turk­
ish pasha as soon as he would appear in their land with
no matter how small an army; the city and the entire country
would then be delivered up to Abbas. In reporting on this
development to Nesselrode, our envoy noted that he had not
taken any action on the Prince's revelation, since Abbas
was in no condition to undertake anything at the moment due
to his dire financial distress caused by Russia's pecuniary
demands. Griboedov told the vice chancellor he was now
awaiting instructions on the subject and then added defer­
tentially: "Without permitting myself to influence your
decision in any way, I would say that if the war continues,
the simultaneous capture of Erzerum by the Russians, and of
Baghdad by Abbas Mirza, would aid our cause."119

There can be no doubt about Griboedov's own attitude
here. He stated it plainly enough to Paskevich: "My real
opinion is that . . . we should order him [Abbas Mirza] to
fight the Turks."120 Knowing that Paskevich was entertain­
ing a similar idea, Aleksandr Sergeevich urged the general
to exert his influence upon St. Petersburg: "Stir up our
drowsy Ministry of External and Extraordinary Affairs.
Write directly to the Emperor, giving your opinion regard­
ing Abbas Mirza - namely, that it would be a good idea

to arm him against the Turks."121

The commander-in-chief did write to Nesselrode on the matter but advised that he considered an alliance with Persia acceptable only in the event that England should intervene in the Russo-Turkish war. Should that occur, then, in Paskevich's opinion, it would "not only be useful but even necessary to involve Abbas Mirza in the war with the Turks."122 However, the Foreign Ministry replied:

We have no cause to suspect the London Cabinet of any hostile intentions against us. . . . From our relations up to the present, we see that England not only is not thinking about going to war in aid of the Turks but completely recognizes the justice of the war which Russia found herself forced to declare against them.123

Thus, St. Petersburg saw no justification for a Russo-Persian alliance. By the time this answer had been dispatched from the capital, Griboedov was no longer in Tabriz.

On December 9, 1828 he had set out for Teheran. Apart from having to present his credentials to the Shah, Griboedov went there in order to induce the Qajar monarch to loan Abbas Mirza the 100,000 tomans needed to complete the eighth crore.124 In truth, however, the envoy believed that little,  

121Ibid., p. 239.


123Ibid., p. 669, Nesselrode to Paskevich, January 8, 1829.

124Ibid., p. 656, Griboedov to Paskevich, October 26, 1828; see also PSS, 3: 228, Griboedov to Rodofinikin, October 30, 1828.
if anything, could be accomplished at the court of the Shah: "I do not think that there will be much scope for diplomatic activity there, as he [Fath Ali Shah] and his Ministry are slumbering in sweet tranquility, and all dealings with Russia, Turkey and Britain have been entrusted to Abbas Mirza."¹²⁵ Unhappily, this turned out to be the last mission of his diplomatic career, for it was in Teheran that Aleksandr Sergeevich's premonitions of disaster came true.

¹²⁵ *PSS*, 3: 233, Griboedov to Rodofinikin, early December 1828.
CHAPTER VII

DEATH IN TEHERAN: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE RUSSIAN MISSION, JANUARY 30, 1829

Much has been written about the tragedy which overtook Griboedov and the staff of the Russian mission in Teheran. It has become perhaps the most thoroughly investigated topic of Griboedov's diplomatic career among Russian historians, attracting the attention of several Western writers as well.¹ It also has been, and still is, one of the most controversial. Notwithstanding all the attempts to reconstruct the event, some circumstances of Griboedov's violent death remain obscure and may never be fully brought to light. This pertains especially to the question of responsibility for the disaster, about which more will be said later.

There are just two major first-hand accounts of the Teheran tragedy. One is entitled the "Narrative of the Proceedings of the Russian Mission, from Its Departure from Tabreez for Teheran on 14th Jummade (Dec. 20th, 1828,)

until its destruction on Wednesday the 6th of Shahban, Feb. 11th, 1829.\textsuperscript{2} Published in \textit{Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine} (vol. 28, September 1830, pp. 496-512),\textsuperscript{3} it is an English translation of a Persian manuscript written by the anonymous secretary of Griboedov's mehmandar, or officer assigned by the Persian government as an official escort for the trip to Teheran. The "Narrative," as it will be henceforth referred to, was translated by Major George Willock,\textsuperscript{4} brother of Henry Willock. Its authenticity and accuracy were strongly vouched for to the publisher in a letter from Dr. McNeill of the British mission.\textsuperscript{5}

Among recent Soviet scholars, the "Narrative" has received a mixed reception. O. I. Popova, who used it extensively in her book \textit{Griboedov-diplomat}, writes that this document is distinguished from other Iranian sources by greater objectivity, by the fact that it does not contain the main characteristic peculiar to all other Iranian versions - namely, the attempt to place all the blame for what occurred on Griboedov. The matter-of-fact tone of the "Narrative's" account changes now and then into conspicuous sympathy for

\textsuperscript{2}The dates are New Style.

\textsuperscript{3}The English version was translated into French as "Relation des événements qui ont précédé et accompagné le massacre de la dernière ambassade russe en Perse" and published almost simultaneously in \textit{Nouvelles annales des voyages et des sciences géographiques} 48 (October-December 1830): 337-67.

\textsuperscript{4}W. Monteith, \textit{Kars and Erzeroum} (London, 1856), p. 228.

\textsuperscript{5}The Text of this letter, dated January 10 (N.S.), 1830, from Tabriz, appears in Evelyn Jasiulko Harden, "Griboedov and the Willock Affair," \textit{Slavic Review} 30 (March 1971): 76, n. 9.
Griboedov, into anxiety over him.\textsuperscript{6}

By contrast, S. V. Shostakovich claims that whereas the "Narrative" is indisputably based on material supplied by an eyewitness, its translation has been "Europeanized to such an extent" that it represents a "tendentious and often contradictory account of the events in Teheran, distorting and falsifying the true picture of the destruction of the Russian mission."\textsuperscript{7} However, his negative attitude did not prevent Shostakovich from borrowing amply from the document for his own study of Griboedov's diplomatic career.

The British scholar, D. P. Costello, subscribes to the view that the "Narrative" "reads for the most part like an accurate chronicle" except that "on two or three important points . . . its version of the facts appears to be 'slanted' in such a way as to exculpate the Teheran authorities from complicity in the murders."\textsuperscript{8}

The other important first-hand source of information comes from I. S. Mal'tsov, the mission's first secretary who miraculously survived the massacre. Upon his return to Russian territory in March 1829, Mal'tsov wrote a series of reports to General Paskevich, giving his version of the

\textsuperscript{6}Griboedov-diplomat, p. 146.

\textsuperscript{7}Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 211, n. 3; see also his article "Proiskhozhdenie 'Reliatsii' o gibeli Griboedovskoi missii," in Trudy Irkutskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta imeni A. A. Zhdanova, 1956, no. 3, pp. 154-59.

\textsuperscript{8}"The Murder of Griboedov," pp. 72-73.
tragedy. His is the only first-hand testimony by a non-Persian; on certain essential points of fact, Mal'tsov's narrative contradicts all the Persian accounts.

There also exist three official Persian reports of the tragedy which were composed immediately after the event. However, their reliability has been strongly contested by Costello, who declares that their "apologetic character... is manifest; they all contain palpable untruths; and they add nothing to what is known from other and more reliable sources" - a reference to the "Narrative" and Mal'tsov's reports. These two last-named sources in fact will serve as the basis for the following reconstruction of Griboedov's mission to Teheran.

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9 See I. Mal'tsov, "Iz donesenii," A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel' v memuarkh sovremennikov, ed. Z. Davydov (Leningrad, 1929), pp. 185-98. This publication does not reproduce some portions of Mal'tsov's reports, however. The most complete publication of his reports appears in P. Efremov, "O smerti A. S. Griboedova v Tegerane," Russkii arkhiv, 1872, no. 7-8, columns 1514-38.

10 They are to be found as translated enclosures in Macdonald's dispatch of February 19 (N.S.), 1829 to Swinton, secretary to the government, Ft. William, Bengal (IOL: L/P&S/9/90).


12 Mention should be made of another source brought to light recently by a Soviet scholar. Entitled "Svedeniia ob ubiistve v Tegerane rossiiskogo imperatorskogo chrezvy-chainogo poslannika i polnomochnogo ministra pri dvore persidskom Griboedova, dostavlennye sartipom kniazem Suleiman-khanom Melikovym, kotorogo rodnoi diadia kniaz' Suleiman-khan Melikov byl ubit v tot zhe den' v russkoi imperatorskoi missii vmeste s pokoinym Griboedovym i
Russia's minister plenipotentiary departed Tabriz in the company of a numerous and motley entourage. Besides his diplomatic staff, it included a physician, a Georgian prince related to Madame Griboedov, an Armenian interpreter, a guard of sixteen Cossacks and a retinue of about thirty servants, composed of Russians, Moslems, Georgians and Armenians. Assisting Griboedov in the capacity of mehmandar was Nazar Ali Khan, whose duty was to procure lodgings, provisions and respectful treatment from the different Persian authorities and heads of villages on the road to Teheran.

Left behind in Tabriz was Griboedov's young bride, who, because of a difficult pregnancy, was entrusted to the care of Mrs. Macdonald, wife of the British envoy. The delicate condition of Nina's health preyed upon Griboedov's mind and he wrote to her constantly. Although only one letter survives, in it we find this tender expression of his feelings:

(Continued)

prochimi chlenami russkoi missii," it appears in G. M. Petrov, "Novye materialy ob ubiistve A. S. Griboedova," Uchenye zapiski instituta vostokovedeniia Akademii nauk SSSR 8 (1953): 156-62. Although Shostakovich quotes from this source in his account of the Teheran tragedy, certain points about the nature of the document render its reliability somewhat dubious in our view: first, it is based entirely on hearsay evidence; and, secondly, it was recorded on July 30, 1897 - more than sixty-eight years after the event. It should be noted, however, that some specific information cited in it is corroborated by other sources, such as the "Narrative."

"Narrative," p. 496.

PSS, 1: XCV.
My adorable friend, I pity you; without you it is as melancholy as it can possibly be. Now I truly feel what it means to be in love. In the past I have parted from many people to whom I also was strongly attached, but in a day or two, or after a week, the grief had disappeared. Now the farther I am from you, the worse it becomes. Let's be patient a little while longer, my Angel, and we'll pray to God that after this we will never again be separated.¹⁵

The journey across the northern terrain of Persia in wintertime was hazardous and painful. The poor state of the roads and the severity of the weather hindered the progress of the travelers. "I shall never forget the sufferings we endured, and the risks we encountered," recalled the secretary of Nazar Ali Khan, "whilst traversing the plains of Sooltaneeh in their whole extent. The cold was intense, our horses could scarcely proceed, from the great depth of snow, and our safety was often endangered by violent storms of wind, accompanied by sleet."¹⁶

The author of the "Narrative" very soon came to regard Griboedov as "a person of great abilities and acquirements"; however, certain happenings on the way to Teheran prompted the Persian to remark that the envoy "appeared new in office, unaccustomed to command."¹⁷ His chief cause of complaint was the base conduct of some of Griboedov's servants toward the Moslem population. It seems that they had gotten into the

¹⁵Ibid., 3: 244, Letter of December 24, 1828 from Qazvin.

¹⁶"Narrative," p. 497.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 498.
habit of exacting a substantial monetary tribute from the local peasants whenever the latter failed to supply the embassy with a surplus quantity of daily provisions. The worst offender was Rustum Beg, an Armenian renegade of violent character. As the "Narrative" makes clear, these shenanigans had been going on behind the back of Griboedov, who expressed astonishment and anger when at last the mehmandar ventured to inform him of them. Aleksandr Sergeevich declared that all of the extorted money would be repaid at every stage of the return journey from Teheran but that he could not dismiss any of the culprits until the mission got back to Tabriz.18

Another source of trouble for Griboedov stemmed from the unending search for Russian captives. His entourage had been joined by numerous people from Transcaucasia, seeking the return of relatives abducted by Persian marauders during the previous two wars. In the city of Qazvin, where the Russian mission halted for three days, Griboedov narrowly averted an ugly incident. A German colonist, having discovered that his captured daughter was living in the city as the wife of a seyid, a man highly venerated as a descendant of the prophet Mohammed, demanded that she be liberated. According to the "Narrative" (p. 498), Rustum Beg seized the seyid and ordered him to be beaten if he did not hand over the captive. At length the German woman19

18See ibid., pp. 496-99.
19According to Mal'tsov, two women were involved in
was brought before Griboedov, who asked her if she desired to return to Russia or to remain in Persia. Despite the efforts of Adelung, the second secretary, who tried to induce the woman to return to her father, she refused on the grounds that she could not bear the separation from her two children. Griboedov therefore ordered the woman to be released. His action was favorably received by a menacing crowd of onlookers who had gathered in support of the seyid. Evidently Griboedov also had to deal with the cases of other prisoners in Qazvin, for he complained in the letter to his wife of December 24: "The captives here have driven me out of my mind. Some are not being released; others themselves do not want to return. For them I have been sojourn ing here in vain, completely in vain." 

Around the beginning of January 1829 the Russian mission finally arrived at Teheran without further incident. The entrance into the capital was made, according to the

19(Continued)

this affair - a German and an Armenian (A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 189).

20Adelung's intervention in this matter undoubtedly was due to his experience in the German colony of Katerinenfeld, where he stopped en route to his post at Tabriz and was besieged by petitioners begging for his assistance in locating family members carried off into captivity by Persian invaders in August 1826 - see his letter to his father of August 3, 1828 in Literaturnoe nasledstvo 47-48 (1948): 252.

21This incident is described in detail in the "Narrative," p. 498; see also M. Ia. Alaverdiants, "Konchina A. S. Griboedova po armianskim istochnikam," Russkaia starina, 1901, no. 10, p. 49, n. 1.

22PSS, 3: 244.
superstitious Persian secretary, at "a period highly unpropitious" - "the sun was in the constellation of Scorpio." The envoy and his staff were housed in a spacious mansion which had belonged to a recently deceased Persian nobleman. A company of Persian infantry, consisting of about eighty soldiers, stood by the house as a guard of honor.

