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Lord Whitworth and the Conspiracy Against Tsar Paul I: The New Evidence of the Kent Archive

Tsar Paul I died at a critical moment in the affairs of Europe. During the last fifteen months of his life he had become estranged from Great Britain and Austria, his erstwhile allies, who were being hard pressed by their French enemy on several fronts. By the beginning of 1801 the tsar's government seemed on the verge of concluding an alliance with Napoleonic France. Russia's "cold war" with Britain heated up as the tsar ordered the confiscation of British merchant vessels in his ports and the incarceration of British seamen. A British fleet under Admirals Parker and Nelson was dispatched to the Baltic to deal with the new threat to British interests. Then, quite suddenly, the tsar was dead.

At about midnight on March 11/23, 1801, a number of embittered and inebriated noblemen and officers, led by the military governor of St. Petersburg, Count P. A. Pahlen, invaded the tsar's palace and strangled him. Many reasons, political and otherwise, motivated this murder, but certainly one cause was that the logic by which Tsar Paul had transformed his empire from an ally into an enemy of Great Britain escaped many of his subjects. The eagerness with which he had rushed to begin hostilities contributed to suspicions that the tsar was not altogether sane.¹ Consequently, Paul's son and heir, Alexander, quickly arranged a peaceful settlement with the English. When news of this settlement reached Paris, the official gazette editorialized: "It is for history to develop the mystery which surrounds this tragical death, and to declare which Cabinet in the world was most deeply interested in bringing about such a catastrophe."²

Many Russian contemporaries shared the suspicion that the British government was directly involved in the assassination. V. P. Kochubei, former vice-chancellor, observed to his friend Count S. R. Vorontsov: "You will see that the English have bought powerful men among us. . . ."³ One of the most prominent conspirators, Prince P. A. Zubov, was rumored to have prepared a draft of a constitution for Russia modeled after England's.⁴ Zubov's sister, Ol'ga Zhereb-

1. A. P. Czartoryski, *Mémoires du prince Czartoryski et sa correspondance avec Alexandre I^{er}*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1887), 1:237. See also the testimony of Princess Lieven that Alexander's first thought on assuming power was to recall the Cossacks sent by Paul to invade India, in T. Schiemann, *Zur Geschichte der Regierung Paul I und Nikolaus I*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1906), pp. 43-44.

2. *Le Moniteur*, quoted in M. A. Thiers, *History of the Consulate and the Empire under Napoleon I*, 20 vols. (London, 1845-62), 2:246.

3. Letter of Kochubei to Vorontsov, March 16/28, 1801, *Arkhiv Kniazia Vorontsova*, 40 vols. (Moscow, 1870-95), 14:146-48 (hereafter cited as *AKV*).

4. See the testimony of A. Kotzebue in *Tsareubištvo 11 marta 1801 goda: Zapiski uchastnikov i sovremennikov* (St. Petersburg, 1907), p. 349. A similar story is told in G. R. Derzhavin, *Sochineniia Derzhavina*, ed. Ia. Grot, 2nd ed., 7 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1868-78), 7:364.

tsov, who had been the mistress of Charles Whitworth, the former British minister to St. Petersburg, declared that English gold had helped finance the conspiracy.⁵ And many people professed to see yet another causal connection in the friendship of Whitworth with Count N. P. Panin, one of the acknowledged initiators of the plot.⁶

Historians have rightly regarded this circumstantial and largely unsubstantiated evidence with skepticism. The fact that King George's government resorted to the use of the fleet in order to coerce the Russians suggests that they had no definite knowledge of plans to depose or to assassinate the tsar. Moreover, although the records of the British Foreign Office show that Whitworth and Panin had been close and had exchanged many confidences, there is no evidence of conspiracy in these papers, and no trace of the "English gold" mentioned by Zherebtsov.⁷ It is certain that Whitworth was expelled from Russia in June 1800, and that Panin was dismissed from the post of vice-chancellor and exiled to his estates in December of that year. The final plan for Paul's overthrow was hatched in January and February 1801 by Count Pahlen and the Zubov brothers, when their dealings with Whitworth were a thing of the past. Historians, therefore, are led to conclude that the concurrent events which made such an impression on Napoleon—the appearance of the British fleet in the Baltic and the assassination of Tsar Paul—were entirely coincidental.⁸

Yet the dismissal of the notion that the British stood behind the assassination depends mainly on the paucity of evidence to support the charge, and not on direct evidence to the contrary. It is only a tentative conclusion and need not be regarded as final. There are some supplementary materials which indicate that relationships between the parties involved (or allegedly involved) in the conspiracy were more complex than they first appeared. For example, the private papers of Count Panin⁹ and Count S. R. Vorontsov,¹⁰ published in the latter part of the nineteenth century, revealed the cooperation between Panin and Vorontsov (the Anglophilic Russian minister to London), on the one hand, and the cooperation

5. Letter of S. R. Vorontsov to A. R. Vorontsov, July 31, 1801, *AKV*, 10:113–14. See also K. Waliszewski, *Le fils de la Grande Catherine: Paul I^{er}* (Paris, 1912), pp. 574–75, 581; and Thiers, *History of the Consulate*, 2:245.

6. See, for example, A. B. Lobanov-Rostovskii in Schiemann, *Zur Geschichte*, pp. 261–68. Cf. Waliszewski, *Paul I^{er}*, pp. 572–75.

7. See, for example, Whitworth's reports to Grenville in the Public Record Office (hereafter cited as PRO), F.O. 65/46, no. 17, March 18, 1800; no. 22, April 2, 1800; and no. 30, April 30, 1800, where Whitworth speaks of confidences made "in strictest secrecy" by Panin. More generally, see Waliszewski, *Paul I^{er}*, p. 575, n. 1; and C. Grunwald, *L'Assassinat de Paul I^{er}* (Paris, 1960), pp. 181–82.

