

SECTION XX. HISTORY, ARCHEOLOGY AND CULTUROLOGY

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THE GREEK PROJECT - FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TEXT

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The Russian-Austrian agreement on the redistribution of Europe of the XVIII century, known in historiography as the Greek Project, does not exist in the format of an official document, but the parties of this treaty, on the one hand, the Russian Empress Catherine II and, on the other hand, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II agree in letters written to each other (dated: May 21, May 24 and September 10, 1782) that the facts and conditions set forth in the referred letters have an official form and fulfillment is mandatory not only for them, but for their descendants as well.

However, the basic principles of the Greek Project – the plan for the restoration of the Dacian Kingdom and the Greek Empire – are known in historiography. A number of important details can be found in the epistolary-documentary materials that were supposed to ensure the implementation of this project and make an influence on the political situation of that period.

Since the European diplomacy of the 80-ies of the XVIII century and the subsequent period was based on the Greek Project, the latter reconstructed by us, as the primary source, should provide significant assistance to researchers, interested in the aforementioned processes, to make an objective assessment of events.

Introduction

The project of neutralizing the Ottoman Empire and redistributing its territories was especially active in Europe from the 60-90-ies of the XVIII century. The Ottoman Empire posed a special threat to Western Europe since the 80-ies of the XV century. The Ottomans, who were twice on the outskirts of Vienna in 1529 and 1683, made Europe and the great powers to neutralize the threat of the Ottomans on a regular basis. Several anti-Ottoman projects have been created since then, though unsuccessful. The Greek Project acquired a qualitatively new shape – the creation of buffer states was a different model for solving the issue.

In 1779, recognition of Russia's arbitrator status under the Treaty of Teschen was followed by another attempt to neutralize the Ottomans. The solution to this problem was the agreement of 1782 between the emperors of Russia and Austria.

This article is part of a monographic study of the Russian-Austrian plan for the rededication of Europe, known in history as the "Greek project". We carry out fundamental research in regard of the Greek Project, due to the special national-political importance of the issue. We have published the results of monographic research in scientific conferences and publications in different cities of the world. In

particular, in Oxford [49], Cambridge [53; 57; 60], Paris [54; 61], Melbourne [56], Moscow [52], Tokyo [55], Rome [48], Vienna [47], Warsaw [40; 41], Boston [39], San Francisco [43], Sheffield [42], Las Palmas [46], Tbilisi [44; 45; 58], Telavi [45; 50], Kutaisi [51; 59].

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of our research is to restore the document that would be used as a basis for the plan of the redistribution of Europe and the neutralization of the Ottoman Empire. It is a precondition for a full understanding of the unified diplomatic and political processes.

Novelty of the study

This study is the first attempt in historiography to restore the version of the Greek Project, the Russian-Austrian treaty for the redistribution of Europe of the XVIII century, based on primary sources as similar to the original as possible.

Research methods

We rely on the methodological principles of objectivity, historicism, determinism, alternativeness, reconstruction, developed in the theoretical studies by the following scientists: Charles-Victor Langlois, Charles Seignobos [25]; Robin George Collingwood [9]; Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch [8]; Peter Lambert and Phillipp Schofield [26]; Abrams Lynn [1]; Brundage Anthony [7]; Gregory Ian, Ell Paul [11]; Hughes-Warrington [14]; Iggers George, Wang Qiang Edward [16]; Akira Iriye [17]; Kaldellis Anthony [20]; Koselleck Reinhart [21; 22]; Lukacs John [24]; Munro Doug, Reid John [32]; Quigley Carroll [62]; Raaflaub Kurt [63].

Sources

Since the basic conceptual principles of the Greek Project were reflected in the correspondence of the two emperors, and no original of this project is available, we will try to reconstruct the probable text of the Greek Project by the method of historical reconstruction.

This is facilitated, on the one hand, by the correspondence of Catherine II and Joseph II, which, according to the emperors themselves, has the status of an official contract [2, p. 78, 82], and on the other hand, the personal record of Catherine II about the Greek Project [64, p.1-4], where the Russian Empress explains her position towards this project within the context of international problems. Consequently, these correspondence and record are the main source of evidence for the Greek Project.

In addition to the primary sources, secondary sources of the Greek Project are also available. In this regard, it is important:

1. Materials preserved in the archives of the State Council existing during the reign of Catherine II [6], since this state body had the duty to advise the Empress on foreign policy issues;
2. Official treaties and acts describing the relations between the Russian and Austrian Empires [27; 28; 29; 30; 31];
3. Correspondence of Empress Catherine II to Voltaire [77];
4. Correspondence of Empress Catherine II with the German enlightener Friedrich Melchior Grimm [72];
5. Records obtained from different documents of Catherine II [73; 74];
6. Records of the Russian Emperor preserved in the state archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [67; 68, 69; 73; 66];
7. Correspondence of Catherine II and Frederick II, the King of Prussia [71];
8. Records of Aleksandre Bezborodko son of Andrei – personal secretary of Catherine II [12; 13];
9. Records of Khrapovitski, personal secretary of Catherine II [23];

10. Correspondence of Maria Theresa, the Emperess of Austria with her son Joseph II [3; 4; 5];

11. Correspondence of the Austrian Ambassador to the Russian Empire Ludwig von Cobenzl with the Austrian Emperor Joseph II [18; 19];

12. Correspondence of the Austrian diplomat D'Argento Merci with the ministers of the Russian Empire [69, pp. 479-518];

13. Records of Wenzel Kaunitz, the creator of the famous diplomatic revolution of the XVIII century. [70, pp. 479-518; 76];

14. Materials stored in the archives of the Chancellery of the Imperial Court of Austria [76].

These documentary materials, secondary sources that we use at various stages of this study in accordance with specific needs, further enhance the position that the Greek Project was a reality and not a product of the imagination.

