

MISSION OF GENERAL SAVARI AND RUSSIA AFTER SIGNING OF THE TILZIT WORLD

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between Russia and France after the treaty of Tilsit in 1807, reflected in the reports of the French general Savary who was sent for a special mission to St. Petersburg in July 1807. Having examined the content of the reports, the authors showed that the initial negative opinion of the Russian society about the Peace of Tilsit was a natural reaction on the recently ended war.

The opinion of the Moscow nobility, divided into parties, wasn't unified, and if after a few years Russia moved from peace and alliance with France to sharp confrontation, largely due to the personal decision of Emperor Alexander I, but not because of the anti-French attitude of the noble society.

Keywords: *Alexander I, Napoleon, General Savary, the treaty of Tilsit, Russian society, War of the Fourth Coalition, the relationship between Russia and France*

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Introduction

The reaction of the Russian society to the Tilsit world of 1807 is almost always regarded by historians as sharply negative. It is enough to quote from the most famous works of modern historians. Thus, the well-known domestic researcher V. M. Bezotosny writes: "The Tilsit



Treaty was met with disapproval in Russia and was criticized, and moreover, it woke up the hidden opposition not only in public circles but even among the highest bureaucracy ..." [1, p. 227]. French historian Marie-Pierre Rey says: "On his return to Petersburg, the king became the object of fierce reproaches. Evidence of this are caustic epigrams, in particular, one of them, written by Pushkin and which circulated at the court:

We knew him very meekly
When not our cooks
Double-headed eagle pinched
At Bonaparte's tent.

In general, the bright atmosphere of the Fronde was felt, this noticeable feeling of discontent worried even the diplomats from St. Petersburg" ¹ [2, p. 245].

However, this perception of the Tilsitsky world is connected in many ways with what appears to the authors of this article as the "late-time screen" effect. After the war of 1812 beginning, the attitude of Russian society about Napoleonic France will become sharply hostile, and any attempts for peace and rapprochement with this country will be unreasonable. This point of view was reflected in the majority of letters, memoirs, diaries written shortly after the Patriotic War of 1812 or much later than this event. This point of view was mainly perceived by historians who wrote about the Tilsit world. The study of synchronous sources makes the believing of such view increase significantly. Documents emanating directly from the era we are exploring provide a much wider range of opinions of the Russian society about the Napoleonic Empire, [3] which is also explained by the stable cultural ties of Russia and France, which minimized the effects of the foreign policy changes [4].

For this point of view, an interesting thorough study of such an important source for understanding the attitude of Russian society after Tilsit as reports of General Savary sent by Napoleon with a diplomatic mission immediately after the signing of Tilsit peace in July 1807, is presented. It is impossible to say that this source was unknown.

¹About how much such a point of view is based on later sources is indicated in particular by a curious error. Marie Pierre Rey provides as proof of the Fronde of the nobility of 1807 the quatrain from the poem "Eugene Onegin", which A. Pushkin wrote in the 1823-1830s!



The reports of Savary were fully published in the pages of the collection of the Russian Historical Society (RIO) in 1892, 1893. [5,6] However, these published reports, it seems, have not been studied carefully by historians. So, the analysis of the letters of Savary, undertaken by SS Tatishchev and later by the French historian A. Vandal [7; 8] seemed very superficial and did not set as his goal the explanation of the phenomenon of Russian society. Both Tatishchev and Vandal proceeded from the traditional concept of Russian society's rejection of the Tilsit world. And therefore, apparently, skimmed through the letters of Savary. Vandal chose from them those letters that fit perfectly into traditional ideas, and the translation of his famous work "Napoleon and Alexander" made these excerpts from the letters accessible to a wide circle of researchers. As a result, it was the extracts from Vandal that became representative for the General Savary opinion for most historians.

In this paper, we set ourselves the task of carefully reviewing the entire Savary correspondence. A fresh look at this correspondence shows how the usual point of view is one-sided and does not reflect the entire spectrum of Russian public opinion in 1807.