8. The best sources concerning the final phase of the conspiracy are T. Schiemann, "Des Generals Grafen von Bennigsen Brief an den General von Fock über die Emordung Kaiser Pauls," *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* (1901), pp. 57–69; and L. Loewenson, "The Death of Paul I and the Memoirs of Count Bennigsen," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 29 (1950): 212–33. Thiers, Waliszewski, and Grunwald all reach the same conclusion. An exception to the prevailing opinion is that of V. Zubow, *Zar Paul I: Mensch und Schicksal* (Stuttgart, 1963), p. 66. Zubow, the great-grandson of one of Paul's assassins, considers the question of English involvement "bisher noch nicht gelöst."

9. Published by A. Brückner [Brikner], in *Materialy dlia zhizneopisaniiu grafa N. P. Panina*, 6 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1888–92).

10. *AKV*, especially vols. 9 and 11.

between Vorontsov and Lord Grenville (the British foreign secretary), on the other. Recently the British Museum acquired the correspondence of Grenville and Vorontsov spanning a twenty-year period. These letters document the existence of an unusually close friendship between the foreign secretary and the foreign minister, and they call into question Vorontsov's ultimate loyalties, particularly in this period of Anglo-Russian crisis.¹¹ Although it can be shown that Vorontsov knew of the plans (as they stood prior to January 1801) to depose Tsar Paul, it has yet to be proved that he communicated any such information to his friend Grenville.¹² Along with the other circumstantial evidence, the Panin and Vorontsov papers contribute to the suspicion that members of the British government at least knew something of the plot against the tsar, but they must be labeled inconclusive.

If one wishes to probe the question of a connection between the British government and the Russian conspirators, Lord Whitworth is the logical focus of attention. What were his relations with Panin and with the other conspirators, what part did he have in the development of their plans, what might have been his motives, and what exactly was Whitworth doing in St. Petersburg during the last six months of his mission? Despite disclaimers by historians, such as Thiers's statement that "Whitworth was an honorable man, incapable of participating in such a plot,"¹³ the fact is that historians have had little but intuition and hearsay to guide them in their search for answers to these questions. The discovery of Whitworth's private papers in the Kent Archive Office in Maidstone, England, makes possible, for the first time, an answer based on documentary evidence.¹⁴

11. See especially the letters of Vorontsov to Grenville dated April 27, 1800, June 27, 1800, February 11, 1801, and April 17, 1801, in the Dropmore Manuscripts in the British Museum. The Museum acquired this correspondence, bound in four quarto volumes, from the estate of the Fortescue family in late 1972. At the time I examined the letters, they had not yet been assigned Additional Manuscript numbers; however, the documents are easily identifiable by their dates. A report on the collection of which these manuscripts were a part was published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission—*Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue preserved at Dropmore*, 10 vols. (London, 1892–1927).

12. On Vorontsov's knowledge of the plot, see the letters to him from N. N. Novosiltsov, January 20 and February 4, 1801, *AKV*, 18:435–38; and from him to Novosiltsov, February 5, 1801, *AKV*, 11:380–81. The published Vorontsov papers are but a fraction of the entire Vorontsov holdings, now broken up among several Soviet repositories (see P. K. Grimsted, *The Foreign Ministers of Alexander I* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969], pp. 312–13). But neither the Soviet historians nor the few Western historians who have used these papers have had anything new to say about the death of Paul.

13. Thiers, *History of the Consulate*, 2:246.

14. Lord Whitworth married the widowed Duchess of Dorset in 1801, and took up residence at Knole, near Sevenoaks, in Kent. His private papers, along with others of his family (including those of his great-uncle, envoy to the court of Peter the Great) were joined with the papers of the Sackville family and passed eventually to the Kent Archive Office in Maidstone. They are listed now among the Sackville of Knole Manuscripts, catalog numbers U 269, O 195 to O 198. There are hundreds of documents, contained in bundles, not individually catalogued. Their grouping and order suggest that they have not been much disturbed during almost two hundred years. (Hereafter I will cite individual documents as KAO, U 269, their file number, and date.)

Enough evidence exists outside the Kent Archive, of course, to challenge the depiction of Whitworth as a man of impeccable morals. Whitworth was one of Lord Grenville's favorite agents precisely because he possessed the attributes so necessary to a diplomat in an age of poor communications. He was intelligent, devious, and honest when it was convenient. Most important, he was resourceful. He had an independent mind, but his willingness to take risks frequently got him into trouble both with London and with the courts to which he was accredited. For example, he had to be admonished more than once on the proper use of government funds.¹⁵ An act of Parliament required that diplomatic agents account in full for all monies spent under the head of Secret Service, but Whitworth interpreted this law rather loosely. During his ten-year residence in St. Petersburg, he complained continuously that the funds at his disposal were inadequate to meet his needs, which included a sizable annual outlay for Secret Service. The Foreign Office was particularly annoyed when Whitworth drew on his bankers for large sums in round figures, then submitted the bill months later accompanied by a general description.¹⁶ Grenville was willing to turn his back, more or less, on this peccadillo and pay the bills, as long as the mission produced results, but Whitworth was apparently incorrigible. He had a predilection for conducting business *dans les coulisses*, and his eagerness to spend his government's money seemed to increase as time went on. In a series of secret dispatches to the foreign secretary during a mission to Paris in 1803, Whitworth enthusiastically recommended spending as much as £2 million to bribe Napoleon's brothers, Lucien and Joseph, and Talleyrand, in order to get Malta.¹⁷

Whitworth's monetary extravagance was not his only fault. His enthusiasm sometimes caused him to overstep his authority. In December 1798, negotiations were under way to unite Great Britain, Austria, and Russia in a coalition against France. Whitworth recommended, on his own authority, a draft of a treaty worked out in St. Petersburg between himself and Austrian and Russian negotiators, thereby undermining the direct negotiations between Great Britain and Austria then proceeding in Vienna. This action nearly cost Whitworth his job. The Austrian envoy in London reported to his court that he had never seen a government more angry at one of its agents. Only a plea by Count Vorontsov to his friend Grenville saved Whitworth's post. Whitworth received instead what was undoubtedly the harshest rebuke of his career.¹⁸

Whitworth obviously possessed a great deal of personal charm which he used to the mutual advantage of his government and himself. During the latter part of Catherine's reign, he assiduously courted Prince Zubov, became his friend,

15. Concerning these episodes see Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/23, no. 21, May 3, 1792; Grenville to Whitworth, *ibid.*, no. 2, June 31, 1792; Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/28, no. 56, October 13, 1794; and Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/35, no. 349, October 12, 1796.