Research Results

The text of the Greek Project does not exist in the form of an officially signed agreement, at least, it has not been found in the archives to the present time. American researcher David Griffiths explains the referred fact as follows: "As the Greek Project caused concern among the Western powers, most of the information related to the project was either not recorded at all or was destroyed" [10, pp. 207-208].

It is noteworthy that the representative of Soviet historiography, Olga Markova, rules out the existence of such a project completely. The researcher urges: "such documents exist neither in the Senate archive nor in Potemkin's archive" [37, pp. 8-9; 38, pp. 53-54]. O. Markova's argument seems rather unconvincing. We believe that the point of view of the American scientist David Griffiths mentioned above is more appropriate, according to which the original version of the Greek Project could not be found either in the archives of the Senate or in the writings of Prince Potemkin for the simple reason: neither the Senate nor the Prince took a direct part in the formation of Russia's foreign policy" [10, p. 354].

Although Grigori Potemkin did a lot for the implementation of the Greek Project, especially in the part of the conquest of the Crimea, which should be echoed by the fact that the referred project is sometimes called the Potemkin project in historiography [65, pp. 133-138], he did not participate in the development of this project itself. Therefore, no fragments of either the official or the "draft" version of the Greek Project can be found in his archive [10, p. 354]. Olga Markova's opinion - as the text of the Greek Project could not be found, it means the absence of such an agreement- can be somehow justified - it is definitely illogical to look for a contract while the text of the latter does not exist. Therefore, we consider it necessary to establish whether the Greek Project existed and if it did, why the text of the agreement has not been found so far.

Direct evidence of the existence of the Greek Project can be observed in the letters of Catherine II and Joseph II. In particular: A letter of Joseph II written to Catherine on May 21, 1781 begins as follows: "**This letter is as important as the officially concluded agreement...**" [2, p. 78, focus on the topic – M.N]. The end of this letter is rather important, where it is clearly explained: "these obligations are the most important not only for us personally, but also for our descendants ..." [2, p. 82].

On May 24, 1782, Catherine II wrote a letter to Joseph II with the title: "**Military defense agreement...** and she explained unequivocally: **this letter equals to an agreement.** The obligations stipulated in this treaty apply not only to us directly, but also to our descendants... **I confirm that this treaty** will enhance the treaties of 1772

and Teschen concluded between our empires...” [2, pp. 82-83, focus on the topic – M.N].

On September 10, 1782, Catherine II wrote a letter to Joseph II: “I think that **the secret convention** should be based on two main points that will form a basis of our agreement: 1. Full protection and inviolability of our possessions; 2. Interests that we may have in common regarding the Ottomans... [2, pp. 143-144, focus on the topic – M.N]. In order to avoid hindrance of our plan by other European states as well as to achieve our goals and a great deed, we should not oppose them to occupy the lands from the ruins of the Turkish Empire that will not harm the common interests of our states. If we encounter any contradictions here, **we must act together in accordance with the secret clauses of the alliance agreement concluded between us...**” [2, p.157, focus on the topic – M.N].

Extracts from the above primary sources unequivocally prove the existence of a secret military defense agreement between Austria and Russia,¹ indicated by both the Russian and Austrian emperors. For the second question – If the Greek Project really existed, why the document is not available - we have to state following explanation: The Greek Project was a secret project.² However, initially neither party, nor Vienna, nor St. Petersburg had anything to hide. An official ceremony was planned to sign this document and recognize publicly the transformation of existing friendly relations into political ones. It is noteworthy that the preparation of the referred agreement lasted five months and everything was defined in a scrupulous manner [34, pp. 122-142].

The preparation of the treaty started in 1780. It was preconditioned by the existing situation- after the Treaty of Teschen 1779, Russia became a qualitatively different state, it received the status of a guarantor of the Treaty of Westphalia, meaning not only participation of the great powers in the European political arena, but also the role of an arbitrator. Therefore, it was extremely important for Russia to make Austria offer the agreement to the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg.³

Relationship with Russia was also very important for Austria. Therefore, Ludwig Cobenzl, the Ambassador of Austria in St. Petersburg contacted the Russian Vice-Chancellor Bezborodko in a conspiratorial manner and offered a secret meeting. The fate of the political agreement between the two countries was decided there [34, pp. 133-39].

It was preliminary agreed that the treaty had to recognize Russia's territorial integrity as of 1713, a period in which the Habsburgs acceded several important territories in central Europe and Italy. On the other hand, the Austrian Emperor and his successors guaranteed that they would recognize the territorial integrity of Russia, as well as the terms of the Treaty of Kucuk-Kaynarca. Austria also undertook the obligation to be a military ally of Russia in case Turkiye started military activities.

It took five months to prepare an optimal agreement acceptable to both sides, but the agreement was not officially signed and was concluded in a rather unusual format — with letters of Joseph II and Catherine II. Such an unusual format was explained by the disagreements about the official signing ceremony of the agreement. In particular, the Emperor of Austria, as the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, did

¹ Catherine II calls the secret document *military defense agreement*, however whether the content of the latter envisages the self-defense and is far from conquering the territories of foreign countries is a completely different side of the issue.