Within a few days, Griboedov was conducted to the royal palace for the presentation of his credentials to the Shah. "As the procession moved slowly along the extensive bazars, the shopkeepers stood erect, saluting the envoy in the Feringhee [or European] style, by doffing their caps. Whilst moving along the passages and courts of the palace, previously to reaching the glass-saloon, where his majesty was seated in state, every demonstration of respect was shewn by the Shah's servants in attendance." This audience passed off fairly well, although Griboedov is said by the "Narrative" (p. 501) to have remained seated too long in the presence of the aged monarch, who almost fainted from the weight of his crown and jewellery. In the days that followed, the envoy and his assistants were feted at a series of grand entertainments given by the princes and notables of Teheran.


24Ibid., pp. 500-01.
In a letter written about this time from the capital to Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonald, who was then at Tabriz, Griboedov described his activity during this initial period. The excerpt that follows is in fact the only information we possess, to date, from Griboedov himself about his mission to Teheran.  

Because you have always shown an interest in me, my dear Colonel, I shall tell you in a few words about my trip and my arrival here. To begin with the cold was unbearable. I galloped, I trotted, I ran at full speed from one station to another. My Mehmandar . . . pointed out in a friendly manner that this was not the custom in Iran, where the Envoy of a great sovereign must go slowly and with solemnity even if he should die of the cold. Here I was given a very nice Istikbal.  

The next day I had a visit from Abul Hasan Khan with all kinds of Herjerat from the Shah. The third day the King received us in a solemn audience with much pomp. As for the rest I do not need to write you all that, since you have experienced all this show before me. Two days after my reception at Court I began to make visits to those who visited me, and still am, during terrible weather; it snows a great deal here every blessed day, and the mud in the streets is abominable. Today I received from His Majesty the list of those who are to have me to dinner,

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Credit must be given to Evelyn Jasiulko Harden, associate professor of Russian language and literature at Simon Fraser University, for having recently discovered this letter at the University of Nottingham Library. The document now ranks as Griboedov's last surviving letter. Although undated, it was probably written during his second or third week in Teheran. For these and other details, see Harden, "Griboedov and the Willock Affair," pp. 74-85.

A Persian word meaning "reception."

According to Harden, "herjerat" seems to be a distortion of the Persian word kharjerah, meaning "travel expenses." It used to be the custom for the host government to defray the travel expenses of a visiting embassy (ibid., p. 88, n. 42).
five times more than my digestion can take. On the whole I can only praise the way they have treated me. In eight days I plan to leave the Capital. . . . 28

It is of interest that Griboedov's communication contains nothing to suggest any irritation or worry over difficulties in Teheran, much less the impending catastrophe. It is reported, however, in the "Narrative" that he encountered various problems practically from the onset of his visit. He was continually pestered by entreaties from the people who had accompanied him with the object of finding abducted relatives. "He could not leave his chamber for a moment," the anonymous Persian secretary noted, "without being importuned by them on this subject. No sooner was one slave released, than she gave information respecting several others. The slaves were never given up, without kindling considerable angry feelings." 29 Nonetheless, vexed as he was by these matters, Aleksandr Sergeevich made some headway. Besides obtaining the release of several captives in the capital, he secured a firman from the Shah, ordering the prince governor of Qazvin to liberate all the captives living in the home of the former ruler of Erivan, Hassan Khan. 30

At his second audience with the Shah, on the twelfth or fourteenth day of his visit, Griboedov delivered a

28 Translated from the French by Harden. For the complete original French text and English translation, see ibid., pp. 85-89.


The treaty was ratified by Russia in March, and by Persia in July, 1828 (Balaian, p. 235, n. 192).
present, whatever may be its value." The situation was all the more embarrassing for Griboedov in that the Shah presented him and his suite with an array of valuable decorations and gifts. The envoy was awarded the Order of the Lion and Sun first class with diamonds; also he received three handsome shawls, a string of pearls, one thousand Dutch ducats, and a horse richly adorned with a gold-plated saddle and a golden bridle studded with precious stones. The secretaries of the mission - Mal'tsov and Adelung - received the same decoration second class with diamonds, in addition to other presents. In fact all but one of the remaining members of Griboedov's staff, including even the officers of the Cossacks, received medals or gifts of some kind - the lone exception was the notorious Rustum Beg. In return for this largess, Griboedov could afford to give the Shah only a piddling present of twenty-five freshly minted Russian coins.32

At the end of his third week in Teheran, Griboedov prepared to return to Tabriz. It was decided that Mal'tsov and the Armenian interpreter, Mirza Nerriman, would remain in the capital to maintain contact with the Shah's government and to present the Emperor's gifts when they arrived. The envoy had a farewell audience with Fath Ali Shah and all business was over.33 The day of departure was fixed.

32"Narrative," pp. 502-03.

33It is strange that there is no reference in the sources to any transactions concerning the indemnity.
The author of the "Narrative" afterwards recalled:

Every honour, every possible distinction had been shown towards the Emperor's representative. . . . With us all was gladness, all was sunshine. The envoy's countenance beamed with delight at the thought of rejoining his beloved and beautiful bride, the Georgian princess. She was frequently the theme of his conversation. Yet suddenly our atmosphere became darkened, even as that of the most dreary winter's night. 34

Indeed, the final catastrophe came unexpectedly.

The individual who precipitated the tragic events which followed was an Armenian, a certain Hadji Mirza Ya'qub Markarian. Born in Erivan, the son of a simple gardener, Ya'qub had been seized by Persian marauders as a young man, castrated, forcibly converted to Islam and eventually taken to Teheran. Intelligent and possessed of some formal education, he was relegated to the royal harem, where he rose to prominence through his knowledge of book-keeping and the simplification of the accounting system which he introduced. For over fifteen years he had been serving the Shah, first as a eunuch, and later as treasurer of the royal seraglio. Had he so desired, Mirza Ya'qub could have risen even higher in rank and responsibilities, but this was not his ambition. Although observing all the rites and practices of Islam, Markarian had secretly remained a true Christian and longed to return to his native Armenia. The Treaty of Turkmanchay gave him the opportunity. 35

34 P. 503.

35 For this and other biographical information on Markarian, see Alaverdiants, "Konchina A. S. Griboedova po armianskim istochnikam," pp. 43-48.
Late on the evening of the 27th of Rajab (January 21), Mirza Ya'qub appeared at the house of the Russian envoy and asked to be repatriated to Erivan. At first, Griboedov refused to accommodate Ya'qub on the grounds that the minister of the Russian Emperor accorded his protection publicly and that no one except thieves sought refuge in the dead of night. The petitioner was sent back to his own house.36

Next morning Mirza Ya'qub returned to the Russian mission with the same request. This time, according to Mal'tsov's testimony, Griboedov tried to persuade him to stay in Teheran, arguing that in the Shah's household he occupied an important position, whereas, in Armenia, he would be a person of no consequence. No amount of persuasion, however, could shake the eunuch's resolve to quit Persia. Accordingly, however reluctant he may have been, Griboedov was compelled to adhere to the stipulations of the Turkmanchai Treaty and grant Markarian asylum within the premises of the mission in order to take him to Tabriz and from there send him to Erivan.37

36 Both the "Narrative" (pp. 503-04) and Mal'tsov (A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 186) report these proceedings.

37 See A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 186. The "Narrative" (p. 504) makes no mention of Griboedov's efforts to persuade Ya'qub to remain in the Persian service and even maintains the opposite: "And if sincerely anxious to befriend him, why was the Meerza not advised to remain in his situation, where he enjoyed affluence and high consideration?"
The deflection of Mirza Ya'qub to the Russian mission deeply wounded the pride of Fath Ali Shah. Here was a person who knew the most intimate details of the Shah's private life and personal fortune - confidential information of the most delicate nature which would now almost certainly be communicated to the Russian envoy. Mirza Ya'qub knew too much.

Mal'tsov reports that

the Shah was furious; the whole court set up a howl, as though what had taken place was a national disaster of the first importance. Twenty times in the course of a day messengers came from the Shah to make the most absurd representations. They said that the Hadji (eunuch) was the same thing as a wife of the Shah, and that consequently the Minister had robbed the Shah of a wife from his harem. Griboedov replied that Mirza Ya'qub, according to the treaty, was now a Russian subject and that the Russian Minister had no right to surrender him or to deny him his protection. The Persians, seeing that they would achieve nothing by their persuasive logic, had recourse to other means.30

It was now alleged by the Shah's representatives that Markarian had robbed the royal treasury of thirty to forty thousand tomans and could not, therefore, be let go. In order to clear up this matter, Griboedov sent Mirza Ya'qub,

30 A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 187. About this matter the Persian author of the "Narrative" says (p. 504): "We knew that, by the late treaty, the Russian minister had a right to afford his protection to persons desiring to return into the Russian territories; yet by no arguments could we reconcile ourselves to suppose, that the pride of the King of Kings, and the suspicion with which all those are regarded who are in attendance on the harem, would permit his majesty patiently to submit to a circumstance so completely at variance with his sentiments of propriety, and so liable to debase him in the eyes of his subjects."
together with the interpreter, Mirza Nerriman, to Manuchehr Khan, the Shah's chief eunuch. This meeting ended up serving no purpose except to exacerbate feelings on both sides. Upon entering the rooms of Manuchehr Khan, Mirza Ya'qub was reviled in the grossest terms and both he and his companion were spat upon by some menials employed in the harem. A heated exchange took place, with Markarian incautiously blaspheming the Moslem faith. Further discussion being fruitless, the Mirza was escorted back to the Russian mission, where Griboedov is quoted as saying: "It is not on Meerza Yakoob they have spitten; they have, I consider, spit upon the Emperor in the first place, then spit upon me. Such conduct is past endurance!" At the same time the envoy reproached Markarian for having had the audacity to make any comments on religious belief.

After this encounter the Shah desired that an ecclesiastical court should investigate the charges against Mirza Ya'qub. Griboedov agreed to this and sent his first secretary, Mal'tsov, to protest in the event of an unlawful decision. The hearing was supposed to have been conducted by Mirza Masih, the mujtahid or chief priest of Teheran. However, since this dignitary preferred to absent himself from the courtroom, allegedly because he could not restrain

39"Narrative," p. 505.

40See ibid. and Mal'tsov's account in A. S. Griboedov: *ego zhizn' i gibel',* p. 187.
his feelings against Mirza Ya'qub, the case was entrusted to Manuchehr Khan. What occurred next is best told by Mal'tsov himself:

I went with Mirza Ya'qub and the interpreter to the house of the Shar' (ecclesiastical court) and declared to Manuchehr Khan that if in my presence anyone resorted to abuse as on the previous occasion, I should not tolerate it but should close the discussions and take Mirza Ya'qub with me and that they would never see him again; that I for my part gave him an assurance that Mirza Ya'qub for his part would not utter an offensive word to anyone. "Mirza Ya'qub owes the imperial treasurer several thousand tomans," said Manuchehr Khan to me. "Must this money now be lost?" I replied that Mirza Ya'qub had stated to the Minister that he did not owe anyone here a farthing and that, consequently, legal documents should be produced; and that if valid notes of hand were found, that is, notes duly witnessed in the presence of the hakem [magistrate], he would be compelled to satisfy Zohrab Khan [the imperial treasurer]. "Such documents are not at hand, but there are receipts, witnesses." "According to the treaty," I said, "as your worship is aware, such receipts and verbal testimony, should the debtor himself not recognize their validity, are of no force in money matters. It is true that Mirza Ya'qub received money from Zohrab Khan, but he was the treasurer of the household and used to receive various instructions from the Shah, in accordance with which he spent the sums he received. He alleges that he can prove this with the help of papers and receipts in his house; but you, your worship, sent your servants, who forced their way into his house when he was already under the protection of our Legation, removed his property, led off his mules and horses, and possibly abstracted the afore-mentioned papers. What you should have done was to draw up an inventory of the property and papers in the presence of a Russian official, not in a violent and arbitrary manner, to seize everything without distinction. Consequently, the entire responsibility for the violation of the rights of a Russian subject falls upon you. How can the Court proceed to make a just decision when Zohrab Khan is in possession of his documents, while Mirza Ya'qub's papers have been taken from him and have perhaps already been destroyed?" "Very well," said Manuchehr Khan, "but what you are saying is not to be found in the treaty." In reply, I instructed the interpreter to read out a number of
articles which I had marked in the text of the commercial treaty, and all those present were struck dumb with astonishment on hearing them. "If that is so," said Manuchehr Khan, "no ecclesiastical court can deal with this case; let everything remain as it is."**1

On the following day, January 25, Griboedov called upon the Shah and accepted another proposal whereby the envoy would investigate the case of Mirza Ya'qub with two of the monarch's principal ministers: Mirza Abdul Wahab and Mirza Abul Hasan Khan. This is further evidence, in my view, that Aleksandr Sergeevich was handling this sensitive affair with the utmost caution in hopes of finding some kind of amicable solution to the conflict. Even the anonymous Persian author of the "Narrative" concedes as much by writing in reference to the preceding developments that "M. Gribayedoff had shewed every disposition to meet the wishes of the ministers as far as was consistent with his duty."42 Nonetheless, the conference agreed to on the 25th was postponed from day to day until events soon rendered it impossible.43

Meanwhile, Mirza Ya'qub had informed Griboedov that two young Armenian women were being held against their will in

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41 A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', pp. 187-88. The "Narrative" makes no mention of this hearing before the ecclesiastical court, whose proceedings, in the view of D. P. Costello, were "so damning for the Shah's case against Mirza Ya'qub" ("The Murder of Griboedov," p. 75, n. 3).

42 p. 505.

43 A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', pp. 188-89.
the harem of the former grand vizier, Allahyar Khan. 44

These women were brought to Griboedov, who, in the presence of Mal'tsov, interviewed them to see whether they were indeed anxious to return home. According to Mal'tsov, they expressed a wish to depart for their native country and, therefore, were kept on the premises of the Russian mission in order to send them off later to their destination.