16. Grenville to Whitworth, PRO F.O. 65/35, no. 33, December 2, 1796.

17. Whitworth to Lord Hawkesbury, "Most Secret," March 14 through 31, 1803, British Museum Add. Ms. 38238.

18. Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/42, no. 54, December 4, 1798; Grenville to Whitworth, *ibid.*, no. 1, January 25, 1799; also Vorontsov to Grenville, January 22, 1799, in the Dropmore Manuscripts; and the report of Cobenzl to Thugut in the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna (hereafter cited as HHSA), Russland, series 2, karton 90, no. 12, February 17, 1799.

and persuaded his government to lavish its attentions on the influential prince.¹⁹ At the same time, Whitworth became the lover of Zubov's sister, Ol'ga Zherebtsov.²⁰ This connection troubled Whitworth's relationship with Tsar Paul. Early in Paul's reign, the Austrian ambassador, Count Cobenzl, reported to his court:

In order to give Your Excellency an idea of how dangerous the position of every foreign minister has become in the present reign, I believe it my duty to report to you what has just happened to the English minister. For a number of years he has been *en liaison* with Mme. Zherebtsoff, the sister of Prince Zuboff, and at whose home the latter has been living since quitting the court. The emperor has known about this intimacy for a long time, and he has often teased Mr. Whitworth about it. The latter has only seen Prince Zuboff a single time; in truth he goes every three or four days to Mme. Zherebtsoff's, but only to see her—and no longer every day, as he used to do. On the 22 of this month the emperor sent someone to Prince Zuboff to ask why he was visited every day by the English minister. The prince was compelled to write a letter on this subject to His Imperial Majesty. For his part, Whitworth was warned by Rostopchin of the emperor's displeasure; and indeed at court on the 23rd the emperor affected not to speak to him.²¹

On this occasion Whitworth was able to smooth things out by assuring Rostopchin—"de gentilhomme à gentilhomme"—that his purpose in visiting the house so frequently did not concern Zubov, and the tsar dropped the matter.

There is also testimony that Whitworth carried on, or at least attempted to carry on, another affair with political implications—with Countess Anna Tolstoi, whose husband was an aide to Grand Duke Alexander, and who was herself very close to Grand Duchess Elizabeth. Whitworth pressed his attentions upon the lady from the latter part of 1799 until the moment he left Russia six months later, possibly as an excuse to gain access to the grand duke's household. However, it is not known whether his private or political purposes met with any success in this quarter.²²

After years of residence in St. Petersburg, Whitworth knew the workings of the court well. Through his acumen, the British government was able to add to its payroll two of Paul's influential favorites. In 1797 Whitworth succeeded in reaching both Catherine Nelidov, the tsar's mistress, and Ivan Kutaisov, his valet, who, for the sums of 30,000 and 20,000 rubles respectively, were instrumental in ensuring terms favorable to England in the commercial treaty concluded at that

19. To cite only a few examples: Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/22, no. 62, December 1, 1791; PRO F.O. 65/23, no. 32, June 19, 1792; PRO F.O. 65/33, no. 15, March 9, 1796 (where Whitworth solicits a team of horses for Zubov); and Grenville's obliging response, PRO F.O. 65/33, no. 7, April 15, 1796.

20. On Zherebtsov, see V. Zubov, *Karlík favorita: Istorîia zhizni Ivana Iakubovskogo* (Munich, 1968), pp. 302–12; and S. A. Adrianov, "Ol'ga Aleksandrovna Zherebtsova," *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 62 (1895): 843–56.

21. Cobenzl to Thugut, HHSA, Russland, series 2, k. 84, no. 79, apostille 11, December 26, 1796.

22. V. N. Golovina, *Memoirs of the Countess Golovine*, ed. K. Waliszewski (London, 1910), pp. 174–75, 206–12.

time.²³ Whitworth, in describing this investment, observed that “both these persons, as they can render extraordinary services, are, from their situation in life much beyond the reach of an ordinary bribe.” (In Kutaisov’s case, at least, this was not always true—in 1792 the Austrians had bought him for a paltry 300 rubles.²⁴) In 1798 Grenville authorized Whitworth to draw on his banker for the sum of 40,000 rubles, to be paid to the ever-corruptible valet on the occasion of the treaty which brought Russia into the coalition against France. This time Whitworth remarked, “It could not have been employed at a more seasonable moment or in a person more capable of making a suitable return.”²⁵