² *Izabela Madariaga* [34, pp. 117-132] and *Andrei Zorin* [78, pp. 37-39] paid attention to the detail.

³ This is a very important detail - the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg behaved exactly the same way in regard of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, when it made a series of intrigues in order to make the Imperial Court of the Bagrationis offer the initiative of concluding an agreement.

not recognize the principle of alternate – equality with the state he was going to conclude an international treaty. Accordingly, he demanded to be the first to sign the treaty in accordance with the rules established for centuries, Catherine II required the same as according to the Treaty of Teschen (1779) Russia acquired a completely different status - a conciliatory judge of Europe, in fact a gendarme.

Austria was not a powerful state at that time and its main political target was Prussia - they were in confrontation with each other for Silesia (Russia was on the side of Austria in this conflict). However, the Emperor of Austria was at the same time the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, he officially represented Western Rome. That time the latter existed only formally as an institution, but still contained real signs of development and transformation into an accountable political force, especially in the format of relations with Russia. However, in this case the focus is not directly to the secular segment of Russia, to the empire, but to the confessional status as the Russian state clearly claimed to be the defender of the interests of the Orthodox world. The German Holy Roman Empire was settling relations with the Eastern Roman Empire. The convergence of interests was supposed to outline a chance of restoring a unified Roman Empire, if implemented, the latter would lead to a redistribution of European power and the establishment of a new diplomatic configuration.

It was not a strong and weak state opposing each other, but, on the one hand, the Christian center of Western Europe - the Holy Roman Empire, and on the other - a political force defending Eastern Christianity, the Orthodox population.¹ The ambitions of both states were presented within the given context. Joseph II, as Holy Roman Emperor, had the traditional advantage and honor of being the first to sign both sides of the treaty. Though this was opposed by the principle of alternate, and at the same time the "self-respect" of Russia was violated, since St. Petersburg did not even want to formally give the superiority to Austria.

A solution was found. It was decided to declare the treaty secret, cancel the official part of its presentation and signing, and monarchs had to confirm their positions in a rather unusual manner, by using an epistolary mode, executed by the letters of Joseph II and Catherine II dated May 21 and 24, 1781 [2, pp. 78-82, 82-87]. According to the American researcher Isabella Madariaga an alternate principle should have been proposed to Catherine by Panin [Madariaga, 1959: 123], who was interested in project failure. This version is rejected by Zonin [78, pp. 38]. The latter believes that as Panin's position at the imperial court was weak for that time, he should not have managed to prevent such a large-scale project.

Following detail is rather significant - according to Albert Sorel, a famous French historian of the second half of the XIX century, the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry Nikolai Panin, who opposed the Russian-Austrian union with all his essence, repeatedly suggested the Austrian Ambassador Lobkovich (1769-1771) that Russia and Austria should jointly share not Poland, rather actual for that moment, but the Ottoman Empire [75, p. 181].

We believe that the principle of alternate should not have been the reason for making the Greek Project secret. As the observation of the international political processes of the 70-80 ies of the XVIII century showed us, Russia became the guarantor of the Imperial Court of Austria after the Treaty of Teschen that was a precondition for the rapprochement of Vienna and St. Petersburg. Taking into account the aforementioned situation, the treaty concluded by Russia with Prussia, Austria's

¹ We do not use the term "Moscow - the third Rome" deliberately, as this theory has not spread beyond the church narration, and therefore, has never been an official state doctrine of Russia.

archenemy, created some discomfort and contradiction. This inconsistent dual political game might have been a distinct barrier, preventing to conclude another political treaty with the Imperial Court of Vienna beyond the already concluded Treaty of Teschen with the latter. We believe this factor, together with the principle of alternate, was crucial while making a decision to keep the Austrian-Russian treaty secret, which was actually a Greek Project.

Although, the secrecy was protected as much as possible, the anti-Ottoman treaty between Austria and Russia became known throughout Europe. Europe was gripped by panic. People already talked about the expected aggression of the Turks. Events developed according to such an undesirable scenario that the Emperor of Austria offered Catherine II to declare publicly that no agreement had been concluded between Austria and Russia. Catherine refused on the grounds that full confidentiality would be protected on her part, since she believed that only Catherine, the addressee, would have access to secret correspondence, especially to the letter of Emperor Joseph II. Nevertheless, the fact was undoubtful - the story of anti-Turkish coalition of Russia and Austria became known throughout Europe, including in Georgia.

We will try to restore the text of the Greek Project by using the method of historical reconstruction. This is possible based on the correspondence of Catherine and Joseph II, which, as indicated in specific letters related to the issue, have the status of an official agreement [2, pp. 78, 82].

Following letters of Catherine II and Joseph II (the Emperor of Austria) are related to the Greek Project: the letter of Joseph II (the Emperor of Austria) written to Catherine II dated: May 21, 1781 [2, pp.78-82], Catherine's letter to Joseph dated: May 24, 1782 [2, pp. 82-87], Catherine's letter to Joseph, the same day, May 24, 1782 [2, pp. 87-90], Catherine's letter to Joseph dated: September 10, 1782 [2, pp. 82-87]. It is noteworthy, that French originals of these letters, published by Arneth in 1869, as well as Russian translations, published in "Russky Arkhiv" in 1880 are available. We preferred Arneth's French publications, since the three most important letters related to the Greek Project (the letter of Joseph II to Catherine dated: May 21, 1782; two letters of Catherine II to Joseph II dated: May, 24, 1782) are ignored in the Russian version for an inexplicable reason and only Catherine's letter to Joseph II, dated September 10, 1782 is printed, in which the Russian emperor, in addition to the conceptual issues of the Greek Project, reviews the international political situation and the perspective of a secret plan and expected contradictions.