Methodology. In this article, the authors used the historical-genetic (historical) method of historical research, consisting of a consistent penetration into the past in order to identify the causes of any facts, events, phenomena. The use of this method allows you to underline the cause-effect relationship and patterns of historical events. Using the principles of historicism and scientific objectivity made it possible to analyze the perspective of Russian-French relations after the Tilsit world. Also, the authors applied special historical methods: conditional documentation, textual methods, historical and political analysis.

Content. Russia's participation in the coalition wars against France, somehow, influences the attitude of Russian society after the signing of the Tilsit Treaty, and this is reflected in the reports of Savary. The general, who arrived in St. Petersburg on July 23, 1807, wrote: "The return of Emperor Alexander to the capital made little impression, no public holidays were organized. The news of the peace that preceded the return of the emperor did not arouse emotions. Public opinion, on which our opponents have been working for more than two years, is orientated against us. People were too disposed to war for the peace to be accepted in Petersburg with the usual for such cases enthusiasm ... I noted silence



everywhere, which consisted in a stupor, regarding political affairs. No one dared to speak, neither about Tilsit, or about the treaty, or about the emperor (Napoleon). The Treaty has not been published yet. Nevertheless, the fact of its signing is doubtless, although some prefer to pretend that they do not believe in it” [5, p. 21].

Savary noted: “I arrived in this country at the time when people treat us very critically. The war caused a negative opinion about everything that comes from France. The events of this war and that, which preceded it were too unfavorable for the Russians to change their attitude, which was hostile. Our fame only increased their hatred” [5, p. 146].

All this was not surprising, since on July 21, in the churches, they prayed against the French, and the order to stop such services was issued only on July 24. A year earlier, in November 1806, a law was passed in Russia on the expulsion of the French [6, p. 157-158]. The French had to leave Russia within 8 days or accept her citizenship, with an immediate payment of debts.

However, the content of the Savary’s report, which, it seems, certainly confirms the traditional point of view, was very likely dictated by some specific episodes. They created an opinion with the author, which he will refute himself in subsequent correspondence later.

An interesting synchronous source allows you to look at the first messages Savary carefully. This evidence comes from the Orenburg military governor G.S. Volkonsky. Here is what he wrote to General Vyazmitinov on July 17, 1807 “At the very midnight on July 14, i.e. when Saturday turns into Sunday, I had the honor to receive ... the intercourse about the conclusion of peace between Russia and France on June 27th. Cannon thunder informed this joy to Orenburg, and in the morning a great multitude of people gathered in churches to bring solemn thanksgiving to the Almighty ... In the evening a feast was through by me and the city was illuminated. Pure joy was portrayed on all the faces and it was more perceptible that the brave sons of Russia marked all steps with heroic deeds and covered themselves with glory, always with the courage of Russians accompanying ... with. thirty]. And Pestel reported from Irkutsk on July 31, “... I consider it necessary to report on the universal great joy here on the occasion of such favorable news, which the inhabitants of the local observed with a decent illumination in the city” [9, p. 81].

With great enthusiasm, the Treaty of Tilsit was perceived by A. B.



Kurakin, the future ambassador of Russia in Paris, N.P. Rumyantsev, the future Foreign Minister, the famous Russian diplomat PG G. Divov, General Rajewski and others. Kurakin wrote to Empress Maria Feodorovna on June 22, 1807: “Suddenly we were filled with the greatest joy! God did not leave Russia and the emperor, your son! The blood will not flow any more, the misfortunes that have torn apart Europe will cease ... The truce and the convention are signed absolutely in such a way that one could only wish for ... You must agree, Your Majesty, that nothing happier could happen. The sky sent us its blessing in the most difficult moment in which Russia had ever been!” [12, p. 183-186].

Finally, Savary himself in one of the subsequent reports writes “The peace was published here and made the most pleasant impression” [5, p. 25].

Savary has repeatedly noted the attention with which he was surrounded by Emperor Alexander. “On August 1, the emperor sent me an invitation to come in the evening and spend the night in Peterhof, where the rest of the diplomatic corps was invited only for tomorrow. A special mansion relating to the imperial court was allocated for me, and a special court crew was given at my disposal”¹ [5, p. sixteen].

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¹ Savary claims that on August 2, 1807, the birthday of Alexander’s mother was celebrated in Peterhof. But the dowager empress was born on October 14 (25), 1759. This, apparently, is about name-days.