Whitworth also had been friendly with Count Panin for many years before the latter became Russian vice-chancellor in the autumn of 1799. Panin was a haughty aristocrat, a Francophobe, and a friend of the English.²⁶ As early as 1798, when a *volte-face* in Russian foreign policy encouraged hopes of Anglo-Russian cooperation, Whitworth had listed Panin’s attributes: “sound principles, good judgment, an uncommon facility in the dispatch of business, a thorough sense of the danger to which Europe is exposed, and a rooted hatred for the maxim and character of the French Nation.”²⁷ At the end of 1799, as he and Panin worked to prevent the breakup of the anti-French coalition, Whitworth told Grenville, “I want words to express how grateful I am for the able assistance of Count Panin. Nothing can be compared to his wise and salutary principles unless it be the zeal and energy with which he avows them.”²⁸ At that time, the struggle within the Russian government between the factions of Panin, who favored continuation of the war against France, and of Count F. V. Rostopchin, the emperor’s aide-de-camp, who advocated an independent Russian policy which inclined more and more toward accommodation with France against the continental ambitions of Austria and the imperial pretensions of England,²⁹ was intense. Whitworth and Panin were obliged to combat the “poison” spread by Rostopchin and his associates, in order to convince the tsar that his honor and duty lay on the side of the coalition. Officially Whitworth was instructed to work for additional Russian forces in Italy and Switzerland. He also was to win approval for the use of Russian troops, then wintering on the Channel Islands, in another Anglo-Russian expedition to the continent. He was authorized, if necessary, to accept a Russian proposal of a triple alliance between Great

23. Whitworth to Grenville, “Most Secret,” PRO F.O. 65/36, no. 12, February 23, 1797.

24. Cobenzl to Thugut, HNSA, Russland, series 2, k. 76, no. 30, apostille 12, May 19, 1792.

25. Grenville to Whitworth, PRO F.O. 65/40, no. 32, October 16, 1798; and Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/41, no. 54, November 20, 1798.

26. See especially Panin’s correspondence with many Englishmen in Brückner, *Materialy*, 5:73–114.

27. Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/39, no. 18, April 18, 1798.

28. Whitworth to Grenville, private, PRO F.O. 65/45, November 28, 1799.

29. See the excellent reexamination of Russian foreign policy under Paul by Hugh Ragsdale, “Was Paul Bonaparte’s Fool?: The Evidence of the Danish and Swedish Archives,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 7, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 52–67. Whitworth dolefully reported Rostopchin’s influence as increasing, “I am sorry to say, in proportion to his disinclination to operations (against the French)” (Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/45, no. 102, November 13, 1799).

Britain, Russia, and Denmark. Captain Home Popham, a military expert who had impressed Tsar Paul the previous year, was dispatched from London to help with the arrangements.³⁰

A recent biographer of Paul, V. P. Zubow, suggests that Popham's mission might have had a sinister purpose connected with the conspiracy against Paul.³¹ But nothing in the Foreign Office archives lends itself to this interpretation. Moreover, a half-dozen of Popham's private letters to Whitworth dating from November 1799 to May 1800 survive in the Kent Archive Office. They are concerned exclusively with military proposals and the incredible series of mishaps which befell Popham on his journey to Russia. He finally arrived at Kronstadt in March 1800, but was not allowed to proceed further to St. Petersburg.³² By this time, Tsar Paul had already made up his mind to withdraw from the coalition, and he had requested the recall of Whitworth and Cobenzl by their governments. Popham's voyage was entirely in vain.

As they were waiting for Popham to arrive, Whitworth and Panin became increasingly apprehensive about Rostopchin's ascendancy, and at some point, so the theory goes, they began to meet with various disgruntled and dissatisfied persons at Mme. Zherebtsov's house.³³ Count Pahlen became a party to these discussions because he feared, like many others, that the tsar's unpredictable behavior and erratic policies might prove threatening to Russia's domestic tranquility and external security.³⁴ Since Pahlen controlled the military police, his presence at Zherebtsov's was an indispensable guaranty of the conspirators' security. But Whitworth's role must still remain a matter of speculation. None of the papers in Maidstone mention these meetings, so it is not possible to add to the little that is already known or surmised about them.³⁵

Other sources do indicate that Tsar Paul suspected the English and Austrian diplomats of conspiring behind his back. In February 1800 he declared Cobenzl to be *persona non grata* at court, and he ordered Mme. Zherebtsov to

30. Grenville to Whitworth, PRO F.O. 65/45, nos. 101–3, November 23, 1799.

31. V. Zubow, *Zar Paul I*, pp. 67–68.

32. Six letters of Popham to Whitworth, KAO, U 269, O 196/1, dated November 1798 to May 1800. Popham's ship was detained by ice off the coast of Sweden; he made his way to Stockholm and eventually to Finland, where he fell violently ill with "the fever." When he finally reached Vyborg in Russian Karelia, he wrote to Whitworth, "Here I am all Skin and Bone, but thank God no Fever!" (March 19, 1800).

33. See Whitworth's bitter comments about Rostopchin in his report to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/44, no. 94, October 10, 1799. For some of Panin's comments, see his letters to Vorontsov (for example, October 4, 1799—"C'est qu'il est très mauvais fils, intéressé, avare à l'excès, et qu'il n'ambitionne des places que pour s'enrichir" [AKV, 11:93]; and November 3, 1799 [AKV, 11:96–97]). Whitworth later drew up a memorandum in which he accused Rostopchin of causing the break between England and Russia, KAO, U 269, O 197/8, n.d. It is impossible to date the beginning of discussions at Mme. Zherebtsov's, but Rostopchin's letter to Vorontsov (October 9, 1799, AKV, 8:250–51), where he speaks of Panin's "love of intrigues," may be a reference to Panin's association with dissident elements. Cf. Czartoryski, *Mémoires*, 1:231–36, where he discusses the start of the conspiracy without giving any dates, and Waliszewski, *Paul Ier*, pp. 569–74.

34. See the letter of Bennigsen to Fock, *Historische Vierteljahrschaft* (1901), p. 60; the testimony of Veliaminov-Zernov in Schiemann, *Zur Geschichte*, pp. 277–79; and Czartoryski, *Mémoires*, 1:237.

35. The most complete summary of this matter, based primarily on the sources cited in the above note, is still Waliszewski, *Paul Ier*, pp. 572–75.

leave St. Petersburg "in a quarter of an hour's time."³⁶ A few weeks later the Russians partially succeeded in cracking the English and Austrian diplomatic codes, and the tsar learned that many unflattering things were being said about him by his allies. In response, he took the highly unusual and provocative step of denying passports to the official couriers of Great Britain and Austria, in effect holding Whitworth and Cobenzl incommunicado.³⁷ Because of this action, Great Britain and Austria suspended diplomatic relations with Russia in May.