The fragments of the letters presented below are translated from Arneth's French publication.

* * *

A letter of Joseph II to Catherine May 21, 1782

„This letter is as important as an agreement concluded officially...

I confirm the respect for the decision contained in the treaty existing between Russia and the Ottoman Empire... I guarantee to recognize and support... the treaties of October 9, 1704; July 10, 1774; April 4, 1775; March 10, 1779 ... both from a diplomatic and military point of view...

I am ready to be Russia's ally in the war against the Ottomans. I will explain that the referred military support will be very expensive - ships need to be built, salaries need to be paid to the soldiers... war is associated with high costs... Nevertheless, I am ready to send exactly the same number of military forces that the Russian Empire will send to war...

I understand that the Russian-Ottoman military conflict will not be a local war, some countries might want to support the Ottoman Empire... If a country supports the Ottomans during the Russian-Ottoman military conflict and starts a war against Russia, then the Austrian Empire will fight on the side of Russia...

I will protect the military interests of the Russian state, but not to the detriment of the security of the Austrian Empire. The security of the Austrian Empire is of paramount importance to me... If the Austrian Empire has to be involved in the war, we will not conclude a truce with the opposing powers without your consent... We will agree our decisions with you...

These obligations are of the paramount importance not only for us personally, but also for our descendants..." [2, pp. 78-82].

* * *

**A letter of Catherine II to Joseph II
May 24, 1782**

"Military Defense Agreement

Dear, my brother, I know your desire to enhance and strengthen our friendly connections through our relationship, in combination with political ones, taking into account the interests of our monarchies.

This letter is equivalent to a contract. These contractual obligations apply not only to us directly, but to our descendants as well.

I confirm that current agreement will enhance the treaties of 1772 and Teschen concluded between our empires... We will defend the territories of the Austrian Empire, except those that you have in Italy. I will take all measures and take care of maintaining peace in Europe. If these measures do not work, I undertake the obligation to send additional 10,000 soldiers, including 2,000 cavalymen, as well as appropriate artillery means and I will pay their costs annually. Instead, you should take care of feeding these armed forces. You have to feed the Russian army the same way you feed your army.

The aforementioned army will be at your disposal, they will act in accordance with your orders. The rules that you set should not contradict the rules I set.

If you consider all possibilities for maintaining peace have been exhausted, you will inform me, and I will send troops within three months at the latest. If you request troops in December-January-February, I will not be able to send troops in three months, but I will try to speed up the process of collecting the troops as much as possible, taking into account the existing weather conditions.

The troops must obtain the appropriate permission from the authorities of a foreign third country in order to reach you. Soldiers will obey special rules and act in compliance with my decision.

Herein, I clarify - sending troops is possible everywhere except Italy, as well as the Netherlands because of the remoteness. If necessary, we offer monetary compensation in the amount of 100,000 rubles every three months, amounting 400,000 rubles a year.

If I need this army for the purposes of my state, I reserve the right to withdraw it, but I undertake the obligation to notify you about it two months in advance so that you can take relevant measures.

If I am at a war and I need these troops for a specific purpose, I reserve the right not to send them to you.

If the number of sent troops, 10 thousand, is not enough, I undertake the obligation to send additional troops. We will specify the number of troops for a certain moment on the basis of a mutual agreement.

You will be informed about all details in advance and we will solve everything in accordance with mutual agreement.

Poland is the subject of particular interest to us because it is the border territory of our empires. This area is important to us, so we have to take care of maintaining a peaceful environment there. I confirm that the unity of the territory of Poland will be preserved on the basis of the Constitution of 1773... I guarantee to protect the lands of Poland in accordance with the terms of the agreement concluded between us.

I will order my ambassadors, wherever they are, to act with the Austrian ambassadors taking into account common interests of the Russian and Austrian Empires...

This agreement is not only the result of our sentiments, this agreement should be reviewed taking into account existing circumstances, therefore some adjustments may be made as a result. Necessity to change the agreement may be provoked by some political circumstances. So I decided to conclude a contract for eight years. I promise, depending on the situation, to extend this contract until the end of the eight-year period" [2, pp. 82-87].

* * *

**A letter of Catherine II to Joseph II
May 24, 1782**

"I confirm that the interests of Russia and Austria in regard to the Ottoman Empire are the same. Geographical closeness allows us to help each other if we are threatened by the Ottoman Empire. I am ready to confirm all the secret clauses of the agreement between the Russian and Austrian Empires directed against the Ottoman Empire. Whatever obligations we have undertaken mutually, they remain legacy obligations for our descendants, since our agreement is of great importance for both Russia and Austria.

I express my respect for the integrity of the territory of Austria, and also confirm the respect of the agreements –dated: July 21, 1718; September 18, 1739; March 2, 1741, May 25, 1747, 1775- concluded between Austria and the Ottoman Empire.

On my side, I will do everything possible to make the Ottoman Empire respect all these agreements. If the Ottomans do not comply with these agreements, I will use all means, both peaceful and armed, to force the Ottomans fulfill the undertaken obligations.