Incidentally [Mal'tsov continues], this circumstance is so insignificant that it does not deserve treatment at length. Not a word was exchanged with the Persian Government on the subject of these women; people began to talk about them only after the murder of the Minister. I pointed this out in Tabriz to the Qaim Maqam, who maintained that the women were the main reason for the murder of the Minister. "Your Excellency," I said to him, "has in his hands the entire correspondence between the Minister and the Teheran Ministry. In it a great deal is said on the subject of Hadji Mirza Ya'qub, but is there a single word about the subject of the women?" "That is so - there is nowhere any mention of the women, but they were detained by you by force and against their will." "I venture to assure you," I replied to him, "that in my presence they declared to the Minister their desire to return to their country. The best proof of the fact that the Minister never took by force people who had no desire to leave this country is the incident of which you are aware and of which all Qazvin was witness. At that place two women, one of them an Armenian, the other a German from the settlements around Tiflis, were living in the house of a Seyid. They were brought to the Minister and when they stated that they desired to remain in Qazvin they were immediately sent back to the Seyid. 45

44 One of the chief antagonists of Russia at the Persian court, Allahyar Khan, it will be recalled, had been captured by the Russians at Tabriz in October 1827; he was held in captivity at least as late as July 1828 - see PSS, 3: 214, Griboedov to Rodofinikin, July 10, 1828.

45 A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 189.
It should be noted that Mal'tsov's testimony on this subject is at variance with that of all Persian sources, which allege that Griboedov held the two women in the mission against their will. The author of the "Narrative" says that on being questioned, the females explicitly stated that they were not willing to leave Teheran; nevertheless, at the suggestion of Rustum Beg, they were detained at the mission, where, it was hoped, they would change their minds after sober reflection. They were placed under the care of Mirza Ya'qub, in an adjoining apartment, over which were stationed several sentries from the Persian guard. Only on the third day after their admittance into the Russian mission did the two females express a desire to return to their native Armenian village in the province of Erivan. But, claims the "Narrative's" author, their declaration was insincere, because they had remained in constant communication by means of their Persian guard with Allahyar Khan's followers who continually hovered about the house. 46

It seems highly improbable that Griboedov would have detained the girls against their will. However, the fact that the two females were kept on the premises of the mission - even at their own request - could easily have played into the hands of Griboedov's enemies. It would not have been difficult to inflame the passions of the masses with allegations that the infidels had seized the women for

46See pp. 506-07.
immoral purposes. As we learn from the "Narrative" (p. 507), reports spread like wild-fire throughout the city unfavorable to the reputation of the envoy, as a consequence of which his situation was being rendered daily, even hourly, more perilous.

Events now moved rapidly to a climax as the priesthood began to assert themselves. The mujtahid of Teheran, Mirza Masih, on being informed that Mirza Ya'qub was traducing Islam, exclaimed: "How is it that this individual who for twenty years belonged to our faith and read our scriptures and is now going to Russia, reviles our faith? He is a traitor, an unbeliever and deserves to be killed." The chief priest was also told that the women were being held in the Russian mission and forced to abjure Islam. Mirza Masih thereupon sent a delegation of mullahs to Prince Ali Shah, governor of Teheran, with a demand that Griboedov be induced to surrender the captives or else they would be forcibly dragged from his house by the populace. Prince Ali asked that all acts of violence be postponed until he had communicated with the envoy. Upon returning from the Prince's palace, the mullahs appealed to the people to shut

47 Quoted by Mal'tsov (A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 190).

48 "Narrative," p. 507; according to Mal'tsov, Prince Ali requested the mullahs to wait awhile and he would make a report to the Shah (A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 190).
the bazaar on the following day (January 30) and to resort to the mosques: "There you will hear our decision!"

Griboedov had by now determined to quit the city. "Our departure was positively fixed for the 7th or 8th of Shahban," reports the "Narrative" (p. 507). He had evidently been apprised of the threatening situation, for on the evening of January 29 he directed Mal'tsov to address a note to the Persian foreign minister which concluded with these words:

The undersigned, having become convinced from the unconscientious conduct of the Persian government that Russian subjects here not only do not encounter a proper friendly attitude but do not even enjoy personal security, is requesting the most gracious permission of his great Sovereign to withdraw from Persia to the Russian frontier. 50

However, it was already too late to effect a safe departure. Next day - January 30 - the bazaar was closed and a large assemblage of people gathered at daybreak at the principal mosque, where the mullahs instructed them to "go to the house of the Russian envoy, remove the captives and kill Mirza Ya'qub and Rustum"51 - the latter being the servant in Griboedov's entourage who was hated by the Persians. An unruly mob, some four or five hundred strong, brandishing clubs and swords, made its way to the Russian quarters. The house occupied by Griboedov and his staff was divided into

49 That is, January 31 or February 1, 1829.
51 Ibid., p. 190.
three courtyards, each having a range of apartments on one side. Griboedov's lodgings were located in the third or last courtyard. As the mob burst into the premises, a shower of stones descended upon the inhabitants. Believing at first that the intruders only wanted to recover the captives, Griboedov ordered three Cossacks to fire with blank cartridges. But when he saw the attackers cut down his own people, the order to use live ammunition was given. During this initial assault, Mirza Ya'qub was one of the first to be killed and the two females were carried off by the servants of Allahyar Khan. The Persian guard attached to the house dispersed without offering any resistance.  

After these first acts of violence, a lull ensued, during which the rioters carried away the bodies of several of their people killed by the Russian defenders. However, before a half hour had elapsed, the attackers returned in even larger numbers, driven to complete madness by the casualties suffered in the first assault. It is said that Griboedov attempted to address the people to bring them to their senses, but his voice was drowned out by the furious tumult.  

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52 The flight of the Persian guard is reported by both the "Narrative" (p. 510) and by Mal'tsov, who adds that the guard had no ammunition (A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 190).

The author of the "Narrative," who happened to be among those at the side of Griboedov, provides a most graphic description of the final attack:

The showers of stones were so thick and incessant, that we were obliged to keep ourselves close within the right-side room of the court, which was M. Grebayedoff's sleeping apartment. . . . Death was at our portal; its victims herded together, helpless, panic-struck, and struggled to avoid their fate, like sheep beset by wolves, fierce and ravenous.

The cossacks treated the danger like men determined if possible to defend their chief, and to sell their lives dearly. Some of the domestics shewed great presence of mind and courage, particularly a courier of the mission, by name Hoachatoo. This brave lad, sword in hand, rushed on the assailants, and cut down two of their number; they gave way before him. By a staircase, he mounted and attempted to clear the walls; he was struck with stones - twice he staggered, yet pushed on, till a stone, by hitting the blade of his weapon, broke it in two, and thus defenceless, he was cut to pieces.

I witnessed with the deepest awe and admiration the death of the physician. From the commencement of the attack, he had been active in stimulating his companions to defend themselves to the last. His only weapon was a small European sabre. He must have judged there was no hope of preservation, for he made his way into the court, menacing those opposed to him, till he met a stout young man, who would not turn to fly; they exchanged at the same time blows with their swords. The Russian raised up his arm to shield his head, and his left hand dropped on the pavement. Not dismayed, he gained the apartment, tore a curtain off one of the doors, which he wrapped round his maimed limb, and, although we endeavoured to oppose his project, he jumped from the window, and fell, overpowered by numbers, having been previously struck to the ground by stones thrown from the tops of the walls.

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54 Actually the physician in question was Dr. Malmberg, a native of Estonia (A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 329, n. 137).

By this time, part of the mob, unable to push their way into Griboedov's room, had climbed onto the roof and perforated the ceiling. Stones rained down and shots rang out from above and among the first to be mortally wounded was the envoy's foster brother. "Look! look! they have killed Alexander!" cried Griboedov. The end was now at hand. "I had still presence of mind," writes the Persian secretary, "to mark the horrors of our situation depicted on the countenances of many. In some, animation was almost suspended, others were frantic with despair, and few besides the cossacks persevered in desperate resistance. The envoy, with arms crossed, paced the floor, and at times he passed his hands in perturbation through his hair. His forehead was bloody, from a blow he had received on the right side of the head. In a tone of enquiry he accosted me. 'They will kill us,' he said. 'Meerza - they will kill us!' I could only reply in the affirmative. The last words I heard him utter were, 'Futh Alli Shah! Futh Alli Shah!' Aleksandr Sergeevich was stabbed through the heart with a dagger, when at last the crazed assailants penetrated his room and finished off its occupants.

The author of the "Narrative," having escaped at the last instant by throwing himself among the attackers who

56 Ibid., p. 510. Aleksandr Dmitrievich Gribov was also Griboedov's personal attendant.

57 Ibid.
in the confusion mistook him for one of their own, was
horrified by what happened next:

The evil spirits of hell must this day have been
let loose, to urge the Tehran people to commit
atrocities which I fancied human nature would have
shrunk from.

Not content with foul dastardly murder, not ap­
peased by dipping their hands in the blood of so many
unprotected persons, those worse than demons com­
menced an indiscriminate plunder. The gory carcases
were stripped to the skin; in a state of nudity they
were cast from the room into the open air, under
horrid grins, laughter, and derision; one a-top the
other they were piled, forming a pyramid of human flesh,
cemented by the blood oozing from their wounds!

Almighty God! can these acts go unpunished? I never
supposed that the human frame contained so much liquid.
The blood had gushed in streams from the bodies, covered
the floor deeply, then found its way in a torrent into
the court.  

Every object of value, including papers and journals,
was plundered from the envoy's residence. So persistent was
the rioters' frenzy that they even invaded the premises of
the British mission and murdered seven or eight Cossacks
and grooms temporarily quartered in the stables. All the
horses belonging to them were spirited away.  

None of the
members of the British mission was present in Teheran at
this time. Afterwards, Dr. McNeill, in writing about this
outrage to his wife, noted that the mob inflicted no damage
whatsoever upon any article of British property.

58 Ibid., p. 511.

59 Ibid.

60 See Memoir of the Right Hon. Sir John McNeill, p. 128.
Mal'tsov reports that when the slaughter was over at the Russian mission but with the looting still in progress, a Persian officer arrived with about a hundred soldiers, dispatched to the scene by the Shah. However, even this auxiliary force had no cartridges: "It had orders to employ eloquence alone, not bayonets, against the furious rabble, and for this reason was a tranquil witness of their frenzy." The "Narrative" says nothing about this incident, although it claims (p. 511) that the Shah made several vain attempts to quell the disturbance. In one instance, Prince Ali Shah, together with a number of hastily-assembled followers, came forth from the citadel but soon beat a retreat after being threatened with death by the multitude. Thus, for whatever reason, no effective assistance was sent to the beleagured mission by the authorities of Teheran. Mal'tsov writes that "an hour before sunset, when nobody but soldiers remained in our ruined house, an imperial official arrived and, in thunderous tones, read out to the four walls a firman instructing the people, under pain of the imperial displeasure, to withdraw peacefully from our house and to refrain from any lawless action." Thirty-seven members of the Russian mission perished in the massacre - a higher toll than that inflicted upon


62Ibid.
their assailants, of whom nineteen were killed. Griboedov's body was found the following morning among the heap of the slain before the window of his own apartment. It was removed to an Armenian church, while the remains of the others were interred in a large pit beyond the walls of the city.

Only three of Griboedov's staff survived the disaster: two couriers and the first secretary, I. S. Mal'tsov. Mal'tsov himself has recounted how he was saved:

I owe my miraculous survival to both extraordinary fortune and to the fact that I did not lose my presence of mind during the horrors which occurred before my eyes. I was living together with our Tabriz mehmandar, Nazar Ali Khan Afshar, in the very first court; besides myself there were no other Russians but also present were Mirza Abdul Husain Khan, the mehmandar assigned to us by the Shah, and the captain of the [Persian] guard. When the people, with a shout, rushed like a wave past my windows, I didn't know what to think. I wanted to run to the envoy but I didn't even have time to reach the doors before the whole courtyard and roofs were already covered with a furious throng. I went to my upper room and within five minutes they were already covered with a furious throng. I went to my upper room and within five minutes they were already covered with a furious throng.

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63 These figures are given by Mal'tsov (ibid.). According to the "Narrative" (p. 512), forty-four individuals from the mission had been put to death, while the Teheran mob suffered about twenty-seven killed and wounded; in the words of its author, "if a well-regulated posture of defence had been assumed, and if the whole of the retinue of the Mission had been assembled, many more of the assailants would have perished; under such circumstances, it is even probable that the attack would have been repulsed" (ibid.).

64 Ibid. Immediately after the attack, a body, mistakenly believed to be that of the envoy, was dragged through the streets of the capital, while the mob shouted: "Make way, citizens, for the Russian ambassador on his way to visit the Shah! Stand up, out of respect; salute him in the Feringhee style, by taking off your caps. He is thirsty for the love you bear his master the Emperor — spit freely in his face!" (ibid., pp. 511-12).

65 On the couriers, see Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, pp. 237, 240.
stabbing before my eyes our courier Hoachatoor. Meanwhile, the people rushed into the second and third courtyards: a fight developed there and shots were exchanged. Having noticed that some of the Persians were moving forward reluctantly, I gave one of my ferashes [a Persian servant] 2,000 rubles and ordered him to distribute them to reliable people whom he knew, and to assemble them at my doors and to tell the crowd that here was the apartment of Nazar Ali Khan's people. I remained in such circumstances more than three hours, expecting any minute to die violently, and saw how the Shah's soldiers and ferashes calmly wandered among the infuriated rabble and plundered my belongings in the rooms below. Several times the people lunged at my doors but, fortunately, were kept back by the individuals whom I had bribed and who defended me with the name of Nazar Ali Khan. 66

When the fury of the mob had subsided, Mal'tsov saw a Persian officer acquaintance of his and summoned him to his hiding-place. The officer, completely dumbfounded at finding Mal'tsov alive, placed a guard at his apartment and promised to return. At nine o'clock in the evening he came back with an armed escort and, after disguising Mal'tsov in a Persian army uniform as a precautionary measure, took him to the palace of Prince Ali Shah. 67

Although having thus survived the massacre, Griboedov's first secretary did not consider himself out of danger. Instead of being allowed to return at once to Russian territory, as Mal'tsov repeatedly requested, he was detained for three weeks in Teheran, as the Shah and his ministers deliberated about what to do with this witness. Mal'tsov


67Ibid., p. 191.
relates that he was informed by a loyal servant that Prince Ali Shah visited Mirza Masih, the mujtahid, on the day after the massacre and that the latter recommended that the Shah accord the Russian survivor all possible honors in Teheran but have him killed on the road to the frontier as a dangerous person.