Papers in the Kent Archive Office give a glimpse of what Whitworth and Panin were doing between February and June 1800. Initially, before the tsar's attitude had turned decisively against prosecuting the war with France, Whitworth and Panin, in collaboration with an adventurer named Charles François Dumouriez, were attempting to secure Russia's participation in an invasion of France. General Dumouriez had defected from the French Revolutionary Army in Belgium seven years earlier, and had spent most of the time since traveling from court to court, ever ready with plans for a counterrevolutionary invasion of France in association with different émigré groups.³⁸ His peregrinations inevitably brought him to St. Petersburg in January of 1800. He already had acquired the backing of Charles of Hesse, Staathalter of Schleswig-Holstein, a powerful figure behind the Danish throne, and he now hoped to get a warm reception from the tsar, who was known to be seeking a substitute for his Austrian ally.

Whitworth and Panin tried to stall Dumouriez until Popham's arrival in order to work out a detailed and unified plan of action to submit to the tsar.³⁹ Whitworth had no specific instructions from London on this matter, but he knew that time was of the essence, and he must have felt that Dumouriez's scheme could be reconciled with London's. Dumouriez presented him with two detailed memorandums calling for a diversionary action in Provence by French émigrés transported from Naples, which was to coincide with a major invasion of Brittany by English, Russian, and Danish troops.⁴⁰ Dumouriez emphasized the feasibility of his plan and its presumed compatibility with London's desires, but there actually were a great many unresolved difficulties—for example, the question of command responsibility, and who was going to foot the bill for the expeditions. Moreover, Lord Grenville was known to have a very poor opinion of Dumouriez.⁴¹ It is unlikely that he would have entertained seriously any plan

36. Cobenzl to Thugut, HHSA, Russland, series 2, k. 94, no. 12, February 11, 1800.

37. *Ibid.*; see also Cobenzl to Thugut, *ibid.*, no. 19, March 17, 1800; Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/46, no. 17, March 18, 1800; and Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/47, no. 32, May 19, 1800, concerning the broken codes.

38. On Dumouriez, a readable but quite dated biography is that by A. Chuquet, *Dumouriez* (Paris, 1914); see pp. 240–41.

39. Dumouriez to Whitworth, February 15/26, 1800, KAO, U 269, O 197/3. From this letter it is clear that Dumouriez was growing impatient with waiting.

40. *Ibid.* One memorandum was a ten-page proposal, "Diversion dans le midi de la France," and the other was a forty-seven-page document, "Plan d'expédition maritime sur les côtes de France." Whitworth also received a paper entitled, "Note sur le projet d'employer les troupes danoises." See also Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/46, no. 20, March 25, 1800.

41. See Chuquet, *Dumouriez*, pp. 232–33. Grenville felt that Dumouriez, unlike Lafayette, did not have the merit of being attached to his principles.

in which the ex-revolutionary general figured prominently. Panin and Whitworth were in fact grasping at straws. Even as they met with Dumouriez, Tsar Paul was requesting Whitworth's recall, indicating that his mind was already made up.⁴² Dumouriez remained in St. Petersburg for two months, and returned to Holstein empty-handed.

All hopes that Paul might choose to remain in the anti-French coalition were dashed on March 18/30, 1800, when Panin was told that Whitworth's recall had been requested four weeks earlier without his knowledge. Panin was now ordered to tell Whitworth that his couriers would no longer be allowed to pass.⁴³ Whitworth was shocked at this announcement, and could find no rational explanation. It was at this time that he penned his much-quoted secret dispatch in which he charged that "the Emperor is literally not in his senses."⁴⁴ Whitworth was allowed to continue to see the vice-chancellor, but he was not able to conduct any official business. What he and Panin talked about is not known, but the Kent Archive contains some tantalizing scraps of information.

On "lundi 19," that is, March 19, 1800, Panin sent Whitworth a personal note apologizing for what he had had to tell him the day before, declaring that it had been "odious" to him. The note closed with the invitation, "Je vous attendrai ce soir."⁴⁵ Two days later Whitworth penned an interesting dispatch to Lord Grenville, suggesting that he not be recalled, but that he merely be granted a leave of absence, because "the storm must soon blow over." Whitworth blamed Rostopchin for the current animosity toward England, but he indicated that a change was in the offing. "It is perfectly impossible that he can remain long in power, and whatsoever the change may be, it must be favorable to the cause. . . . One way or another" the present difficulties would shortly be removed.⁴⁶

It is tempting to speculate that Whitworth's dispatch was prompted by the knowledge that Panin intended to approach Grand Duke Alexander for the first time to ask him to take over the government from his father. Others in the Russian capital were also aware of changes in the air, as is demonstrated by a most interesting note sent to Count S. R. Vorontsov by his friend Dr. John Rogerson (who was the ideal observer at court, being on terms of intimacy with many members of the Russian aristocracy, including Rostopchin as well as Panin):

Tout l'entourage se trouve au bout de leur latin. Celui que je viens de quitter [Rostopchin] je vois être dans un état (de) dépérissement et inquietude; il dit qu'il ne sera plus ici dans le mois de mai. Même le favori [Kutaisov] devient très inquiet, et je vois (entre nous) que tous veulent se

42. That Paul made this decision and instructed Rostopchin to write London without even informing Vice-Chancellor Panin is the point made by V. N. Aleksandrenko in *Russkie diplomaticheskie agenty v Londone v XVIII veke*, 2 vols. (Warsaw, 1897), 1:75-77.

43. Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/46, no. 17, March 18, 1800.