If the Ottoman Empire violates these agreements, you must notify me and I will declare war to Turkiye. I will allocate for this war exactly as much military reserve as the Austrian Empire. However, we will attack the Ottoman Empire from a completely different direction in order to destroy the unity of their army and gain a strategic advantage.

I have a fleet on the Azov and Black Seas, I will use it after proper negotiations with you. If I use the navy in a war, you have to use land forces. The expenses needed for this war must be reimbursed to Russia by Austria.

We must develop a common strategy in case of war not only against the Ottomans. It doesn't matter which state starts war with Austria, in such case I consider the invader to be my enemy. Russia will not conclude either a permanent or temporary truce with a belligerent country without the consent of the Emperor of Austria" [2, pp. 87-90].

* * *

A rather interesting document related to the Greek Project was published in 1892 by Nikalai Schilder. He found a manuscript of Catherine II, in one of the folders of the Speransky archive with the inscription on the cover "Extracts from the papers

of Catherine the Second", it contained detailed description of the Russian Empress's plans for the neutralization of the Ottoman Empire and the redistribution of Europe.

This is what Empress Catherine II writes in her manuscript:

„In order to avoid misunderstanding between the three empires, in particular the Russian, Roman and Greek Empires, it is necessary to determine eternally that Moldova, Wallachia and Bessarabia should be independent of these three empires under ruled by Christian government under the name of Dacia.

The border of Greece and Rome ... should be determined using the Sanson Atlas,¹ both Imperial Courts can rely on it as trustworthy. Herein, it shall be determined that the new state, which will be inherited to the owner, will never be acceded to any empire and will have precisely defined borders.

Between Russia and Greece are the Black Sea and the Albanian Sea,² the Persian provinces that belonged to Russia.

Poland must remain as it is in accordance with the Three-State Convention.

Russia refuses acquisitions, except 1. Ochakov, along with part of the lands located between the Bug and Dnieper rivers; 2. The Crimean Peninsula, contrary to expectations, the customs administration turned out to be useless and hostile due to the death of the current Khan or some unforeseen intervention and, finally, 3. One, two or three islands of the archipelago for various needs and profitable trade.

Let the Imperial Court of Vienna regain Belgrade together with parts of Serbia and Bosnia.

In case of military success, Russia is given the opportunity to completely expel the enemy outside Europe in the name of Christians. Russia, for the benefit of Christianity and humanity, declares the restoration of the ancient Greek Empire on the ruins of a barbarian state. Russian Empire promises full independence to this empire and it will transfer the latter to the Grand Konstantin of Russia the son of Pavle for governance, who promises not to allow oppressions of the Russian government either by inheritance or in any other way and will be an equal to his brother.

The borders of the Greek Empire are precisely defined.

In case the Imperial Court of Vienna needs any support for trading in the Mediterranean, we promise to help.

Both Imperial Courts, along with other Kingdoms, will spare no effort in each case to succeed and facilitate the fulfillment of the set conditions.

If another state declares hostility to any of the allied empires, then we will prevent this hostility through our combined forces.

Both empires offer other empires to satisfy their desires through profitable trade” [64, pp.1-4].

* * *

We believe the referred primary source is of great importance, since there is an opinion in historiography that the project was presented to Catherine II by other states [33, pp.253, 256; 37, pp. 8-12]. However, the referred opinion can be annulled by the above document. Based on the current document, we can unequivocally conclude that Catherine formulated the version of her desired foreign policy and the project of the desired political system herself, ensuring to transfer the development of Russia

¹ A French geographer - Nicolas Sanson D'Abbeville.

² As the publisher of this document, Nikolai Schilder, points: "Albania mentioned by the Empress, refers to the one given in Khrapovetsky's diary dated August 17, 1787: I have read the secret project of Potemkin-Tavridel himself, according to the latter we should take advantage of the unrest in Persia, occupy Baku and Derbent, accede Gilan and call Albania to the future possessions of Konstantin s/o Pavel [64, pp. 3].

into a completely different qualitative reality. Therefore, the opinion that Catherine was made to perform it due to influence of other states is incomprehensible and devoid of arguments.

The letter of September 10, 1782, written to Joseph II by Catherine II, is especially important for understanding and analyzing the text of the Greek Project, since, unlike previous letters, the terms of the convention are not only conceptually formulated in this letter, but also explained in details both possible contradictions of the Russian-Austrian agreement and ways to resolve them. It is also noteworthy that Catherine (in this letter) refers to the Russian-Austrian agreement as the convention, which was supposed to have secret articles.

The following fact proves that the work in regard of the mentioned convention was conducted rather seriously. The letter presents the postulates, considered by the Russian Empress as the essential ones to be used as the basis for Russian-Austria relations. According to the statement of Catherine, she notified her opinions to Joseph II orally, through Ludwig von Cobenzl and Wenzel Kaunitz in St. Petersburg. The Russian Empress specifically indicates it at the beginning of the letter. Taking into account the size of the letter, we cite only the most important concepts from it that should have been the constituent fragments of the Russian-Austrian secret convention.

* * *

A letter of Catherine II to Joseph II September 10, 1782

„My displeasure and ultimatums to the Ottoman Porta... is caused by the following circumstances: free trade and navigation are not allowed in the Straits of Constantinople; the uprising in the Crimea, inspired and encouraged by the Porta; The actions of the Porta towards Moldova and Wallachia.