The Shah sent all of his viziers to me . . . [he continues]. With the eloquence of the East they all described the despair of the Shah and their own grief. "The Shah has paid 8 crores from his treasury for the friendship of Russia," they said, "and look what the mullahs and people of Teheran have done. What a disgrace for the whole of Iran! What will the Emperor say?" They wanted to explore my thoughts, but, knowing that for the slightest word incompatible with their views I would have to take leave of my life, I pretended to be convinced by their speeches. "One has to be a completely irrational person," I said, "to think for even an instant that the Shah would have permitted this horrible deed if he had been informed one hour beforehand about the intention of the mullahs and people. I myself was a witness of the Shah's magnificent good-will toward the envoy and of the unprecedented honors accorded him in Teheran. I myself saw that the Shah adopted every measure possible to quell the revolting mob. He sent Zil-es-Sultan himself, a vizier, soldiers, ferashes, but, unfortunately, they arrived already too late to save the envoy."

By pretending throughout the whole period of his detention that neither Fath Ali Shah nor the Persian government could be blamed for the destruction of the Russian mission, Mal'tsov claims to have duped the central authorities into believing that he would be a powerful advocate of Persia's

68The title of Prince Ali Shah meaning "Shadow of the King" - it was bestowed upon him because of his remarkable resemblance to his father, Fath Ali Shah.

69A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', pp. 194-95.
interests before the Tsar. He also believes that in addition to this subterfuge, he owed his life to the fact that the Shah also acted upon advice solicited from Abbas Mirza, who demanded his immediate release.  

News of the catastrophe reached Abbas Mirza in Tabriz on the night of February 6. He quickly summoned Macdonald, who arrived at the palace to find the Crown Prince closeted with the Qaim Maqam:

Both appeared to be in a state of the utmost consternation. The Prince was in tears and marks of sorrow were strongly depicted on his countenance. He was indeed so greatly agitated that for some minutes after I had entered the apartment, he could only repeat La Ilah Ila allahu, there is no God but one God - am I, alas! doomed never again to know a moment's repose? The waters of the Danube would not wash away our crimes, nor those of the Euphrates efface the follies we commit.

Macdonald was then informed of the contents of three letters received from Teheran, containing notification and explanations of the massacre. In his first report to the British authorities in India, Macdonald's version of the events reflected what he had just learned from his Persian informants:


71 IOL: L/P&S/9/90, Macdonald to Swinton, February 19 (N.S.), 1829.

72 These were from the Shah to Abbas Mirza, from Prince Ali Shah to Abbas Mirza, and from Nazar Ali Khan to the Qaim Maqam.
I as yet possess no further information on the subject of this unparalleled atrocious violation of the Laws of Nations. But faintly and darkly as the case is now before me, I think I can discern that the public mind was greatly excited even before the removal of the women from the house of Allah Yar Khan, by the conduct of Khooja Yacoob, one of the King's Head Eunuchs, who had fled from the Palace, where he was employed in a very confidential situation, and sought an Asylum in the Russian Residency, which conformably to the stipulations of the Treaty of Turcoman Chahee, it became the duty of M. Grebayedof to grant him. I see no just reason to believe, however, that either the Shah, or any member of his Government, were in the smallest degree accessory to this revolting catastrophe, which from all I can learn is solely to be ascribed to a sudden and irresistible ebullition of popular frenzy, caused by the treatment experienced by the women, the haughty demeanour of those attached to the mission, the death of several of the citizens, and in an over zealous invasion of those customs, which more than anything else is calculated to rouse the prejudices, and inflame the wild and ungovernable passions of a Mohammedan mob, prone to fanaticism, adverse to any encroachment on their religious usages, and above all, jealous, even to madness, of the sanctity of the Harem.

The simple circumstance of the Mehmandar of the Envoy, having been severely wounded in defence of His Excellency, and the vigorous efforts made by the Guards set over him by the King, many of whom were killed while endeavouring to resist the intrusion and violence of the multitude, may be urged as some palliation of the deed, and will I should hope, have a tendency to assuage the just indignation and avert the anticipated vengeance of the Emperor.

In the same report, Macdonald went on to say:

I almost lament that I did not accompany M. Grebayedof to Teheran, as I am disposed to think that my presence

73 In point of fact, Nazar Ali Khan was not present at the mission during the attack nor did the Persian guard put up any resistance – see the "Narrative," pp. 508, 510.

74 IOL: L/P&S/9/90, Macdonald to Swinton, February 19 (N.S.), 1829. The above passage was first quoted by Lang in "Griboedov's Last Years in Persia," p. 329.
and mediation might have been attended with good effect in preventing matters from going to extremity but as His Excellency went to Court for the sole purpose of presenting his credentials, and with a fixed resolution of immediately returning to Tabreez, when he had seen the King, I was reluctant to quit Abbas Meerza while on the eve of his departure on a foreign mission.

The British envoy then paid a final tribute to Griboedov:

To the generous, manly, though perhaps somewhat unbending character of the deceased, no one can bear more ample testimony than myself, having long lived with him on terms of personal intimacy, been connected with him in the transaction of business, as well public as private, and in short enjoyed numberless opportunities of duly appreciating the many virtues which adorned his mind, and of perceiving that a high sense of honour formed on all occasions the rule and guide of his actions.

Macdonald also wrote immediately to General Paskevich, apprising him of the fate which had befallen Griboedov and expressing his profound sympathy. As a mark of respect for his slain friend, he directed the British community to observe two months of mourning. Furthermore, the British envoy sent an assistant, Captain R. D. H. Macdonald, to the capital in order to ascertain the exact particulars of the catastrophe and to facilitate the safe return of the

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75 This, as we have seen above, pp.218,228-29 is not quite accurate.


77 See his circular of February 20 (N.S.), 1829 (IOL: L/P&S/9/90).
survivors to Tabriz. This officer was also instructed to deliver to the Persian foreign minister the following protest which Macdonald made against the outrage to a friendly power:

With feelings of the deepest horror and disgust, the Undersigned has received from His Royal Highness Abbas Mirza an official intimation of the atrocious massacre of the Russian Mission at Teheran. The History of Nations affords no example of a similar event. The most barbarous Governments of whom we have any record, acknowledge the necessity of respecting and protecting the persons of those, who are deputed on friendly Missions from Princes or Powers, with whom they are on terms of amity. Even war itself has not been allowed to justify any violation of this indispensable and established principle. But here, in the midst of profound peace, in the capital of the Sovereign, who from his Palace must have heard the cries of the victims, have we seen the whole Mission of a friendly state slaughtered in the presence of all the Authorities, who were bound by the laws of nations and of hospitality to protect them.

All confidence has been destroyed, for it would be vain to pretend that the representative of any nation can now feel himself secure in Persia - either the Government wants the will, or it has not the power, to protect him. But if it has any regard for its own reputation or existence, it must make an effort to preserve its character (if it can be preserved) from the imputations under which it must now lie. It is not enough that it should disavow proceedings, the consequences of which it may dread; it must make atonement deep and ample. The instigators and perpetrators of the murder must be delivered up, be they who or what they may - no rank must protect them - no sanctuary must shelter them - and no subterfuge must be resorted to, to screen them from the punishment they have merited. The slightest hesitation on the part of the Government will be considered as acknowledgement of the acts of him whom it may seek to protect; and if it cannot be proved that it stands fully exonerated from all participation in the crime which has been committed, not Russia only, but the whole civilized world, will be its enemies.

Ibid., Macdonald to the Secret Committee, February 21 (N.S.), 1829.
The Undersigned therefore calls upon the Persian Ministers, and on His Excellency [Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, the foreign minister] in particular, to afford him such evidence and such explanations, as may enable the British Government to decide on the course it may become it to pursue, and to judge whether it will be desirable to continue its present relations with the Court of Teheran. The Undersigned sincerely trusts, and would willingly believe, that satisfactory explanations and unequivocal evidence of its innocence can easily be produced, tho' with pain and sorrow he has observed, that no steps have yet been taken to punish the guilty or even to apprehend them.

Captain Macdonald, who will deliver this note, is dispatched to Teheran to receive such documents and statements as the Persian Government may be prepared to give: and the Undersigned anxiously hopes, that they may be such as will enable him to avoid an interruption of his communication with the Ministers of His Persian Majesty.

Captain Macdonald is also directed to receive charge of the survivors of the Russian Mission, and conduct them to Tabreez. The Undersigned would be unwilling to believe that they are in any danger of being subjected to further insult or violence, but it is his duty to state, that if a single hair of their heads should be injured, he will instantly withdraw from the Persian Territories, with the whole of the British Subjects under his orders.79

It is mortifying to the Undersigned to find himself called upon to address His Excellency in terms so unmeasured; but an act has been perpetrated, which demands that he should leave no doubt as to his feelings regarding it, and the Persian Government stands in a position which it is impossible to touch upon without throwing aside all reserve.

The Undersigned, etc.  
Macdonald, British Envoy

79 As it turned out, Mal'tsov was released before Captain Macdonald arrived in Teheran (ibid., R. D. H. Macdonald to J. Macdonald, March 21 [N.S.], 1829).

80 Ibid., Macdonald to Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, February 21 (N.S.), 1829. The British protest was first quoted in full by Lang in "Griboedov's Last Years in Persia," pp. 330-32.
With the murder of Griboedov and the temporary detention of Mal'tsov in Teheran, Russia's only remaining diplomatic representative in Persia was A. K. Amburger, consul-general at Tabriz. The news of the fate of the Russian mission evidently caused Amburger to lose his nerve, for, instead of staying at his post, he deemed it wise to prepare to quit Persia with all possible speed. Accordingly, he requested Macdonald to place all Russian subjects in Persia under British protection. His note to the British envoy of February 12, 1829, reads in part:

The undersigned has the honor to advise His Excellency the Minister of His Britannic Majesty residing in Persia, that, in view of the horrible catastrophe which has taken place in Teheran - unprecedented in the annals of even the least civilized nations - he takes the liberty, counting on the complaisance of His Excellency which has already so often been exercised in the most ticklish transactions between Russia and Persia, to recommend to him the subjects of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias, who are obliged to stay in this country on account of their affairs. He is at the same time convinced that His Excellency will render them all the aid and assistance which they may require.

At the same time the undersigned has the honor to announce to His Excellency the Minister of England that in the present circumstances when the law of nations is so openly violated, he considers it a necessity to leave the territory of Persia and to retire to the frontiers of Russia, where he will await the orders of His Sovereign on his future movements.

Demonstrating once again his accommodating spirit in Russo-Persian affairs, Macdonald agreed to Amburger's request, 82 whereupon the consul-general promptly departed

81 IOL: L/P&S/9/90; translated from French.
82 "A request with which I could not in humanity and
for the frontier, arriving in Nakhichevan on February 20. with the entire staff of the Russian consulate. 83

Included among Amburger's entourage was the unfortunate widow of Griboedov, Nina Aleksandrovna. Ironically, she was as yet unaware of her husband's murder, every effort having been made by the British and Russian officials in Tabriz to conceal the tragic news from her. Indeed, it required considerable resourcefulness on Macdonald's part to persuade Nina to leave Persia, since she was unwilling to do so without her husband's permission. Only after she had returned safely to her parents in Tiflis was the news broken to her. The trauma of the occasion caused her to give premature birth to a son, named Aleksandr, who lived only an hour, long enough to be baptised. 84 Although only a teenager when

82 (Continued)
considering the alliance between the two states, refuse to comply," Macdonald to Swinton, March 25 (N.S.), 1829 (ibid.).

83 A. Mal'shinskii, "Podlinnoe delo o smerti Griboedova," Russkii vestnik, 1890, no. 7, p. 214. Mal'shinskii falsely maintains that Amburger left his post on the advice of the English minister (ibid.). Paskevich sharply reprimanded Amburger for abruptly leaving Persia: "From your reports of February 21 and 22 [1829] . . . to my extreme astonishment I have seen that you left Tabriz without awaiting permission. . . . Because of your conduct it may happen that the Persian government, in fear and bewilderment, will follow the suggestions of the war party, which, by taking advantage of this, will purposefully exaggerate the dangers and thereby push Persia into the hands of the Turks and into war against us" (AKAK, 7: 676, Paskevich to Amburger, March 6, 1829).

84 For these and other circumstances of Nina's return to Tiflis, see Evelyn Jasulko Harden, "An Unpublished Letter of Nina Aleksandrovna Griboyedova," The Slavonic and
widowed, the beautiful Princess preferred never again to remarry and won universal respect by her fidelity to Griboedov's memory. She died of cholera in 1857, at the age of forty-five. 85

Finally, it remains to consider the difficult question of determining who was responsible for the Teheran catastrophe. Like various other episodes of Griboedov's biography, all the facts surrounding his death have not yet been completely established, owing in part to insufficient evidence and to the conflicting testimony of first-hand witnesses. So many years after the occurrence, it is still not possible to present a conclusive case fixing the blame for the events of January 30, 1829. In all likelihood this will continue to remain a hotly debated and unresolved question in the history of Griboedov's diplomatic career.

Among those who have been held responsible for the tragedy is Aleksandr Sergeevich himself. A number of accusations have been leveled against him. One frequently cited by Persian historians concerns the envoy's supposedly arrogant behavior in dealing with the Shah. Specifically, it is said that Griboedov chose to disregard the ceremonial etiquette of the court by refusing to remove his boots and,

84 (Continued)
East European Review 49 (July 1971): 437-49. Nina's letter, dated April 22 [1829] from Tiflis, was addressed to Mrs. Macdonald, in whose care she remained after Griboedov had gone to Teheran.

85 Ad. P Berzhe "Nina Aleksandrovna Griboedova," Russkaia starina, 1883, no. 6, p. 663.
as noted earlier, by making constant use of the chair in the presence of the Shah. These charges, however, appear to be based on a misapprehension of certain facts. True, it had long been the custom in Persia for European diplomats to replace their footwear with red, woolen stockings before entering the throne room for a royal audience. But, whereas the English continued to observe this point of etiquette, the Russians, even before Griboedov's time, refused on the grounds that it was beneath their dignity. Subsequently, when the Turkmanchay Treaty was drawn up, it provided for a special protocol specifying the exact ceremonial procedure to be observed by both sides during the reception of Russian diplomats at the royal courts of Persia. Under the terms of this protocol, the Russian envoy and his suite were granted the privilege of entering the throne room without having to remove their boots; moreover, the envoy himself could remain seated in the Shah's presence.