As a response, Napoleon sought to organize the warmest welcome to the Russian ambassador in Paris, P.A. Tolstoy, when Napoleon presented the Russian envoy with a luxurious mansion called Telusson, filled with expensive furniture, paintings, silverware, and carpets. When the Russian ambassador met, the emperor Napoleon put on the Order of St. Andrew the First-Called, whom Alexander I awarded him in Tilsit and wore him all day. Regarding the reaction of the Petersburg society to the reception of the Russian ambassador Savary, he reported: “In the capital, they only talk about the reception hosted by Count Tolstoy. The young people who accompanied him described it to their families in the best possible way, among others, the young Guriev, whose father is the Minister of Fate, is a great admirer of France and enjoy universal respect here. It is also known that Your Majesty consented to the training of cadets in the navy and for guns so everything at the present moment contributes to making public opinion towards us benevolent ...” [5, p. 240]. It should be noted that such a reaction of Guriev was not something exceptional. The union signed in Tilsit allowed the emperor Alexander to send several young men (Gagarin, Gorgoli, Chernyshev) to Napoleon’s headquarters to familiarize themselves with French military affairs. All of them were given an exceptional reception.

Champagne wrote to Savary on this occasion: “The emperor wants the French officers who are in St. Petersburg to know and be pleased about the proudness with which the Russian officers achieved success in Parisian society” [5, p. 98]. As for the Russian society, the situation here was not so unambiguous, of course, it directly depended on the international situation and, on the will of the emperor himself.

“We will make a big mistake,” wrote Savary, if we understand by public opinion in Petersburg is the same thing that this word usually means in any other country. The people who have everywhere at least some importance for the state, here does not mean anything. ... After the courtiers and ministers, I see only the merchants, who are between the nobles and their serfs. Foreign merchants consist mainly of the British, the rest of the French or Germans”¹ [5, p. 143].

It means that, in Russia, there was no politically active social category,

¹The Russian infantry rifle of the sample of 1808 was an exact copy of the French rifles of the model of 1777 modified in the republic’s IX year (1801). The following 1808 became the main armament of all Russian infantry.



with the exception of the nobility, which formed the basis of a “society” that was rather small relative to the entire population of the empire.

Savary thought that the apolitical peasantry could not influence the decision of the emperor. Thus, the stratum of people that he could potentially influence in the interests of France was greatly reduced and limited to the Russian nobility.

What Savary noted was a feature of the historical development of Russia, in which the process of formalizing the estates took place from above and was directed by the state. In Russia, there was no active third class in the form in which it was, for example, in France until 1789. The nobility, however, which was formed in close contact with Europe, absorbed the political ideas of France, England, and Austria. So, the Russian society was not monolithic but disintegrated into parties and groups whose composition was mobile. It so happened that over the years, England had the greatest influence in Russian trade and the court; however, despite this, French remained the language of communication, France was a traditional supplier of luxury goods, the main cultural center, and rapprochement with it was desirable for many nobles.

Savary wrote: “During the revolution, for ten years we did not have an ambassador in St. Petersburg, all kinds of relations with us were interrupted, it gave our enemies great opportunities to influence the Russians, and this is what they did. And now the work of their efforts, intrigues and bribes are problems that we have to deal with now. The British captured everything ... General Duroc appeared here only for a short moment. He had only his own special task, which he performed without doing other things. Then came General Kolenkur. His short-term mission was too fleeting to give him time to notice everything that could damage or contribute to the interests of our country ... Kolenkur did not have time to do anything in order to enforce France influence ... General Eduville arrived here with the status of an ambassador sent by the First Consul after the battle of Marengo. He failed to adequately represent France, for he behaved as if he represented a third-order power ... There was no worthy representative of France here ... In this situation, the emperor sent me here [5, p. 144-145].