As my requirements are based on two treatise and contracts concluded with the Porta, I am sure I am right...

... I hope that our efforts and unanimity against the Ottoman Government will force it to fulfill its obligations. This will prevent future violations of the undertaken obligations... and if this does not happen and the Porta continues to act arbitrarily, with your permission, we must use a secret agreement concluded between us and mutual obligations to solve the problem.

This secret agreement is especially valuable for me, as it is based not only on the permanent interests of our states, but also on our personal mutual trust and friendship.

... I would like to confirm the respect for the agreement between us and for your undertaken obligations, which is not only political, but also conditioned by the desire for the well-being of the entire Christian community.

... According to the secret agreement concluded between us before the start of preliminary military activities:

- 1. We must agree on a plan of military action;*
- 2. We must conclude a preliminary secret agreement granting us the right to demand monetary compensation or territories from the violator of the peace.*

I believe two main clauses shall be the basis of the secret convention...: 1. Full protection and inviolability of our possessions; 2. Interests that we may have in common in regard of the Ottomans.

As for the first clause, I have already notified you my opinion regarding the joint actions of my naval and land forces to resolve the issue. I will define the final plan after I read your response, indicating your views regarding the activities of your armed

forces. My armed forces will carry our activities with you based on our mutual agreement. I think that the security of our states from other European countries is protected both by the defense agreement achieved between us and by inviolable neutrality...

... We have to arrange the matter in such a way as to prevent the confrontation of the three empires in any form in the future, for this we need to exclude the direct neighborhood of these empires as much as possible.

I consider it necessary to determine from the very beginning that there should be an independent State among these three States. Such a state, which is now to be created, previously existed under the name of the Kingdom of Dacia. This kingdom may consist of the regions of Moldavia, Wallachia and Bessarabia under the rule of a Christian king, trusted by both emperors. In addition, this state, ruled by inheritance, will always remain independent and will never be annexed to either by Russia or Austria. Moreover, our empires will not allow this kingdom to be conquered by any other state.

The borders of this kingdom should extend from the Polish and Russian sides to the Dniester and the Black Sea and from the Austrian possessions to the Olt River to the confluence of the Danube. The new state has to be separated by the Danube River from the side of Turkiye.

The new border between the Austrian Empire and the current Ottoman Empire depends on the desire of Your Imperial Majesty in terms of the accession of new lands, as you have a legal right. We will define the issue in more details in accordance with the confidentiality provisions of our contract.

The most natural border between the Russian Empire and the current Ottoman Empire I would like to see is the Black Sea.

As for the lands owned by Turkiye, which I would like to annex is: 1. The city of Ochakovo, with the adjacent territory between the Bug and Dniester rivers, 2. One or two islands of the archipelago for the safe trade of Russian citizens...

Your indefinite trust entitles me with the right to hope that if, I expel the enemies from Europe and Constantinople, in the name of Christ, Your Imperial Majesty will not refuse me assistance in restoring the ancient Greek empire from the ruins of this barbarian state, on the firm condition from my part that the new Greek state will be completely independent from my possessions and will be occupied by my youngest grandson, Great Prince Konstantin, who, in turn, will be separated from the throne of the Russian Emperor forever, because two states will never be united. The Grand Prince, my son, as well as his eldest son also make the aforementioned promise, which will confirm that these two states will never become one state.

The border of the new Greek Empire with Russia will be the Black Sea. As for the border with the possessions of Your Imperial Majesty, it will depend on the acquisition you make after the destruction of this barbarian country. As for the border between Dacia and the Greek Empire, the Danube River will play a perfect role to this regard.

You can rely on me, as I am ready to support you occupy some desirable areas in the Mediterranean, necessary for the safe trade of your subjects.

In order to avoid hindrance of our plan from other European states and fulfill our goals with the purpose of a great affair, we should not oppose them occupy those lands from the ruins of the Turkish Empire, that will not harm the common interests of our states. If we encounter certain contradictions here, we must act together in accordance with the secret clauses of the alliance agreement concluded between us" [2, pp. 143-157].

* * *

When reconstructing the text of the Greek Project, we must define the basic principles of reconstruction. Since the letters we have brought are of an official nature, confirmed by both emperors, the reconstructed treaty and the plan for the redistribution of Europe should contain all the conceptual provisions found in these letters.

The situational analysis showed, that the emperors of Austria and Russia should have concluded two documents:

1. The Convention, the plan for the redistribution of Europe, the same as the great plan or the Greek Project;
2. The secret military defense agreement between Russia and Austria, in order to define the ways of practical implementation of the project provided by the convention and set out the principles of Russian-Austrian state and military cooperation necessary for the implementation of the plan for the redistribution of Europe in detail.

Taking into account the principles outlined above, we have compiled a preliminary version of the document. We, hereby note, that all fragments of the text are taken from the letters of the emperors. Corresponding with the explanation of the authors, those letters are recognized as official documents. Primary source of the particular text is indicated at the end of each section of the reconstructed text for clarification purposes.

Surely, below presented reconstructed version of the Greek Project will not be accurate. It can only be as similar and identical to the original as possible, since the secret clauses, detailed versions of solving the agreed problems are still to be found.