One may be certain that Griboedov was firm in adhering to these prescribed rules of diplomatic etiquette, if for no other reason than that he himself participated in drafting the protocol. On the other hand, it is easy

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87 The text of the protocol appears in Motamen-ol-Molk, Receuil des traités de l'Empire Persan avec les pays étrangers (Teheran, 1908), pp. 137-42.

88 Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskai deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 215.
to imagine that the Persians would consider his conduct as lacking respect for the dignity of the Shah, especially since no other foreign representatives enjoyed such exceptional privileges.

Griboedov has also been charged with failing to keep his servants under proper control. The Persian foreign minister, in answering Macdonald's scathing protest note, alleged that "the Armenians who accompanied the Russian Envoy paraded the streets committing every species of excess and abusing in every possible manner the religion of Islam, which excited the people against them and tended to accelerate the scandalous deed." Some incidents of this kind may have occurred in Teheran, but there is reason to believe that they were not as extensive as charged by the Persian foreign minister. The "Narrative" (p. 501) speaks only of "two or three occasions" when quarrels broke out between the townspeople and the envoy's servants as a result of the latter's general demeanor, and in Mal'tsov's reports there is no word at all about such disturbances. Certainly, Griboedov should have kept his menials under tighter rein if they were misbehaving, as is possible,

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Excerpt from a translation of Mirza Abul Hasan Khan's letter, dated 1st of Ramazan a. H. 1224, to Macdonald, enclosed in Macdonald to the Secret Committee, March 25 (N.S.), 1829 (IOL: L/P&S/9/90). The report on the catastrophe by R. D. H. Macdonald, which was based in part on interviews with Persian officials, also speaks of the "irritating conduct of many of [Griboedov's] servants" who walked about the streets intoxicated, insulting the women and quarrelling with the men in the bazaars (ibid., Macdonald to Macdonald, March 21 [N.S.], 1829).
but these circumstances should not be singled out as a principal cause of the riot - as was done by the Persian government. The real occasion of the riot was the fact that he had accorded asylum in the Russian mission to Mirza Ya'qub and to the two girls from the harem of Allahyar Khan. Up to that point, there is no reason to assume that the envoy and his suite would not have been able to return safely to Tabriz.

Did Griboedov, as some critics contend, make a fatal mistake by offering protection to people who belonged to such eminent personages as the Shah and Allahyar Khan? The authoritative Ad. P. Berzhe, a nineteenth century Russian historian, wrote that Griboedov "went too far" in granting asylum to the eunuch and the two females and therein lay his "chief error." Even the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Vice Chancellor Nesselrode, found it convenient (as will be explained in the next chapter) to attribute the disaster to the fanaticism of the Teheran rabble and to the envoy's own rashness - his "precipitant bursts of zeal" - presumably in dealing with the asylum requests. Such accusations as the latter, to say the least, are patently unfair in view of the circumspection with which Griboedov

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90 See below, pp. 272-73.
92 Nesselrode to Paskevich, March 16, 1829 (AKAK, 7: 684).
handled the case of Mirza Ya'qub and that of the two girls. Moreover, if these people sincerely desired to return to their own country, Griboedov had no alternative but to accord them protection. The British envoy recognized this by writing that Griboedov was duty-bound by the stipulations of the Turkmanchay Treaty to grant asylum to Mirza Ya'qub. All sources agree that Mirza Ya'qub wanted to flee from Persia. As far as the girls are concerned, the testimony, as we have seen, conflicts. But knowing what we do of Griboedov's past action in a similar case at Qazvin, it is highly unlikely that he held the women against their will. On this essential point, the evidence of Mal'tsov, who was present at their interrogation by Griboedov, must be accepted over all claims to the contrary.

If, as I have endeavored to show, Griboedov cannot be held responsible for the destruction of the Russian mission, who can? Let us now consider whether the Persian government was implicated in the deed. The government of Fath Ali Shah denied any responsibility for the massacre. Mirza Abdul Wahab, the Shah's principal adviser, wrote to the British minister that "whoever reflects upon the late catastrophe and possesses a moderate share of common sense, will be convinced that the Government had nothing to do with it..." The riot has always been represented in

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93 See above, p. 262.

94 Excerpt from a translation of a letter, undated, from the Moatamad-ud-Dowleh [Mirza Abdul Wahab] to Macdonald,
Persian accounts as an unforeseen and spontaneous outburst of popular feeling provoked by the misdeeds of Griboedov's servants.\textsuperscript{95} The latter, therefore, and, by implication, the envoy himself were the real culprits: "In short, the whole blame of this melancholy occurrence is to be attached to those Armenians about the person of the Envoy, in whom he placed too much confidence. Sensible as was the Envoy, he was influenced and deceived by the Armenians, although he himself often abused them."\textsuperscript{96} Such, in brief, was the official Persian version. However, although positive proof has yet to be found, there is a certain amount of circumstantial evidence which suggests that the riot was organized with at least the tacit approval of Fath Ali Shah.

The Persian authorities, including the Shah, undoubtedly were aware that trouble had been brewing for several days before the actual onslaught on the Russian mission. According to Mal'tsov, Mirza Mahtee, the Shah's personal secretary, assured him that three days before the event he informed Griboedov that the mullahs were stirring

\textsuperscript{94}(Continued) enclosed in Macdonald to Swinton, March 25 (N.S.), 1829 (IOL: L/P&S/9/90).

\textsuperscript{95}See, for example, the letters from Prince Ali Shah and Fath Ali Shah to Abbas Mirza, informing the latter of the catastrophe; translations of these letters appear in Shcherbatov, 3: appendix IV, 67-73.

\textsuperscript{96}Excerpt from a translation of a letter, undated, from Mirza Abul Hasan Khan to Macdonald, enclosed in Macdonald to Swinton, March 25 (N.S.), 1829 (IOL: L/P&S/9/90).
up the people against the Russians and that the envoy would find himself in extreme peril if he did not immediately surrender Mirza Ya'qub. Furthermore, the "Narrative" (p. 508) states that on the night before the riot the Shah ordered Manuchehr Khan to warn Griboedov of the troubled state of public feeling and to persuade the envoy to withdraw his protection from those sheltered under his roof. And it will be recalled that Griboedov himself, in his note of January 29 to Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, informed the Persian government that Russian subjects no longer enjoyed personal security in the capital.

Why, in view of these circumstances, did the local authorities take no measures to strengthen the Persian guard at the envoy's residence? Why was no effective aid sent to the Russian mission either at the immediate outset of the attack or at anytime afterwards? The noise of hundreds of enraged rioters must have been heard in the royal palace, since Teheran at this time was a small town, with a population under 100,000, and distances were not great. The answer to these questions could easily be that the Shah

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97. A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', p. 102. The author of the "Narrative" says (p. 507) that "Meerza Mah-tee . . . frequently visited the envoy on the part of Alli Yar Khan, to request that the women might be restored."

98. According to information in "Svedeniia . . . Suleiman-kanom Melikovym," Manuchehr Khan on his own accord sent word to Griboedov, warning of a plot to incite the people against the Russian mission. However, Griboedov did not heed this warning, refusing to believe that anyone would dare strike a blow against the mission (Petrov, pp. 158-59).
wanted to use the cover of a popular riot in order to re-
gain possession of Mirza Ya'qub.

Here is the viewpoint expressed by Mal'tsov, who gives
a plausible explanation of Fath Ali Shah's motives in per-
mitting the assault on the Russian mission:

In my opinion, this is how the whole thing hap-
pened. The Shah had tried every means of keeping
Mirza Ya'qub - persuasion and entreaty at first, then
baseless financial claims, finally anger and threats.
None of them was effective. The Shah had to destroy
this man who knew all the secret history of his
domestic life, all the gossip of his harem. So long
as the Minister was alive, no one could do this. The
Shah did not dare to send soldiers to remove Mirza
Ya'qub by force and kill him, as this would have been
on his part a flagrant violation of the peace treaty,
for which he had paid 8 crores. He was told, "the
people will break into the Minister's house and kill
Mirz Ya'qub, while we shall feign panic, order the
palace gates to be locked, send Zil-es-Sultan and a
vizier to restrain the people and send soldiers with-
out ammunition and with an order to hurt nobody; and
we shall say that we knew nothing about it, that it
was all done by the accursed people, that we imme-
diately sent reinforcements but that, unfortunately,
the crime had already been committed" - in a word,
precisely what the Shah is saying and writing in his
justification.99

Mal'tsov, incidentally, did not believe that Fath Ali
Shah wanted to see the Russian envoy killed: "His Majesty
was probably told that the people would only take the cap-
tives, kill Mirza Ya'qub but not touch the Russians, and
then it would be easy for him to apologize for all that
happened."100 But perhaps this reasoning is too charitable.

D. P. Costello, in his study of the murder of Griboedov,

100Efremov, "O smerti A. S. Griboedova v Tegerane,"
columns 1534-35.
cites an earlier episode recorded in a dispatch from the British chargé d'affaires, Henry Willock, to the foreign secretary, dated April 1 (N.S.), 1822, to show that Fath Ali Shah had no understanding of the inviolability of diplomatic premises or of persons accredited to his court. Willock reported that on the instructions of the Persian monarch, he was informed that if he did not pay the Shah a promisory note for two thousand tomans, drawn by one of the royal princes upon Willock, then he, Willock, would be beheaded. The British chargé immediately protested against this death threat and received a note from Mirza Abdul Wahab, stating "that the King was ignorant of the feelings of Europeans, and of the nature of their Government, that he was absolute here, and thought he had the power of decapitating anyone who might incur his displeasure." Although the Persian government disavowed the threat, Willock responded by withdrawing from Persia shortly thereafter.101

Something should now be said of the case which Costello has made in support of the theory that Griboedov was the victim of a plot concocted by members of the Shah's immediate entourage. It is based in large measure on the fact that Abbas Mirza's right to the throne was not recognized by all his brothers. Costello quotes a modern Persian historian, Bager Qaem-Maqami, who writes:

The brothers and other opponents of Prince Abbas had no desire to see relations between Russia and Persia improved, for the reason that the Qaem Maqam had received from Russia in the Turkmanchai Treaty an understanding that she would officially recognize the Qajar dynasty only in the family of Prince Abbas. Prince Abbas's brothers wanted to see war break out again between Persia and Russia so that the Treaty of Turkmanchai should lapse.102

Chief among those who wanted war with Russia, according to Costello, was Prince Ali Shah, the governor of Teheran. The British scholar considers it significant that Prince Ali Shah refused to receive Griboedov, when the latter desired to pay a ceremonial visit on him after arriving in Teheran;103 moreover, when Mal'tsov was found alive after the massacre of the Russian mission, Ali Shah turned for advice to the mujtahid, Mirza Masih, who was known to all Teheran as the principal public organizer of the massacre.104 Costello maintains that

Ali Shah had nothing to gain from good relations between Russia and Persia. If war did come, the first brunt of it would fall precisely on Azerbaijan and the army of the Prince Royal, Abbas, and to that extent it would, from Ali Shah's point of view, be a good thing. This same consideration would help to account for the utter despair of Abbas when the news of the Teheran catastrophe reached Tabriz.105

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102 Ibid., p. 87.

103 Costello refers to the "Narrative" (p. 501) as his source for this information.


105 Ibid.
To the foregoing one can add that the ambition of Prince Ali Shah to usurp the throne manifested itself in 1834, when, upon the demise of Fath Ali Shah, he immediately proclaimed himself king in defiance of the then designated heir, Muhammad Mirza, son of the deceased Crown Prince, Abbas. Ironically, English troops, not Russian, assisted Muhammad Mirza in suppressing the rebellion of Prince Ali.  

Yet another Persian notable responsible for the riot against the Russian mission may well have been Allahyar Khan. Having been one of the leaders of the anti-Russian coalition within the Persian government during the last war, he could only have become even more embittered toward the Russians after Turkmanchay, since, as a consequence of Persia's military defeat, he lost his post as grand vizier.  

It will be recalled that Griboedov considered Allahyar Khan to be his personal enemy: "He will kill me. He will not forgive me for the peace concluded with the Persians." Moreover, Allahyar Khan's animus toward Griboedov would not have been diminished by the loss of the two girls from his harem -

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106 See Watson, pp. 279-82.

107 At the beginning of 1828 the office of grand vizier, or prime minister, was bestowed upon Abdullah Khan, the Amin-ud-Dowleh (Hasan Ibn Fasai, History of Persia under Qajar Rule, trans. Heribert Busse [New York, 1972], p. 186).

108 See his remarks to Begichev, quoted above, p. 196.
a circumstance which he could easily have exploited to incite the people against the envoy. The rumor that the former grand vizier in fact helped to plan the riot of January 30, 1829 was already reported, among others, by Macdonald: "Allah Yar Khan, the late Prime Minister, and Meerza Messee, the Mushtehed, or High Priest of Teheran . . . are accused of being the chief and secret instigators of these disturbances." Most scholars, Costello included, point an accusing finger at Allahyar Khan.

On the basis of the evidence presented by Costello, the main points of which have been outlined above, the indictment against the Persian government would come down to this: "It was the conjunction of the Shah's personal resentment at the defection of Mirza Ya'qub with the political plans of such powerful personages as Ali Shah and Allah Yar Khan that was the real cause of the massacre of the Russian Legation." Although supported only by circumstantial

109 IOL: L/P&S/9/90, Macdonald to Lord W. C. Bentinck, governor-general of India, February 24 (N.S.), 1829.

110 See, for example, the following: Costello, "The Murder of Griboedov," p. 87; Berzhe, "Smert' A. S. Griboedova," p. 181; Mal'shinskii, "Podlinnoe delo o smerti Griboedova," Russkii vestnik, 1890, no. 6, p. 163; Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 229; Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, pp. 173-74. For a viewpoint which attempts to exonerate Allahyar Khan, see Enikolopov, Griboedov v Gruzii i Persii, pp. 167-82.

111 "The Murder of Griboedov," pp. 87-88. In this connection the "Svendenia . . . Suleiman-khanom Melikovym" maintains that "high officials" in the Persian government aroused Fath Ali Shah against Griboedov: "Every day they
evidence, this conspiracy theory, in my view, is tenable.