44. Ibid.

45. Panin to Whitworth, KAO, U 269, O 197/11, "ce lundi 19" (March 19, 1800 O.S.). From its position in the bundle, this note clearly pertains to 1800. A check of the Julian calendar for 1800 shows that there was no other "lundi 19" during the time Whitworth was in Russia.

46. Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/46, no. 22, April 2, 1800 (March 21 O.S.).

repatrier vers le grand-duc. Je vous prie, mon cher comte, tâchez de procrastiner; c'est l'idée du comte [Panin] aussi.⁴⁷

But Alexander refused to consider Panin's proposal the first time it was put to him. This was a cruel blow to those who counted on his support, but it gave a further lease on life to Rostopchin. Thus, Whitworth, not Rostopchin, was forced to depart in May.

Whitworth and Panin continued to meet secretly right up to the moment of Whitworth's departure. In a private note of "mercredi," probably May 9/21, 1800, Panin arranged an inconspicuous rendezvous with Whitworth: "J'ai un mot à vous dire, Milord. . . . Ce que j'ai à vous dire n'est point officiel, mais un avertissement d'ami."⁴⁸ Apparently Panin feared that some disaster was about to befall them, for the next day, "jeudi 10," he expressed relief that the threat was past: "J'éprouve une satisfaction infinie en vous annonçant, Milord, que nos appréhensions n'étaient point fondées, qu'un conducteur invisible a détourné la foudre, quoique le nuage fut sur nos têtes. Par le rapport qu'on vient de me faire, je suis complètement rassuré. Malgré cela, le régime que vous voulez suivre aujourd'hui me semble très convenable à l'état de votre santé."⁴⁹

Shortly thereafter, instructions arrived from London concerning the protest to be made about the withheld passports.⁵⁰ Whitworth and Panin first discussed the matter in private, but could think of nothing to soften the blow.⁵¹ Whitworth and his secretary of legation, Justinian Casamajor, jointly delivered the protest. Tsar Paul, using as a pretext an alleged slight to the Russian ambassador in Stockholm by his British counterpart, then ordered Casamajor expelled along with Whitworth. Panin had to announce this additional misfortune to his friend "dans la plus profonde douleur."⁵² As he was leaving St. Petersburg the next day, Whitworth sent a note of encouragement to Panin:

Je m'adresse à Mons. le Vice Chancelier pour remettre à Son Excellence la lettre pour accuser la reception de celle qu'elle m'a communiqué hier par ordre de S. M. l'Empereur. Je m'acquitte avec peine de ce devoir. Mais comment exprimer à l'ami que j'aime, que je respecte, toute la douleur que je ressens en me separant de lui. Recevez, mon cher comte, les adieux d'un homme qui vous est tendrement attaché. Pensez à moi, comme je penserai bien souvent à vous. La dernière prière que je vous ferai est pour vous exhorter au courage, à la patience, à la resignation. Pensez combien depend de vous dans des circonstances si critiques. Tant que vous êtes consacrés à

47. Rogerson to Vorontsov, April 8, 1800, *AKV*, 30:122.

48. Panin to Whitworth, KAO, U 269, O 197/11, "mercredi." The precise date is deduced from the connection of this note to the one which follows, "jeudi 10," which could only have been May 10, 1800 O.S.

49. *Ibid.*, "jeudi 10" (May 10, 1800 O.S.). There were no other Thursdays falling on the 10th of the month during the first half of 1800.

50. Grenville to Casamajor, PRO F.O. 65/47, nos. 1-3, May 2, 1800. The instructions were addressed to the secretary of legation because it was assumed that Whitworth would have already left Russia.

51. Panin to Whitworth, KAO, U 269, O 197/11, May 20, 1800 O.S.

52. Panin to Whitworth, private, *ibid.*, "ce vendredi 25"; also Panin to Whitworth, as vice-chancellor of Russia to the minister of Great Britain, *ibid.*, May 25, 1800.

la cause je ne perdrai pas tout espoir, et je me laisserai aller à la bonne espérance de vous revoir. Adieu, mons. le comte. Adieu mon digne et respectable ami. Accordez moi ce titre; je sçaurai toujours l'apprécier.⁵³

On the same day, Whitworth received a note from the military governor, Count Pahlen, which indicates that they had been in amiable contact before, and is, as far as I know, the only surviving proof of a connection between them:

Je suis pénétré des plus sincères sentimens en vous voyant, Mylord, quitter cette ville. Soyez persuadé que rien n'effacera de mon coeur la vraie estime et l'attachement que j'ai toujours senti envers la personne de Votre Excellence, ni le souvenir des agréables momens que j'ai passé en votre société. Je souhaite de tout mon coeur que vous finissiez votre voyage de la manière la plus heureuse, et que j'aye un jour le plaisir de vous recevoir ici, espérant que ce souhait ne manquera pas d'être accompli.⁵⁴

Even taking into consideration the elaborate formal politeness of the time and place, this hardly sounds like the notification of a chief of police to an undesirable alien being expelled from his city! Could it have been an assurance to Whitworth that measures discussed in his "agreeable" company would continue without him?

Many months later, Whitworth expressed his satisfaction on learning of the death of Paul: "I shall, so long as I live, celebrate as a festival the day on which I learned of the death of that arch-fiend Paul."⁵⁵ Whitworth could have returned to St. Petersburg (Count Vorontsov in particular urged him to resume his station there), but Whitworth chose, for whatever reasons, to remain in England. He was succeeded in St. Petersburg by Alleyn Fitzherbert, now Lord St. Helens.⁵⁶ Among the papers in Maidstone is a private letter in which St. Helens gives Whitworth some information about the death of Paul: "I must defer political and private anecdotes till another opportunity, apprising you only that the accounts we had rec'd of a certain transaction were tolerably exact, excepting as to the Hero of the executive part, who was a certain Gen'l Bennigsen. . . ."⁵⁷

53. Copy of a letter from Whitworth to Panin, in Whitworth's hand, KAO, U 269, O 197/7, May 26/June 7, 1800. I have reproduced this copy as it appeared, evidently written in great haste. A slightly different version of the letter was published, but with the wrong date, by Brückner, *Materialy*, 5:111.