Savary gave the following characteristic of social categories in Russia: the court; the emperor; the ruling empress; the widowed empress, and her children; the nobility; the merchant corps; and the serfs. Even



though Alexander wanted to show his disposition for France and Savary, the court of the empress mother was on the opposite side. All anti-French nobility concentrated around her. However, even here it was not so simple. Surrounded by the empress mothers were courtiers, pro-French minded. For example, prince A.M. Beloselsky-Belozersky former ambassador to Dresden and Turin. Savary had, also, other arguments. Montesquieu, who played the role of a courier between Russia and France, was introduced by the general to the court of Maria Fedorovna and received a warm welcome. "I knew," continued Savary, "that after Montesquieu's departure, the empress-mother told her confidants how much she was pleased with him and said that when she returned to St. Petersburg, she would order the French who were with me, to be invited at her ball"¹ [5, p. 259].

A supporter of the alliance with France was Alexander's brother, Grand Duke Constantine. Savary gave him the following description. "The Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich ... lives constantly outside the city, in a beautiful palace in Strelna ... Near him there is an Uhlan regiment named after him, he is constantly engaged to this regiment ...

... His palace is a real arsenal where you can see weapons of all kinds, his library contains all sorts of books on military affairs that exists and by rereading them he is constantly looking for innovations for the Russian army, in his park you can see the barracks of military camps, such as those that were built in Boulogne, Ostend, and Ambletесе. These structures were built by French prisoners who were with him. The orchestras of the two cavalry guards regiments of the Horse Guards and the Lancers, play only French marches at the parade, such as the "Chant de depart"¹ [5, p. 261].

During Savary's stay in St. Petersburg, Grand Duke Konstantin talked with him more than once and once said that although he loves his wife (*in Orthodoxy, Anna Feodorovna, Princess of Saxe-Coburg, born in Julian*), he cannot live with her. But he asks to convey that he is very grateful to Napoleon for what he did for her family and her parents. Konstantin added: "Although I am very much disposed towards Napoleon, this new circumstance adds even more devotion that I feel to him" [5, p. 103].

¹ "Chant de départ" - "The Song of Departure (volunteer appearances)", a French song and march of the era of revolution and empire.



The English influence was strong in the diplomatic corps, which Savary considered an important political institution, but in his opinion, this influence could be overcome. He wrote: “A properly composed diplomatic corps is a pledge of success and influence of the French ambassador here ... It is necessary that the ambassadors of the most significant states of the Rhine Confederation, as well as Italy, Naples and Holland be sent here” [5, p. 143].

The British Ambassador in Russia was Lord Gower. Savary wrote: “The British, who rule here for three years here, would go for any expenses, just to make a palace coup, but I dare to assure that they will not succeed ... Their ambassador was a powerful ruler here. Many German princes do not possess such a luxury ... Since I arrived here I realized that: it is necessary for him to be replaced as soon as possible by the ambassador of Your Majesty, and that he would own the influence that the English ambassador had” [5, p. 80].

The British party was represented in the government by the following persons: A. Chartoryi, V.P. Kochubey, G.A. Stroganov, N.N. Novosiltsev, Orlov, Pushkin, and Budberg. However, after the Tilisit Treaty, it was French interest to have representative people in the government. Interior Minister Kochubey immediately asked for his resignation. It was given to him, but he remained at his post and was replaced only three months later on December 6, 1807. Novosiltsev was sent on a journey, and Stroganov at that time was Spain ambassador.

As for the French group, the most consistent supporter of the alliance with France was N.P. Rumyantsev, Minister of Commerce, who later became Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was Napoleon who wanted to be the Paris ambassador. To this Rumyantsev replied: “I cannot be the ambassador of my emperor in France because of my poor health, but I want to serve Napoleon here. I want him to point out that I am the Minister of Commerce. I am always ready to patronize the French merchants. Even in times of hostility, I was not afraid to speak out in their defense” [6, p. 135].

Among other supporters of the French influence were Saltykov, the comrade of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Naryshkin brothers, “who accepted the French very well.” Describing the Russian court, Savary could not attribute many of political influencers to any of the parties. “Lobanov and Vyazmitinov are Russian ministers, who is Prin-



ce Lobanov is well known, and as for Vyazmitinov, he is rather an old man, a Russian patriot ... Chichagov is the naval minister, Golitsyn, minister of public education - patriots” [6, p. 135]. As it can be seen, there were few true supporters of England in the government.