* * *

Secret Convention of the Russian and Austrian Empires (The Great Plan– the „Greek Project“) 1782

Reconstructed Version

This Convention, signed by Her Majesty Catherine II, Empress of Russia, on the one hand, and Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, on the other hand, is concluded with the desire of prosperity and peace of the entire Christian world, based not only on the permanent interests of our states, but also on our mutual personal trust and friendship [2, p. 144].

We mutually confirm all the secret clauses of the agreement between the Russian and Austrian Empires against the Ottoman Empire [2, pp. 144, 157].

Since our agreement is of paramount importance for both Russia and Austria, mutually recognized obligations remain as legacy obligations for our descendants [2, pp. 143, 157].

Basis for the Secret Convention is:

1. Full protection and inviolability of our possessions;
2. Interests we might have in common regarding the Ottomans [2, p. 145].

Purpose of the Convention:

Legalization of free trade and maritime traffic in the Straits of Constantinople [2, p. 144; 64, pp. 2-3].

In order to achieve the goal set by the convention, we must expel the enemies from Constantinople from Europe in the name of Christ, the ancient Greek empire must be rebuilt on the ruins of a barbarian state, which will be a completely independent state [2, p. 156; 64, pp. 2-3].

The throne of the Greek Empire will be occupied by Constantine the Great of Russia, who in turn will be separated from the throne of the Russian Emperor forever [2, p. 156; 64, pp. 2-3].

The Empire of Greece and the Empire of Russia will never be united into one state, it is also promised by the Grand Prince of Russia Pavle the son of Peter, and his son, the Grand Prince Alexander the son of Pavle [2, p. 156; 64, pp. 2-3].

We must avoid the confrontation of the three empires - Russian, Austrian and Greek empires in any form, therefore, it is necessary to have an independent buffer state between these three states [2, p. 153].

The Kingdom of Dacia should be created from the regions of Moldavia, Wallachia and Bessarabia, and ruled by a Christian king, trustee of the Imperial Court of Austria and Russia [2, p. 153; 64, pp. 2-3].

The reign is passed on by the inheritance principle in the Kingdom of Dacia. This state will always remain independent and will never be acceded to either Russia or Austria. Herein, the Russian and Austrian Empires will not allow any other state to conquer the Kingdom of Dacia [2, p. 153-154].

New borders of European states should be established along with the restoration of the Greek Empire and the creation of the Kingdom of Dacia:

1. Russia's border with the new Greek Empire will be the Black Sea¹ [2, pp. 154, 156].

2. The border of the Austrian Empire with the new Greek Empire will be determined later, after the destruction of the barbarian country of Turkiye, after determining territories of the former Ottoman Empire that will be occupied by the Austrian Empire [2, p. 156]. The Russian Empire agrees that it should be Belgrade together with part of Serbia and Bosnia... [64, pp. 2-3].

3. The border between Dacia and the Greek Empire would be the Danube River [2, p. 156].

4. The borders of the kingdom of Dacia should pass over the Dniester and the Black Sea from the side of Poland and Russia, and over the river Olt to the confluence of the Danube from the side of the Austrian kingdoms. The state of Dacia should be separated by the Danube river from the Turkish side. [2, p. 154].

5. From the territories of the Ottoman Empire, the following areas should be transferred to the possession of the Russian Empire: 1. The city of Ochakovo, with its surrounding territory between the rivers Bug and Dniester, 2. One or two islands of the Greek archipelago for the safe trade of Russian subjects... [2, p. 155], 3. The Crimean Peninsula²... [64, pp. 2-3].

6. The Russian Empire will support the Austrian Empire to occupy several desirable areas in the Mediterranean, necessary for the safe trade of the subjects of the Austrian Empire [2, p. 157].

In order to avoid hindrance of the measures determined by the current secret convention from other European states, Austria and Russia will not oppose them occupy those lands from the ruins of the Turkish Empire, that will not harm the common interests of Austria and the Russian Empire [2, p. 157].

¹ In Catherine's notes, this border is presented in a different formulation, in particular: *the Black Sea and the Albanian Sea are between Russia and Greece, those are the Persian provinces that belonged to Russia* [Русская старина, 1892: 3]. At the same time, Schindler, who prepared this publication, points to Potemkin's secret project, according to which Russia plans to take advantage of the unrest in Persia, occupy Baku and Derbent, annex Gilin and call it the Albanian Kingdom. We believe this plan of St. Petersburg should have been kept secret from the Imperial Court of Vienna, since Austria was clearly interested in relations with the Caucasus. Thus, we believe that *this version of the Greek Project could not have been included in the format of the agreed Russian-Austrian convention.*

² In Catherine's letters to Joseph II, the Crimean Peninsula is not mentioned among the desirable acquisitions of Russia. This appears in Schilder's publication, which should serve as proof that, this acquisition might have been undesirable for the Imperial Court of Vienna, but, to some extent, it might have been acceptable as well.

If the measures determined under this Convention are objected by European States, the Russian and Austrian Empires will act jointly in accordance with the secret clauses of the concluded alliance agreement¹ [2, p. 157].

According to the aforementioned convention, the Austrian and Russian Empires reserve the right to demand monetary compensation or territories from the States violating the peace [2, pp. 145].

We confirm mutually that Poland, as the border territory of our empires, is of special interest to us, so we will make every effort to maintain a peaceful situation here. Austria and Russia will defend the Polish Constitution of 1773 and the territorial integrity of the country [2, pp. 85-86].

The conditions determined in this Convention are mutually recognized and remain as hereditary obligations for our descendants [2, pp. 143, 157].