54. Pahlen to Whitworth, KAO, U 269, O 197/8, May 26, 1800 O.S.

55. Whitworth to Grenville, April 16, 1801, in *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue*, vol. 7 (London, 1905), p. 4 (cited in N. Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean, 1797-1807* [Chicago, 1976], p. 153, n. 80).

56. See the letter of Vorontsov to Whitworth, PRO F.O. 65/48, April 15, 1801; and Vorontsov to Grenville, Dropmore Manuscripts, April 17, 1801. Vorontsov liberally advised his friends concerning whom they should send to Russia, and he asked Whitworth to pass on his recommendations to Lord Hawkesbury in case Whitworth should decline to return himself.

57. St. Helens to Whitworth, private, KAO, U 269, O 197/12, May 31, 1801. Bennigsen was recruited at the last moment by Count Pahlen (see Bennigsen's letter to Fock, *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* [1901], p. 60). Cf. St. Helens to Hawkesbury, "Secret and Confidential," PRO F.O. 65/48, May 31, 1801.

By far the most interesting documents among the Whitworth papers in Kent are the ones touching on the matter of a large, secret disbursement made by Whitworth in the last days of his mission in St. Petersburg. In May 1800, Whitworth reported to Grenville that he was making preparations for his departure. His report ended with the statement that he had had to draw on his banker, Mr. Daniel Bayley of the Russia Company, for a total of 40,000 rubles "necessary for the expense in closing down the Mission."⁵⁸ But Whitworth later failed to submit a satisfactory account of how this money had been spent, and he seems to have been in no hurry to do so. In November 1808, His Majesty's Commissioners of Audit discovered the draft on Bayley's account, and notified Whitworth, who was now living in retirement in Kent, that in the absence of a proper accounting he would be held liable for this sum of money. It was suggested that Whitworth appear before the commissioners to swear an oath concerning how the money was spent.⁵⁹ Whitworth replied somewhat cavalierly that "I have only to observe that [this money was] as Mr. Bayley stated, paid by him to me . . . on Account of Secret Service. I have no accounts whatever, it having been invariably my practice during the course of my Mission in Russia to destroy all traces of disbursements made under such account."⁶⁰ The commissioners did not consider this reply satisfactory.

Whitworth turned for help to the current foreign secretary, George Canning, protesting that "I do not recollect that on my return from Russia . . . any such oath was required of me." Canning replied firmly that this was required by law.⁶¹ Whitworth then wrote two additional letters, another one to Canning, and one to Lord Grenville, now also out of office. The second letter to Canning was more conciliatory in tone than the first had been:

The money was taken up by me as I stated at the time to Lord Grenville, in part to make good some payments on the account of Secret Service connected with the accomplishment of the object for which the cash subsidy was given, and partly to enable me to leave Petersburg in conformity to the will of the Emperor Paul signified to me in so abrupt a manner as to put me to great inconvenience.

Whitworth went on to say that under the circumstances, Grenville had authorized him to include his personal costs under the head of Secret Service, and that he remembered swearing an oath on his return, which he implied might have been somehow lost by the Office of the Exchequer.⁶²

Whitworth, in his letter to Grenville, complained that Bayley and the Foreign Office had somehow failed to submit their accounts of the Secret Service money to the Exchequer in 1800, and he pleaded with Grenville to intercede now with the commissioners in his behalf. Grenville replied that this would be impossible. The only solution would be for Whitworth to make a full statement

58. Whitworth to Grenville, PRO F.O. 65/47, no. 35, May 22, 1800.

59. Commissioners of Audit to Whitworth, KAO, U 269, O 196/5, November 5, 1808.

60. Whitworth to the commissioners, *ibid.*, November 9, 1808.

61. Whitworth to Canning, *ibid.*, November 11, 1808; Canning to Whitworth, *ibid.*, November 12, 1808. Copies of these two letters also appear in PRO F.O. 65/74.

62. Whitworth to Canning, PRO F.O. 65/75, November 15, 1808.

to Canning, and to ask him in his official capacity to recommend to the Treasury Board that Whitworth be absolved from the debt.⁶³

Whitworth wrote again to Canning on December 4, proposing to dispose of the matter as Grenville had suggested, and explained:

The part of the 40000 rubles appropriated to my use was 12000 rubles, equivalent at that time to £1500 Stl. For the employment of the remainder I am ready to account in the manner prescribed by law.

I will only mention that this was the winding up of a mission of twelve years, during which I concluded a Treaty of Alliance, a Treaty of Commerce, and three Conventions for cooperation in the war against France. Such being the result of a mission to a court where more is (or at least was) to be done with money, and less without it, than in any court in Europe, I trust that I shall not be charged with an improvident use of that discretionary power entrusted to me.⁶⁴

Canning was now willing to handle the matter as suggested, and after a further exchange of letters, Whitworth submitted statements under oath to the Treasury and to Canning. The statement to Canning, dated December 20, 1808, was quite vague:

I beg leave to state to you that on the 10th and 14th of May, 1800, being at that time His Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of St. Petersburg, I received of Mr. Daniel Bayley, through whom the subsidy paid that year to Russia was remitted, the amount of 28000 rubles, at that time equal to 3500 pounds Sterling, which sum was duly applied by me to purposes of Secret Service.⁶⁵

In an accompanying letter of the same date, Whitworth asserted that he could not remember exactly on what the remaining 12,000 rubles had been spent, only that it went to cover debts which had accumulated over the years of his mission.⁶⁶

At first the Treasury Board balked at accepting Whitworth's vague explanation at this late hour, especially since both the manner in which he got the money and the way he accounted for it were "not in the manner set forth (by law)."⁶⁷ Whitworth was obliged, therefore, to seek Canning's help once more to extract him from his difficulty. The business was finally settled before the Board on December 30. Whitworth submitted a new affidavit to the lords which contained no more information than the one he had given Canning. But on the

63. Whitworth to Grenville, KAO, U 269, O 196/5, November 15, 1808; Grenville to Whitworth, *ibid.*, November 28, 1808.

64. Whitworth to Canning, PRO F.O. 65/75, December 4, 1808. See also the following letter from Whitworth to Canning, *ibid.*, December 9, 1808.