Similar charges against the Shah and other Persian officials may be found in the works of past and present Russian and Soviet historians. However, the majority of these writers go one step farther and contend that the murder of Griboedov and his staff was organized by the British. Typical of such allegations are these: "The English residents [sic] organized and subsidized the anti-Russian policy at the Persian court with the object of eliminating the Russian embassy";\(^\text{112}\) "the chief instigators and organizers of the destruction of the Russian mission were agents of England who were openly on the payroll of the British mission."\(^\text{113}\) As two contemporary Soviet historians - S. V. Shostakovich and O. I. Popova - put it, the representatives (Continued)

\(^{111}\)(Continued)
told the Shah that the Russian envoy not only in matters concerning Russian subjects and Russia in general [is] implacable, severe, exacting and insolent, but also in relation to His Imperial Majesty he does not let an opportunity pass to insult and disrespect the august person of His Highness. They gradually set even the Shah against Griboedov. Convinced of the necessity to get rid of such an unbearable envoy, the Shah gave his consent to find the means to restrain this indomitable individual" (Petrov, p. 157). The same source says that after Mirza Ya'qub and "a captive Georgian woman" from the harem of Allahyar Khan were given asylum in the Russian mission, it was Allahyar Khan himself who persuaded the Teheran mujtahid to incite the people to attack the envoy and the mission and that the Shah, when informed of the plan by Allahyar Khan, agreed to it in order to teach the envoy a lesson (ibid., p. 158).

\(^{112}\)Pashuto, p. 159.

\(^{113}\)Balaian, p. 244.
of British diplomacy both in England and in Persia became alarmed at the rapid growth of Russian influence in Persia after the peace of Turkmanchai and therefore plotted to remove the individual chiefly responsible for that achievement - A. S. Griboedov.\textsuperscript{114}

In support of this thesis, Shostakovich and Popova make a good deal of the Russophobia of Lord Ellenborough,\textsuperscript{115} who served in the Wellington cabinet as president of the Board of Control from September 1828 to 1830.\textsuperscript{116} (Since the function of the Board of Control was to superintend all political and military affairs of the East India Company, Ellenborough in effect was able to exercise control over diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Persia.)\textsuperscript{117} Both Soviet historians insinuate that the upheaval in which Griboedov lost his life was organized on Ellenborough's

\textsuperscript{114}Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, pp. 208, 226-27; Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{115}Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, pp. 227-28; Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, pp. 186-87.


\textsuperscript{117}On the relationship between the Board of Control and the East India Company, see A. H. Imlah, Lord Ellenborough: A Biography of Edmund Law, Earl of Ellenborough, Governor-General of India (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), pp. 34-36.
instructions. As proof of this charge Shostakovich quotes from an entry of October 10 (N.S.), 1828 in Ellenborough's diary: "I would, in Persia and everywhere, endeavour to create the means of throwing the whole world in arms upon Russia at the first convenient time." This, of course, looks ominous, but the same entry in Ellenborough's diary contains another passage which Shostakovich deliberately omits: "The Duke [of Wellington] . . . is for the more pacific line, and would have the Persians give their great neighbour no justifiable ground for interference with them."\textsuperscript{118} Thus, it is possible that British policy toward Russia in Persia took an entirely different line than the one desired by the president of the Board of Control.

Wellington had expressed his views upon the policy which Britain should pursue in Persia in a letter to Ellenborough of October 9 (N.S.), 1828. In it he said, inter alia:

\begin{quote}
It is quite obvious that the King of Persia is not equal to a contest with the power of Russia, even upon its Georgian frontier, and when Russia is occupied elsewhere in Europe. . . . That which we ought to inculcate [at the Persian court], then, is peace and good neighbourhood. A strict and good-humoured performance of treaties; and the manifestation of a strong desire to continue on good terms, would have a good effect; and such measures are not at all inconsistent with an entire independence of, and even freedom from, Russian control, and even council. . . .
\end{quote}


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There is no denying that Ellenborough and the Duke entertained opposing policies with respect to Persia. Mr. C. H. Philips writes that Ellenborough "hoped to counteract Russian influence in Persia by rousing trouble in that country against her, but Wellington was not disposed thus to alienate Russia." Which of these viewpoints prevailed? In early November 1828 the Board of Control directed the governor-general of India to instruct Macdonald, the British envoy in Persia, "to inculcate on the Court of Teheran a spirit of Peace and good neighbourhood, to recommend a strict and chearful [sic] performance of Treaties, and the manifestation of a strong desire to remain on good terms both with Russia and the Ottoman Porte." The phraseology is nearly identical to that in Wellington's letter to Ellenborough quoted above. In broad terms, this was a continuation of the very same policy which the British government had been following in Persia for more than a decade, a policy which Castlereagh had described to the Persian ambassador in 1819 as follows: "The great object of England was to conciliate Persia and Russia, and to make them live upon the most friendly terms."
To prove conclusively that Ellenborough had nothing to do with the riot in Teheran, here is the entry in his diary for April 14 (N.S.), 1829, in which he records his regret upon learning of the tragedy:

By the newspapers I see that there has been a quarrel at Teheran, between some of the Russian Ambassador's suite and the populace, which led to an attack upon the Russian palace, and to the death of the Ambassador and all his people except two. This is an unfortunate event, as it will give the Russians a new claim to indemnity, which they will exercise inexorably. Probably they will insist on the junction of Persia in the attack on Turkey, as the only satisfaction they can accept. It is just possible that the example once given, and the people despairing of pardon, a rising against the Russians may take place, and something of a national feeling arise in Persia. But I fear this will not be the case. I suppose our Minister was at Tabriz.123

Not surprisingly, this passage is entirely ignored by Shostakovich, whereas the more resourceful Popova attempts to distort its real significance by emphasizing only that portion of it referring to Russia's probable demands for redress.124

It is not my intention here to refute, point by point, the "evidence" which Shostakovich and others have assembled to support their allegations against the British. This in fact has already been admirably done by Costello in a series of articles easily accessible to the interested reader.125

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123 A Political Diary, 2: 15.
124 See Griboedov-diplomat, p. 214.
Like Mr. Costello, I can conclude by saying, on the basis of my examination of all available materials, including the documents in the British archives, that there is not a shred of evidence to indicate that English agents had anything to do with the massacre of the Russian mission.
CHAPTER VIII

WAR OR PEACE: THE SETTLEMENT OF THE
TEHERAN TRAGEDY, 1829

The news of the destruction of the Russian mission reached official circles in St. Petersburg on March 14, 1829 - one year to the day since Griboedov's arrival in the capital with the Treaty of Turkmanchaj.\(^1\) At any other time such an outrage would have necessitated and received swift and drastic punishment. The Russians would probably have chastised Persia by marching on Tabriz, and, failing complete satisfaction, on Teheran itself. However, because of the exigencies of the military and political situation in which Russia was then placed, the tsarist government opted instead for a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

The reaction of St. Petersburg to the Teheran tragedy was in large measure dictated by the complexities of the Russo-Turkish war then in progress. Contrary to the expectations of Nicholas I and his generals, the imperial armies had failed to achieve a decisive victory over Turkey

\(^{1}\)A. S. Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov, p. 42.
in the first year of the conflict. With great difficulty Russian forces in the Balkan theater had managed to overrun the principality of Wallachia and to penetrate as far as the town of Varna on the coast of the Black Sea, while in Asiatic Turkey, the troops under Paskevich occupied the pashaliks of Kars, Bayazid and Akhaltsikh. These were only partial successes, not the total victory which had been contemplated in 1828. It therefore became necessary to wage another campaign the following year, the major objective of which would be to push across the strategically important Balkan mountains and threaten Constantinople. Throughout the winter of 1828-1829, the Emperor's war council was engaged in planning the military operations to accomplish that goal. Every effort was to be made in the forthcoming campaign to bring the war to an end, because it was feared that a longer, drawn-out struggle would exhaust the empire's resources and place Russia in a precarious position vis-à-vis the other powers of Europe.

Already at the beginning of 1829, the international situation for Russia was no longer as favorable as at the start of the war. The specter of a powerful anti-Russian coalition loomed up to haunt the tsarist diplomats. In October 1828 Nesselrode reported to the Emperor: "In February of this

\[\text{See Schiemann, 2: 240-83; Fadeev, Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kh godov XIX veka, p. 285.}\]

\[\text{Schiemann, 2: 288-94.}\]
year I could guarantee to the Sovereign that he would have to do battle only with Turkey alone, whereas with respect to the campaign in 1829 I can only hope that this will be the case. Previously the attention of Russia was directed chiefly at Austria and her forces, but our attention now is being attracted both by those forces and by the outbursts of national enmity in England." What disconcerted St. Petersburg about England was the hysterical anti-Russian campaign in the British press which flared up in the latter half of 1828. Hence, on the eve of the all-important offensive against the Ottomans in the Balkans, Russia's leaders were especially unwilling to risk further complications in relations with Great Britain by adopting excessive measures of retaliation against the latter's Persian ally.

The dispatches which the Russian Foreign Ministry received from Paskevich could not but reinforce this determination to avoid renewed warfare with Persia. On March 30, 1829 the commander-in-chief of the Caucasus forwarded a lengthy report to Nesselrode, in which he analyzed the factors militating against such a conflict:

4Quoted in Fadeev, Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kh godov XIX veka, p. 287.


6See Shostakovich, Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 264.
I know [wrote Paskevich] that the dignity of Russia demands retribution for the murder of our envoy and that the manifest violation of the laws of nations cannot be left without satisfaction; however, because I am thoroughly acquainted with our situation and the conditions of this region, I consider it my duty to explain the following.

If the conduct of the Shah is to be judged unpardonable by any justifications, and if he is to be so represented before all of Europe, it will be necessary to punish the Persian ruler personally for the unprecedented outrage perpetrated against our envoy, and, to do this, we shall have to declare implacable war against him. However, there is no possibility of undertaking it with any hope of success during the present war with the Turks. In order to inflict a decisive blow against the Shah of Persia, we must invade his possessions and not only occupy Azerbaijan but also cross the Kaflan-Koo, but what means do we have for this?

The troops at my disposal in this quarter are insufficient even to conduct a defensive war with both powers and the reinforcements I have requested cannot arrive before the end of September. Having started an offensive war against Persia, it would be necessary to bring along huge supplies of provisions, artillery shells, etc. into the very heart of Persia. However, this region has been on a war footing since 1826 and, therefore, all the means of supplying the troops, especially with transport, have been so thoroughly exhausted that even during the present war against the Turks I can with the greatest efforts barely move all the loads needed for offensive operations...

So, in examining our situation from this viewpoint, the question arises: is it not possible to accept the apologies which the Shah of Persia intends to make concerning the murder of our envoy? In brief, the present conditions relating to matters with Persia necessitate the most careful consideration; and the security of our Transcaucasian possessions depends on the solution to the question: war or peace with that power?

I also cannot neglect to mention that it would be impossible to guarantee in a war with Persia that there would be no repetition of those uprisings and disorders which occurred in 1826 in almost all of our provinces. Nowadays, as soon as the first news arrives that the Persians are taking up arms, the mountaineers would resort to rebellion. This time of course the Persians

7That is, cross the mountains separating Tabriz from Teheran.
would spare neither efforts nor money to arouse the rebels; and if insurrection does occur and spreads to Daghestan, then, having two adversaries on our frontiers and enemies everywhere in the interior, it will be difficult for us to hold out on the southern side of the Caucasus. . . . To sum up, it is impossible in this region to wage war with Turkey and Persia at the same time.8

Paskevich need not have worried about a bellicose reaction from St. Petersburg. Already in response to his earlier, initial report informing Nesselrode of the Teheran tragedy,9 the latter stated that Nicholas I would be satisfied to receive an assurance from Persia that neither the Shah nor the Crown Prince had been in any way involved in the lamentable occurrence at Teheran.10 Subsequently the Emperor decided that Persia should atone for the crime by having Abbas Mirza send one of his sons or brothers to St. Petersburg with a letter of apology from the Shah and by punishing the perpetrators of the massacre.11 Such were the terms of satisfaction demanded by the Russian government for the murder of Griboedov. As the British ambassador to St. Petersburg, Lord Heytesbury, later exclaimed: "More moderate conditions

8AKAK, 7:690

9See Paskevich to Nesselrode, February 23, 1829 (ibid., pp. 673-74).

10Nesselrode to Paskevich, March 16, 1829 (ibid., p. 684).

11See Nicholas I to Abbas Mirza, April 3, 1829 (ibid., p. 692).
for pardon and oblivion of so atrocious a proceeding, could hardly have been imagined. 12

In view of the foregoing, it is not surprising to find that St. Petersburg endorsed what amounted to the official Persian version of the Teheran disaster. In replying to the first reports of the catastrophe, Nesselrode wrote to Paskevich that

the occurrence must be attributed [on the one hand] to the precipitant bursts of zeal of the late Griboedov, who failed to weigh the consequences of his conduct with the crude customs and notions of the Teheran rabble and, on the other hand, to the well-known fanaticism and unruliness of the same multitude, who by themselves compelled the Shah to start a war with us in 1826.

The resistance offered to the rioters by the Persian guard which was with [our] minister Griboedov; the large number of people from this guard and from the troops dispatched by the court who perished during the people's uprising; the letter of the Teheran governor to Abbas Mirza; and, finally, the conduct of the latter who imposed a period of general mourning at his court on account of the unfortunate event, serve, it seems, as sufficient proof that the Persian court did not harbor any hostile designs against us.

The views of the vice chancellor became the official position of the tsarist government on the matter, and, notably enough, this public stance was adhered to even after St. Petersburg later received Mal'tsov's reports and other information accusing Fath Ali Shah and the Persian court of complicity in the destruction of the Russian mission. 13

12 PRO: F. O. 65/180, Heytesbury to the Earl of Aberdeen, British foreign secretary, August 13 (N.S.), 1829.

13 Nesselrode to Paskevich, March 16, 1829 (AKAK, 7: 684).

14 Pashuto, p. 155.
It is difficult to quarrel with the assessment of S. V. Shostakovich, the Soviet historian, who maintains that the Russian authorities found it expedient to accept the explanations of the Shah to the effect that Griboedov was murdered as a result of a spontaneous outburst of popular frenzy provoked by the envoy's own people. In such a case, Russia would not feel constrained to break diplomatic relations with Persia; nor would there be any compelling reason to wage war against her. The crisis could be liquidated merely by having one of the Qajar princes come to St. Petersburg and apologize for the crime. This way the tsarist government would save face and simultaneously preserve peace with Persia. Shostakovich concludes: "All the decisions adopted by the Russian government in connection with the destruction of the Russian mission in Teheran were dictated above all else by the complicated state of international politics. The Tsar's sympathy or ill-will toward Griboedov played absolutely no role in this matter."