Most of the English were quite naturally engaged in trade. Savary wrote: “It is enough for Your Majesty to know that more than half of the merchants who trade here are the British, that out of 1,200 ships that, on average, enter the Neva, more than 600 have the British flag. That is why it is not surprising that merchants who are expecting a quick break (relations with England) are spreading thousands of absurd rumors” [5, p. 80].

Savary divided merchants into two categories: “Merchants who have an account and wealthy merchants, and merchants in the shops. The first half consisted of English, half German, Russian, and several French. There are only five or six French houses of the third order (in Lyon, Bordeaux, Nantes or Rouen, this is not even called merchants). The second category consists mostly of Russians, Germans, and French adventurers ... - Savary continued, - our trade here is in a degraded condition or, better to say, does not exist ... I have not seen in Russia neither fabric, nor porcelain, nor lace, nor jewelry” [5 with. 266].

Describing the situation in St. Petersburg, the Commissioner for Trade Affairs in St. Petersburg Zh.B. Lesseps wrote to Champagny: “The two parties are now at enmity and share mainly the merchants on the local stock exchange: one thinks that the war that Russia can declare to England any minute, might cause a complete fall of trade, the other, on the contrary ... finds that it is necessary to care not about personal, immediate interests, but about the liberation of the seas and about the benefits of the whole of Europe ”[6, p. 197-198].

In this situation of struggle and uncertainty “... France perhaps more than Russia has the arguments to shut up the Russian merchants, personal interest for people of this class means a lot. It is enough for this public to report that France, which for so long has not acquired anything important in Russia, wants to buy wood, hemp, canvas. All this seems to be politically and economically beneficial,” Savary wrote. It was also assumed that all this can be bought at a bargain price without competition [5, p. 140-141].

The society itself, as we have already mentioned, did not have a definite vector, it divided into parties whose composition was flexible, be-



cause of the constant struggle of the English and French groups, whose countries clashed over spheres of influence in Europe. This is evidenced by the reaction to the attack of England on Denmark, which declared its neutrality, on August 16, 1807, which caused a general censure of yesterday's ally. The British "sent a significant fleet to the coastal areas of Denmark to force it to provide the fleet and become an ally of England and to involve Sweden in the coalition in order to prevent the conditions that can be achieved between Russia and France and which (the conditions) can be hostile to the interests of England."

Savary wrote: "What the British did in Copenhagen provoked universal indignation here ... It got angry all Russians and they are working on enforcing Kronstadt (in anticipation of a British attack)" [5, p. 57]. "The events in Copenhagen provoked universal anger and in the eyes of the English ambassador (who left St. Petersburg only in November), all the preparations were made to protect Kronstadt. Everything is ready to fight the British if they attack. Everything is prepared for fighting the English properly. The emperor wanted me to see Kronstadt with my own eyes. I visited him ... and I can assure you that any attempt to attack this fortress is meaningless" [5, p. 66].

This England behavior could not have the support of the nobility. A.B. Kurakin wrote in a letter to Rumyantsev in November 1807: "I am waiting for our break with England ... The outrageous despotism that the British provided during their work over the fleet that they carried out up until now against neutral fleets, insults all the powers at once and violates the rights of all people. The military neutrality established by Catherine in 1781 forced England to make peace with Paris. Now it seems to me that I need to wait for the same effect ... most of her (England) residents want peace, it is impossible if she will continue the war against the whole Europe ... this is exactly the era when England's stubbornness and violence must stop" [10, 1316-316 about.].

However, the English party, according to Savary, "seized upon Petersburg" [5, p. 147]. Immediately after Tilsit, an Englishman, Wilson was sent to St. Petersburg with a special mission, who left a diary about his journey. Wilson wrote about Savary "I don't like the long visits of Savary to the emperor. This closeness cannot indicate favorable consequences. Although we should not rashly conclude about the way we are treated according to external signs" [11, p. 348].



Savary also had a bad opinion of his rival, he wrote to Napoleon: “This carrier of intrigue and corruption, who had the courage to come here with pockets full of outrageous brochures in which Your Majesty and Emperor Alexander are doused with mud” [5, p. 147]. These books are distributed here through Orlov, Novosiltsov, Kochubey, Stroganov and others” [5, p. 174].