65. Whitworth to Canning, KAO, U 269, O 196/5, December 20, 1808.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Commissioners to Whitworth, *ibid.*, December 15, 1808.

recommendation of the foreign secretary, they decided to relieve him of the debt. The king's warrant for this release was issued to Whitworth on February 7, 1809.⁶⁸

What is most significant in all of this? First, Whitworth's handling of funds in the closing days of his mission was quite irregular. Second, he was deliberately vague about how the money was spent. Third, he resisted attempts to make him tell what he had done with it. It might well be asked why His Majesty's government was willing finally to accept Whitworth's vague and belated explanations, if not because it was privately understood by a few key individuals that these matters ought not to be probed deeper.

Drafts of two private letters from Whitworth to Lord Grenville, dated May 19 and 20, 1800, which perhaps were never sent, suggest even more strongly the irregularity and the uneasiness which Whitworth felt:

The winding up of a long and expensive mission throws some difficulties in my way, which it will be impossible to remove without assistance. I have therefore taken from Mr. Bayley a sum sufficient to answer every demand, either public or private, and for this I have given drafts on Mr. Bidwell in the usual manner. The sum which I have thus taken up amounts to 40000 rubles, about fifteen of which have been in part due to Mr. Bayley since last year, and in part expended on the account of Public Service. I had no other means of satisfying Mr. Bayley's demand on my own occasions than by giving him drafts on the Office. But at the same time that I entreat Your Lordship's assistance in procuring His Majesty's pardon for the freedom I take, I beg leave to assure Your Lordship that should my claim under all the circumstances of my long residence in the country with a salary totally inadequate to the expenses of the place . . . and of my so sudden departure under circumstances also which make it doubly necessary to leave no demand unsatisfied, be deemed in the smallest degree unreasonable, I pledge myself to refund every shilling of it with the most scrupulous exactness within a month of my arrival in England.

Whitworth was so worried about "abusing the confidence reposed in me" that he returned to this subject again the next day, reiterating his promise to make restitution.⁶⁹

What is of particular interest, however, is not the portion of the money applied to his private debt, as unethical as that might have been, but rather the 28,000 rubles applied to Secret Service. To whom was it paid and for what purpose, since Whitworth was in the process of leaving Russia? Does Whitworth's assurance that this was a court where more was to be done with money and less without than in any other court, and his allusion to circumstances which

68. Whitworth to Canning, PRO F.O. 65/75, December 23, 1808; Whitworth's affidavit to the Lords of the Treasury, KAO, U 269, O 196/5, December 24, 1808; Minutes of the Board of Treasury, PRO, T. 29/98, December 30, 1808; Canning to Whitworth, KAO, U 269, O 196/5, January 9, 1809; Lords of the Treasury to Whitworth, *ibid.*, January 20, 1809; and King's Warrant to Whitworth, *ibid.*, February 7, 1809.

69. Drafts of two letters from Whitworth to Grenville, KAO, U 269, O 196/5, May 19 and 20, 1800.

"make it doubly necessary to leave no demand unsatisfied," justify our supposition that the money was spent on bribery? And if it was spent on bribery, why not in the interest of the conspirators? A most likely recipient would have been Kutaisov, who was subsequently manipulated by Pahlen into persuading the tsar to restore the Zubovs (who had been in disgrace since 1797) and to dismiss Rostopchin prior to the execution of the conspirators' plan.⁷⁰

This, of course, is still speculation, and the evidence against Whitworth is only circumstantial. Yet the very fact that Whitworth's final explanations were so vague (especially when contrasted with his earlier mention of Kutaisov and others by name) leads one to suspect that there is more to this business than meets the eye. Was the money perhaps left at the disposal of Panin or Pahlen, to be used by them at a timely moment? Whitworth had no specific authorization for such a disbursement, but this would not be inconsistent with what we now know of Whitworth's character or of the latitude he customarily ascribed to his "discretionary power," and it would explain his reluctance to account specifically for what he had done with the money. At the very least, even if the documents do not allow a definite conclusion, the business of Whitworth's disbursement of Secret Service money in May 1800 provides definite grounds for the charges about "English gold" so long dismissed by most historians.⁷¹

The Whitworth papers at the Kent Archive Office include many letters written subsequent to 1801, showing Whitworth's continued interest in Russia, and illustrating his friendship with Panin, Vorontsov, Novosiltsov, and others.⁷² None of these, however, sheds any more light on his activity in the final months of his mission to St. Petersburg. Future historians may uncover additional pertinent information in other archives in Great Britain or the Soviet Union but, until they do, the papers in the Kent Archive will remain the best, if still uncertain, guide for those who would, in the words of the French editor of long ago, "develope the mystery."

70. See Rostopchin to Vorontsov, June 30, 1801, *AKV*, 8:286–88; the testimony of Kotzebue and Veliaminov-Zernov in Schiemann, *Zur Geschichte*, pp. 278, 321–24; and E. Shumigorskii, *Imperator Pavel I: Zhizn' i tsarstvovanie* (St. Petersburg, 1897), pp. 195–96.

71. See, for example, Thiers, *History of the Consulate*, pp. 245–46; Waliszewski, *Paul Ier*, p. 575; and Grunwald, *L'assassinat*, pp. 180–82.

72. These letters make up the bulk of KAO, U 269, O 197. They are personal in character, and almost exclusively concerned with small, private matters.