To help arrange the peaceful settlement with Persia, Nicholas I dispatched a special emissary, Prince N. A. Dolgorukii, to the court of Abbas Mirza. Dolgorukii

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15 See Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' A. S. Griboedova, p. 263.
16 Ibid., p. 266.
17 See Nicholas I to Abbas Mirza, April 3, 1829 (AKAK, 7: 692); Dolgorukii was expected to function as an ad hoc
arrived in Tiflis toward the end of April 1829 but was prevented by Paskevich from proceeding immediately to his destination. The commander-in-chief had just undertaken an important diplomatic initiative vis-à-vis the Crown Prince and was afraid that the conciliatory mission of Dolgorukii would undermine his objectives. To explain why he detained the Tsar's emissary in Tiflis, Paskevich wrote to Nesselrode: "You know, Count, the character of the Persians: negotiations with them do not lead to anything; one must demonstrate complete readiness to employ force and thus compel them to fulfill our demands." Indeed, Paskevich was now threatening to do just that.

This episode can only be understood in light of the fickle and tortuous character of Persian policy in the aftermath of the Teheran massacre. The Shah and his ministers were utterly bewildered as to the proper course of action to be followed with respect to their northern neighbor. They were in no hurry to send a prince of the Qajar dynasty on a mission of apology to St. Petersburg; they believed Russia was deceiving them and simply marking time in order to start a new war with Persia once hostilities with the

17(Continued)
replacement for Griboedov until such time when circumstances would permit the appointment of a permanent minister plenipotentiary - see Nesselrode to Paskevich, April 4, 1829 (ibid., p. 693).


19Quoted in ibid., p. 167.
Turks were concluded.\textsuperscript{20} The Qaim Maqam told the British envoy that he had been instructed to appease Russia with his right hand and rouse the Turks with his left. He also informed Macdonald that in a moment of panic after Griboedov's death, the Shah had opened negotiations with the Porte to aid that power in the war against Russia and had formed an offensive coalition with the states of Khiva, Bokhara and Afghanistan against Russia.\textsuperscript{21} Although nothing ever materialized from these projects, rumors concerning Persia's war preparations grew to alarming proportions and attracted the notice of Russian authorities.\textsuperscript{22} It was against this background of disturbing intelligence that Paskevich decided to act.

On April 14 he sent an aide-de-camp, Prince Kudashev, to the court of Tabriz with several secret letters addressed to Abbas Mirza. The first letter demanded that the Crown Prince immediately dispatch one of his sons to the Russian capital on a mission of atonement. In no uncertain terms, Paskevich warned:

\textsuperscript{20}See Mal'tsov's dispatch to Paskevich of June 4, 1829, from Tabriz in Kavkazskii sbornik 30 (1910): 183, 185. Incidentally, despite Mal'tsov's fears and unwillingness to serve any more in Persia, he had to return to Tabriz on the orders of Paskevich - see A. S. Griboedov: ego zhizn' i gibel', pp. 197-98; Berzhe, "Smert' A. S. Griboedova," p. 207.

\textsuperscript{21}IOL: L/P&S/9/90, Entry in Macdonald's journal for June 19 (N.S.), 1829.

\textsuperscript{22}Shcherbatov, 3: 161.
Don't abuse the patience of the Russian Emperor. One word from my Sovereign and I shall be in Azerbaijan beyond the Kaflan-Koo, and it may come to pass that within a year the Qajar dynasty will be destroyed. Don't rely on the promises of the English or the assurances of the Turks. . . . With Turkey Russia cannot do everything which it wants, because that power is needed to maintain the balance of the European political system. Persia is needed only for the interests of the East Indian commercial company, and Europe does not care who governs this country. Your entire political existence rests in our hands, all of your hopes are [directed] toward Russia: she alone can overthrow you, she alone can support you.  

In the second letter, Paskevich urged Abbas Mirza to prove his allegiance to Russia by declaring war against the Porte. If the Crown Prince would undertake to occupy the pashalik of Van, the general promised to assist him with troops and materiel. Moreover, Paskevich indicated he would exert his influence at St. Petersburg to see to it that the murder of Griboedov was forgiven.

Paskevich's demarche caused consternation in St. Petersburg. When copies of his letters reached the Foreign Ministry, Nesselrode immediately instructed the Russian ambassador in London to inform the British government that the Emperor

23 Quoted in Popova, Griboedov-diplomat, p. 203.

disapproved of the contents of Paskevich's communications to the Persian Crown Prince. The vice chancellor even went so far as to order Dolgorukii to attempt to abstract the offending letters from Abbas Mirza. And to Paskevich himself, Nesselrode wrote:

I deeply regret, my dear Count, that I cannot agree with the measures you have adopted toward Persia. I confess that I fear they may produce a result exactly contrary to your expectations. It was important for you to gain time, to calm and reassure the Persian government, to pretend that it was entirely uninvolved in the assassination of Griboedov and that we would be satisfied with the dispatch of one of Abbas Mirza's sons. This was the course of action outlined in your preceding reports as the most convenient and appropriate for your general situation. I fail to see what has prompted you . . . to depart from it. Your letters to Abbas Mirza are urgent and even somewhat peremptory. Could they not push him into a wrong direction and provoke against us hostile designs which so far have not been explicitly observed and which it is in our great interest to avoid. That is what we fear. . . .

Nesselrode went on to say that he was counting upon Dolgorukii, "a person with intelligence and tact," to do everything in his power to forestall any complications in Persia. Moreover, he implored Paskevich to handle the English gingerly and not to believe all the rumors which were being circulated by "the Armenians and other Asiatic intriguers"

25 See V. K. P. [Vladimir Karlovich Peterson], "Feldmarshal Paskevich i diplomatiia v 1827-1829 godakh," Istoricheskii vestnik, 1892, no. 5, p. 509.

26 Ibid., pp. 509-10.

27 Nesselrode to Paskevich, May 11, 1829 — the full text of this letter is in Mal'shinskii, "Stranichka iz istorii nashikh snoshenii s Persiei v 1829 g.,” p. 222.
desiring to sow discord between Russia and Great Britain: "Our primary interest is to end the second campaign against the Turks without subjecting ourselves to complications with other states."\^{28}

It was as much in the interests of Great Britain as in those of the tsarist government to prevent "complications" from arising out of the massacre of the Russian mission. Macdonald recognized that another war with Russia would have plunged Persia into inevitable ruin; consequently, he did his utmost to overcome the folly of the war party at the Persian court and to expedite a peaceful settlement of the dispute. On May 4 (N.S.), 1829 he wrote in a letter to Lord Heytesbury:

> The Priests and several other leading men of the Court, would seem anxious for a rupture, but the King is himself inclined to offer every atonement in his power for the murder of Monsieur Grebayedof save the disbursement of his money. . . . Sensible of the weakness of Persia and of the feeling of disaffection towards the Kujer family throughout the Kingdom, I have hitherto exerted the whole of my influence to prevent such a catastrophe, and I have reason to believe that I shall succeed in inducing His Majesty to depute one of his Ministers on an Embassy to St. Petersburg in order to offer the necessary apologies and explanations for the massacre of His Imperial Majesty's Representative.\^{29}

Besides endeavoring to bring the court of Teheran to its senses, the British envoy also managed to prevail upon Abbas Mirza to abstain from pursuing either of the two extreme

\^{28}Ibid.

\^{29}PRO: F. O. 65/180.
alternatives which presented themselves at this critical juncture. Not only did the Crown Prince resist the pressures from those now agitating for war with Russia, he also spurned the inducements of Paskevich and maintained strict neutrality in the Russo-Turkish war. It is clear that Macdonald's advice played a substantial role here, for in the wake of the final reconciliation between Persia and Russia (described below), Abbas Mirza expressed his gratitude to Macdonald in these terms:

We appreciate more especially the value of the services you have rendered to Persia in the line of action pointed out to us to follow after the melancholy death of M. Grebayedoff, which, not only averted a rupture with Russia, but has placed us on a more amicable footing with that power than we ever were at any former period.30

In response to Abbas Mirza's communication of thanks, the British envoy wrote with a sense of satisfaction to his superiors in India:

I cannot feel otherwise than truly gratified with the terms in which H. R. Highness is pleased to notice the suggestions I made bold to offer him at a moment when, overwhelmed by conflicting opinions, he seemed at a loss how to act, and still more pleased to find, that my advice has proved, in some measure, conducive to the affairs of Persia. To have plunged into a war with Russia in the vain hope of regaining, by the assistance of Turkey, the lost provinces beyond the Araxes, would, in all likelihood, have led to the ruin of the reigning family, while to have accepted, on the other hand, the promises of Russia to coalesce with her against the Porte must, to the reproach of

30Abbas Mirza to Macdonald, December 1 (N.S.), 1829 (IOL: L/P&S/9/90).
breaking her engagements, have now left this country involved in a war with the Sultan.

Persia has averted both these extremes, and . . . is now on friendly terms with all her neighbours. . . .

Thus it was that after several months of wavering and irresolution, Abbas Mirza decided at last to send his seventh son, Khosrou Mirza, on the mission of atonement to St. Petersburg. The prince selected for this delicate assignment was a mere boy - just sixteen years old. Nonetheless, events were soon to show that he was well chosen. On May 2, 1829 he crossed the Russian frontier with a numerous suite of officials and servants - some 140 people in all - and, after visiting Paskevich at Tiflis, headed north for the Russian capital. He arrived on the Neva the first week of August, having stopped in Moscow on the way to express his condolences to Griboedov's bereaved mother for the loss of her only son.32

On August 10, 1829, at a solemn gathering in the Winter Palace in the presence of the Emperor, the imperial family, high-ranking members of the military and governmental establishment, as well as the diplomatic corps, Khosrou Mirza formally apologized for the outrage committed against Russia at Teheran.33 After making a brief speech, the

31 Macdonald to Swinton, December 3 (N.S.), 1829 (ibid.).
34 For the text of this speech, see AKAK, 7: 705-06.
young Prince handed the Emperor a letter from the Shah, which ran in part: "Although the cause of the terrible occurrence was a quarrel between the envoy's people and the mob which erupted so suddenly that it was impossible to render any assistance, our government is covered before yours with the dust of shame and only a stream of apology can cleanse its face." Vice Chancellor Nesselrode answered on behalf of the Emperor and, although it was the practice at such public audiences for the Tsar to refrain from making any direct utterance to visiting emissaries, Nicholas I took Khosrou Mirza by the arm and declared: "I consign the ill-fated Teheran occurrence to eternal oblivion."

The mission of Khosrou Mirza turned out to be a resounding success. His handsome features and refined manners created a most favorable impression in the Russian capital and he became a stellar attraction in the salons of high society. More importantly, by the time of his departure

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35 The full text of the Shah's letter of apology appears in AKAK, 7: 706.


37 AKAK, 7: 704, Nesselrode to Paskevich, August 12, 1829.

38 On this, see the diary of Count P. P. Sukhtelen, the Russian officer who served as Khosrou Mirza's official escort - "Dnevnik grafa P. P. Sukhtelena o prebyvanii Persidskogo posol'stva v Peterburge v 1829 godu," Russkii arkhiv, 1889, no. 2, pp. 240-60.
for Persia in mid-October, not only had the murder of Griboedov been completely forgiven by the Tsar, but his Majesty also relinquished one of the two crores of tomans still due by Persia to Russia under the terms of the Turkmanchaj Treaty and postponed the payment of the other crore for five years. So great was the desire of St. Petersburg to be on friendly terms with the government of Persia.

All that remained to complete the reconciliation between Russia and Persia was for the Shah to punish those responsible for the Teheran catastrophe. The Persian mill of justice ground slowly, however. As late as August 1829 Macdonald was reporting that no steps have yet been taken by the Shah to punish any of those concerned in the massacre of M. Grebayedof and his suite, nor until this is done can we venture to look upon the question at issue with Russia as finally settled. His Majesty in so far as he himself is concerned manifests every inclination to comply with the just demands of the Emperor, but the Prime Minister, the Priesthood, and the Kujer Nobles are opposed to the act and continue to exercise the whole of their power and influence in order to prevent or retard it.

39 See Nesselrode to Dolgorukii, September 13, 1829 (AKAK,7: 707). By 1853 the balance of the Turkmanchaj indemnity still remained unpaid, for in that year the Russian government offered to release Persia from its remaining pecuniary obligations if the Shah would invade Turkey during Russia's impending conflict with that power; Persia, however, stayed neutral in the Crimean war - see Watson, pp. 413-14.

40 IOL: L/P&S/9/90, Macdonald to Swinton, August 15 (N.S.), 1829.
However, not long after penning those words, Macdonald received notification from Teheran that the Shah had finally acted. The chief priest of Teheran, Mirza Masih, was banished from the kingdom and a large number of habitual offenders, thought to have been involved in Griboedov's murder, were rounded up in the capital and elsewhere and had their noses, ears and tongues cut off. It was reported by Prince Dolgorukii in early September that more than 1,500 people had been punished, but since the Prince was not present at the time in Teheran to verify this figure, it is undoubtedly an exaggeration. The final act of reconciliation between the two countries occurred in Abbas Mirza's camp at Udjan, where Dolgorukii expressed himself satisfied with the extent of the Shah's atonement. A military parade, fireworks and a twenty-one gun salute celebrated the occasion.

At the request of the Russian authorities, the body of Griboedov was retrieved from the Persian capital and brought back to Tiflis for interment. On June 11, 1829, Pushkin, who was on his way to Paskevich's headquarters

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41 Mirza Abul Hasan Khan to Macdonald, undated, enclosed in Macdonald to Swinton, August 21 (N.S.), 1829 (IOL: L/P&S/9/90).

42 See his report to Nesselrode quoted in Mal'shinskii "Podlinnoe delo o smerti Griboedova," Russkii arkhiv, 1890, no. 7, p. 227.