The British behavior was increasingly met with disapproval. Rumyantsev wrote about Wilson: “Unimaginable is everything that the British are doing in order to put us out of balance. I am very saddened by the arrival of this Wilson, who I don’t like at all ... Wilson came to me yesterday and after long complaints about unpleasant changes in the situation of England in Russia, he decided to enlight his true reasons for being here. This is a simple officer not accredited, whose duties are similar to a courier’s one. But he was the one who was going to suggest Alexander I some ideas” [5, p. 184].

What did the English envoy want in order to enforce the influence of his country, which refused to mediate Russia in a truce with France? He declared to the king: “We decided to continue the war on our own or with other allies. Doubtless, it will be a long one because we decided not to declare peace until Germany will have strong states capable to stop France, so its ambitions cannot disturb Europe’s peace ... We see this as a guarantee for the expansion of Prussia and Russia” [5, s. 185; 11, p. 434-439].

In the conversations of Wilson and Savary, the problem of Moldova and Wallachia, occupied by Russia during the campaign of 1806-1807, was repeatedly raised. Russia did not hurry up with the withdrawal of troops from this territory. Wanting to promote rapprochement with the new ally as much as possible, Napoleon was ready to support the wishes of Russia in this matter. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Champagny wrote Savary on emperor’s will: “Perhaps ... Emperor Alexander wishes to save Moldova and Wallachia? The emperor (Napoleon) is ready to agree to this, but at the same time, France should receive benefits that would preserve the balance of power, as defined by the Tilsit agreements” [5, p. 212].

Napoleon’s position about this issue contributed to the improvement of Russian-French relations. Finally, on November 18, 1807, an important event occurred - Lord Gower and the British mission left St. Petersburg. Savary wrote: “This event made a big impression here. For almost 50



years, the British owned almost all trade affairs in this country ... Now everyone here treats us in a much better way than before with us and our ambassador will be able to do a lot in this country” [5, p. 219].

In general, the attitude towards peace with France and personally towards Savary was changing very quickly. A month and a half after his arrival, Savary wrote to Talleyrand: “The changes that have taken place here are entirely in our favor. Public opinion is completely different than the one I met at the time of my arrival. With satisfaction, I can tell the emperor that this situation is completely the one we could wish for ... I see the same feelings (from the Russian side) that were manifested in Tilsit. The desire to maintain what was done there is very touchable” [5, p. 65].

About a month and a half later, and shortly before the departure of the English ambassador, Savary wrote to Emperor Napoleon personally: “The tone of the conversations has completely changed, especially the women`s one. There are no such lofty words that were not addressed to Your Majesty. It remains quite a bit to do in order to make this behavior universal.” And then Savary confidently writes that the ambassador, who will come to his place, “will not find more bile in the world” and will undoubtedly play a huge role in Russian society [5, p. 149].

In general, the evolution of public opinion, which is noted by the envoy of Napoleon, is quite obvious. He was sharply negative, which is understandable since Savary arrived in St. Petersburg almost a few days after the end of hostilities, the French general managed to win the trust of a large part of the Russian aristocracy. Without a doubt, the English influence was strong at court and in the circle of metropolitan merchants, which Savary has repeatedly noted. However, it is completely unacceptable to generalize this position to all Russian society (this is, of course, primarily about the nobility), as many historians do. A significant part of the Russian aristocracy easily changed their attachments towards a particular country. Even though Alexander`s position was not that touchable, many representatives of the Moscow aristocracy quickly changed their landmarks. The Russian-French alliance, contrary to what is often written, was quite possible and the reports of Savary do not refute but confirm this opinion.

Conclusion. The content of this article shows that Savary`s correspondence was not thoroughly analyzed by historians, and the initial negative opinion of Russian society about the Tilsit Treaty was in many



ways just an emotional reaction to the recently ended war and anti-French propaganda of 1806-1807. The cultural ties and mutual interest of France and Russia mitigated the fluctuations in foreign policy. And this is very clearly expoused in the reports of Napoleon's adjutant. Despite the presence of the pro-British party, the opinion of the Russian nobility was not unified, and the fact that after a few years, Russia did not move from peace and alliance with France to sharp confrontation, this is largely due not to the sharp anti-French spirit of the noble society, but to the personal contradictions of Emperors Alexander I and Napoleon.

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