43 IOL: L/P&S/9/90, Macdonald to Swinton, September 14 (N.S.), 1829.
at Erzerum, happened in the vicinity of the Armenian fortress of Gergeri to meet a party of Georgians accompanying an ox-wagon. "Where are you from?" he asked them. "From Teheran." "What have you in the wagon?" "Griboed." The chance encounter set the great poet to reminiscing about his deceased compatriot. Among other things, he observed: "I do not know anything more envious than the last years of his stormy life. Death itself, which overtook him in the midst of a bold and unequal battle, did not have anything horrible or oppressive for Griboedov. It was instantaneous and beautiful." 44

On July 18, 1829 the remains of Aleksandr Sergeevich were laid to rest in the picturesque monastery of St. David, which overlooks the Georgian capital on a hill not far from the center of the city. 45 It was a favorite spot of his and he had told his wife more than once: "Don't leave my bones in Persia; if I die there, bury me in Tiflis, in the monastery of St. David." 46 Griboedov's tomb bears the following epitaph composed by his widow: "Your mind and your deeds will live forever in the memory of Russia. But why did my love outlive you?"


45 For an eyewitness description of Griboedov's funeral, see the memoirs of V. N. Grigor'ev in ibid., pp. 202-03.

46 Quoted in PSS, 1: CII.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

As one looks back over the course of Griboedov's diplomatic career, it is clear that Russia possessed in him an outstanding and tenacious guardian of her national interests. He demonstrated this as early as 1819, the first year at his post in Persia, when he placed his life in jeopardy to repatriate a group of Russian soldiers from Persian captivity. But it was not until the Russo-Persian campaign of 1827-28 that Griboedov really enjoyed an opportunity to display his talents in full measure. Placed in charge of superintending relations with Turkey and Persia, Aleksandr Sergeevich distinguished himself not only in aiding Paskevich plan the political strategy of the war, but also in other essential ways as well. He drew up a highly effective statute for the administration of Azerbaijan; embodying his belief that conquered peoples should be governed with the most scrupulous justice, it helped to keep the entire province pacified throughout the duration of the Russian occupation. But perhaps Griboedov's foremost achievement came during the tortuous series of negotiations which led to the Treaty of Turkmanchai. Here
he played an instrumental role as a member of the Russian delegation in obtaining the Persian signature on what was for the Shah's government a very humiliating document. At the close of the war, it will be recalled that Paskevich recommended Griboedov to the Tsar "as a man who has been extremely useful to me on the political side";¹ and Murav'ev-Karskii, who, to repeat, personally disliked Griboedov, went so far as to write that without the latter's help, Paskevich might not have been able to cope with the situation in Georgia in 1827 and "could not have concluded such an advantageous peace with Persia."² This treaty, moreover, determined the broad outline of relations which were to exist between the Russians and Persians for nearly a hundred years.

In the aftermath of Turkmanchai, Griboedov was entrusted with the exceedingly difficult task of restoring friendly relations with Teheran while at the same time enforcing the onerous terms of the treaty. As minister plenipotentiary to Persia, he served for just a few short months, but this was an especially critical period in the new relationship between the former adversaries. Russia was then engaged in a war against Turkey and Griboedov had to see to it that the Persians were not provoked into joining forces with the Ottomans. Altogether he had a formidable assignment to cope

¹See above, p. 178.
²See above, p. 175.
with, for, on the one hand, St. Petersburg had left him no alternative but to insist on the fulfillment of the exact terms of the treaty, and, on the other, he no longer had the backing of a superior military force, since Paskevich's army was then fully employed in Asiatic Turkey. It is a tribute to Griboedov's ability that he singlehandedly accomplished anything at all upon his return to Persia. Yet he succeeded in removing some obstacles in the way of the Armenian exodus; in locating and liberating an unspecified number of Russian captives; in "squeezing" an additional 100,000 tomans out of impoverished Azerbaijan; and, most importantly in view of the sacrifices which the treaty imposed on Abbas Mirza, he was able to encourage the Crown Prince to look toward Russia for support and protection. His performance at this juncture obviously aroused the admiration of contemporaries, for no less a critical observer than Murav'ev-Karskii was moved to say that Griboedov was worth as much as an "army of twenty thousand men" in Persia and that, if he had not been killed, Russia's influence there "would have been consolidated for a long time."3 Finally, to quote the words of another historian, "the cause in which Griboedov lost his life was essentially that which he had defended so passionately against Prince Abbas in Tabriz nearly ten years before —

3 See above, p. 224.
the right of Russian subjects to return to their own country."  

Griboedov, then, was a diplomat of very high quality, but he never concealed the fact that he did not feel at home in the diplomatic service. Compelled by family and economic circumstances to enter the State College of Foreign Affairs in 1817, he soon had to leave Russia and take up an insignificant position "among savage Asiatics" in faraway Persia. Just one year after arriving there in 1819, he already made several unsuccessful attempts to extricate himself from the isolated Russian mission - in his phrase the "diplomatic monastery"  at Tabriz. But not only did he wish to get out of backward Persia, he also evidently had had enough of the diplomatic corps. In February 1820, Griboedov wrote from Tabriz to an official in Ermolov's chancery: "I am already no longer a poor Iros, a beggar serving the sovereign for his bread. I have been informed that my material circumstances are on the mend. Now with the first favorable wind I shall fly away. If only Aleksei Petrovich [Ermolov] allows me to set sail . . . I again will be independent."  

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4Costello, "Griboedov As a Diplomat," p. 69.
5PSS, 3: 56.
6Nickname of Arnaios, a beggar mentioned in Homer's Odyssey.
7Griboedov to A. I. Rykhlevskii, February [?], 1820 (Orlov, A. S. Griboedov: Sochineniia, p. 524).
For one reason or another nothing ever came of Griboedov's efforts then or later to return to private life. Meanwhile his dissatisfaction continued to grow. In October 1827, while serving as Paskevich's key political adviser in the midst of the Persian campaign, he wrote from Erivan: "[I am] determined to go away or to get right out of the service, which I hate with all my heart, whatever sort of future it may offer me." The future brought him a major appointment as minister plenipotentiary to Teheran, but even after he had reached this pinnacle of his career in 1828, Griboedov, as we know, intended to become "the hermit of Tsinandali" within another two years - that is, to resign from the service and settle down on his father-in-law's Georgian estate. Clearly, ambition was not Griboedov's ruling passion.

It is not difficult to pinpoint the cause of Griboedov's dissatisfaction with the diplomatic service. The history of his career reveals him to be a self-willed and independent-minded man possessing a high degree of initiative and enthusiasm - qualities which ill-suited him for the life of a successful career diplomat. Early on he learned from bitter experience that independent actions were not appreciated by the authorities who determined Russian foreign policy in St. Petersburg. In 1819 he successfully

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8PSS, 3: 205, Griboedov to Akhverdova, October 3, 1827; translated from French.

9See above, p. 199.
extricated a group of Russian soldiers from Persian captivity - and received a reprimand from the Foreign Ministry. Two years later, without authorization from St. Petersburg, he helped to incite the Persians to attack the Turks - and received a "dressing down" from Nesselrode. Indeed, at every state of his career we find that he met with frustration when attempting to apply the policies, which he himself had devised. It will be recalled that the freedom of action which he desired to give to Russia's minister plenipotentiary to Persia for the purpose of securing the implementation of the Turkmanchai Treaty, was severely curtailed by Rodofinikin. Again, in 1828, in defiance of his instructions, he wanted to arm the Persians against the Turks but did not proceed for fear that his superiors, as he said, would "peck me to pieces." Other episodes could be cited to illustrate the point that as a diplomat, especially in the time of Nicholas I, Griboedov was expected to follow blindly the orders handed down from above. Life in the diplomatic corps was too confining for a person who craved the liberty to do what he wanted. 10

In connection with this, Mr. D. P. Costello has made the shrewd observation that Griboedov's "fantastic scheme for the establishment of a Caucasian version of the East India

10 He once complained to Begichev: "Will I ever be independent of people? I am dependent on my family, on the service, even on the goal in life which I have set for myself . . ." (PSS, 3: 196, Letter of December 3, 1826).
Company with himself in command was . . . an attempt to create for himself the situation of virtual independence which he needed. "11

Then, too, diplomatic life entailed a great deal of routine work and even inactivity. By nature Aleksandr Sergeevich was restless and energetic, a person "with an insatiable soul, with a burning passion for new creations of the mind, for new knowledge, for a change of locale and employment, for extraordinary people and deeds" - to borrow his own words. 12 The only time he really found an outlet for his energies was in a crisis situation, when, with his combination of intelligence, inflexible character and lion's heart, he was well-qualified to handle the tasks at hand. Ordinary times, by contrast, bored and oppressed him and the prospect of long periods of idleness always drove him to write about quitting the diplomatic service. His important contributions to the victorious Persian campaign of 1827-28 support the view that Griboedov would have made an ideal kind of roving trouble-shooter, serving his country well wherever an emergency situation required an agent of his high caliber to defend the interests of Russia. But for the quiet routine of most diplomatic labor he was completely unfit.

11"Griboedov As a Diplomat," p. 72.

12Griboedov to Begichev, July [?], 1824 (PSS, 3: 156).
All of Griboedov's service abroad was performed in Persia at a time when the Anglo-Russian rivalry for influence in that country had already started. Thus, the study of his diplomatic activity perforce entailed delving into the nature of the relationship between Russia and Great Britain vis-à-vis Persia in the 1820's. It would be useful here to summarize briefly the development of the early phase of this rivalry between these two European powers - a rivalry which would continue through the remainder of the nineteenth and into the beginning of the twentieth century.

Of the two powers, the British were the first to establish themselves in Iran when they succeeded in ousting the French after 1807. At that period, it will be remembered, Russia was engaged in a long, intermittent war with Persia which did not end until 1813, with the signing of the peace treaty at Gulistan. Several more years had to pass before Alexander I was able to turn his particular attention away from European affairs in general to the new situation along Russia's southern frontiers. By then Great Britain had consolidated its position at the court of Teheran, an Anglo-Persian treaty of mutual defense - the Definitive Treaty - having been concluded in 1814. It could be said that Russia's competition with Britain for dominance in the Shah's empire began in earnest in 1816, when Ermolov was ordered by Alexander I to undermine English influence in Persia:
No matter how close are my relations with the government of Great Britain [wrote the Tsar], I cannot, however, view with indifference the growth of its power in a state adjoining mine—a state over which I must of necessity strive to see that it is not subjected to the outside influence of European powers. . . . It is necessary to stop the preponderance of English influence in Persia, to weaken it imperceptibly and finally to destroy it completely.13

This was exactly what Russia's first permanent diplomatic establishment in Persia set out to do. In 1819 both the chargé d'affaires, Mazarovich, and his secretary, Griboedov, were quoted as telling their English counterparts that Russia had to establish a superintending influence over the government of Persia.14 Conditions were favorable for Russia's attaining this goal, since in the post-1815 period the British Foreign Office began more and more to display a markedly indifferent attitude toward the Persians, who came to be regarded as something of a nuisance. Although authorities in India desired to maintain British ascendancy at Teheran,15 the heads of the Foreign Office—first Castle-reagh and then Canning—reduced the importance of the

13 From Alexander's instructions to Ermolov, dated July 29, 1816 (AKAK, 6, pt. 2: 125).

14 See the extracts from Willock's correspondence quoted above, pp. 51, 54.

15 In 1824 the Indian government reported to London in the following vein: "We consider it indeed of unspeakable importance to the welfare of our Indian Empire, that the British influence in the Councils of Persia should be maintained unimpaired, and more especially that the intrigues of Russia in that Quarter should be watched with a jealous eye and counteracted to the utmost extent practicable" (L/P&S/5/3, Governor-General in Council to the Secret Committee, July 16 [N.S.], 1824).
British presence there as much as possible and pursued a policy of non-intervention in Russo-Persian relations. Russia might easily have supplanted her competitor in these years, if Ermolov, now the immediate architect of Russian policy toward Persia, had played the role of a conciliator instead of a bully. However, his ill-timed contemptuous, hard-line posture not only alienated the Persians and eventually drove them to war, but also kept them oriented toward the English for support.

During the war between Russia and Persia from 1826 to 1828, the British authorities refused to render any financial or military assistance to their hard-pressed Eastern ally; nonetheless, their influence in Persia was maintained intact as a consequence of Macdonald's active role in helping to restore friendly relations between the two belligerents. In the wake of Persia's humiliating defeat, conditions were again favorable for Russia to establish a preponderance in the Shah's kingdom, since the Treaty of Turkmanchay laid the groundwork for tsarist political and economic penetration. Moreover, the British had seen fit to further emasculate their alliance with Teheran by arranging for the cancellation of the subsidy clause in the Definitive Treaty. If Griboedov had now been allowed to pursue his own policy as minister plenipotentiary to the court of Teheran, he would have ultimately labored to bring Persia under the sway of Russia. To be
convinced of this we have only to recall his proposal con-
cerning Abbas Mirza which he made a few months before
perishing at Teheran: "We should solemnly promise that we
shall elevate him to the throne, since this will cost us
nothing - a peacetime exercise for the troops with expenses
paid by him - while our influence in Asia will become pre-
dominant over that of any other Power." Griboedov's ob-
jective was the same as that enunciated twelve years earlier
by Alexander I in his above-mentioned instructions to
Ermolov. However, in 1828 that was not the policy which
Nicholas I and Nesselrode desired to follow. As long as
Russia was engaged in a difficult war against Turkey, their
overriding concern was to avoid antagonizing relations with
Britain by excessive Russian activity in the East. Conse-
quently, after Turkmanchay they came out in favor of up-
holding the status quo in Persia.

The murder of Griboedov momentarily plunged Russian
influence in Persia to its nadir. Not for long, because the
situation in that part of the world continued to remain
quite fluid. Within a few years Fath Ali Shah undertook a
campaign to seize Herat in Afghanistan in order to compen-
sate for his heavy territorial losses in the west. Russia
encouraged and Britain opposed the Shah's aggressive
designs to expand eastwards, since the extension of Persian
sovereignty would involve the posting of Russian agents

16 See above, p. 225.
nearer India. Although Fath Ali died before his forces had achieved any success in Afghanistan, his successor, Muhammad Shah (1834-48) continued the campaign to capture Herat. Despite the help he had received from the English in obtaining the throne, the new Shah favored Russia over Great Britain. If Griboedov had not been killed and had stayed in the diplomatic service after 1830, we may be sure that he would have thoroughly exploited these new opportunities to consolidate Russia's position in Asia.

According to the Turkmanchai Treaty, Russia had the right to place consuls wherever the demands of trade might require.
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