Catherine II

Joseph II

* * *

**Secret military defense agreement between
Russia and Austria, 1782**
(Reconstructed Version)

This secret agreement, signed on the one hand, by Her Majesty Catherine II, Empress of Russia, and on the other hand, by His Majesty Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, is concluded with the desire for the welfare and peace of all the Christian world, based not only on the permanent interests of our states, but also on our personal mutual trust and friendship [2, p. 144].

This agreement will enhance the agreements of 1772 and the Treaty of Teschen concluded between our Empires [2, p. 83].

Russia expresses respect for the territorial integrity of Austria and also confirms respect for all concluded treaties:

1. Between Austria and the Ottoman Empire;
2. Between Russia and the Ottoman Empire;
3. Between the Russian and Austrian Empires [2, p. 82-89].

and supports it both diplomatically and militarily [2, p. 78].

Austria expresses respect for the territorial integrity of Russia and also confirms respect for all concluded treaties:

1. Between Austria and the Ottoman Empire;
2. Between Russia and the Ottoman Empire;
3. Between the Russian and Austrian Empires [2, pp. 82-89].

and supports it both diplomatically and militarily [2, p.78].

The Ambassadors of the Russian Empire, as well as the Ambassadors of the Austrian Empire, will act jointly in accordance with the common interests of the Russian and Austrian Empires [2, p. 82].

The Imperial Court of Russia, on the one hand and the Imperial Court of Austria on the other hand, undertake the obligation to ensure the preservation of peace in Europe. If Joseph II considers that the possibilities for peace have been exhausted, he will inform Catherine II, who will send 10,000 soldiers to Europe within three months, including 2,000 cavalymen and artillery [2, p. 83].

The Austrian Empire will cover the feeding expenses of the Russian army sent to Europe [2, p. 83].

The orders given by Catherine II to the Russian army and the rules defined for them should not contradict the orders given by Joseph II to the Austrian troops and the rules established for them [2, p. 83].

¹ Most likely, this should mean a violent way to solve the problem, described in detail in the secret military defense agreement of Russia and Austria.

It is possible to send Russian troops everywhere except Italy and the Netherlands because of the remoteness. If necessary, Austria will receive a compensation from Russia in the amount of 100,000 rubles every three months, amounting 400,000 rubles a year [2, p. 83].

If Catherine II needs the army sent to Europe for the purposes of her state, she reserves the right to withdraw it, but she undertakes the obligation to notify the Emperor of Austria about it two months in advance to enable the Imperial Court of Vienna take relevant measures [2, p. 84].

If Russia is at a war and needs the army for a specific purpose, she reserves the right not to send them to the Emperor of Austria.

If the number of troops sent - 10 thousand soldiers is not enough, Russia undertakes the obligation to send additional troops. The number of troops at a certain moment will be specified by prior mutual agreement [2, p. 85].

If it becomes necessary to send Russian troops to Europe in winter - December January-February, the three-month deadline cannot be met due to weather conditions, but St. Petersburg will try to speed up the process of transferring troops as much as possible [2, p. 83].

Russia must obtain the appropriate permission from the authorities of a foreign third country, for Russian troops in order to reach the Austrian Empire [2, p. 83].

In order to preserve peace in Europe, the Austrian and Russian Empires will do everything possible to ensure that the Ottoman Empire complies with all the treaties concluded with the Russian and Austrian Empires. If the Ottomans do not comply with these treaties, the Russian and Austrian Empires will use all means, including armed force, to make the Ottomans fulfill the obligations undertaken under these treaties [2, p. 88].

If the Ottoman Empire violates these treaties, the Imperial Court of Vienna must notify the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg and after it Russia will declare war on Turkey [2, p. 88].

The Russian Empire will allocate exactly the same amount of military reserve for this war as the Austrian Empire. Russia undertakes the obligation to attack the Ottoman Empire from different directions in order to disrupt the unity of the Ottoman armed forces and gain a strategic advantage [2, p. 88].

If Russia uses the Azov and Black Sea fleets during the war with Turkiye, Austria is obliged to use land forces [2, p. 89].

The expenses necessary for this war must be reimbursed to Russia by Austria [2, p. 89].

The Imperial Court of Russia confirms that it will fulfill the obligations in compliance with the terms of the Treaty of Teschen and protect the Austrian Empire by both military and peaceful means. Accordingly, this secret agreement defines a general strategy in case of war against the Ottomans. [2, p. 89].

If any state starts a war against Austria, the Russian Empire will consider it as its own enemy [2, p. 89].

Russia will not conclude either a permanent or temporary truce with a country at war with the Austrian Empire without the consent of the Imperial Court in Vienna [2, p. 89].

The Austrian Empire is ready to provide military support to Russia in the event of a war with the Ottoman Empire [2, p. 79].

If an ally of the Ottoman Empire starts a war against Russia, the Austrian Empire will fight on the side of Russia [2, p. 79].

The Austrian Empire is ready to send exactly the same number of military forces to war as the Russian Empire [2, p.79].

If the Russian army is represented by a larger force in this war, then Catherine should finance an additional number of Austrian military forces [2, p.79].

On the other hand, the Austrian Empire will defend the Russian state in a military form, although not at the expense of posing any treat to the Austrian Empire [2, pp. 79-80].

If the Austrian Empire has to get involved into a war on the side of Russia, it will not conclude a truce with the opposing forces without the consent of Catherine II and will enforce any decision in agreement with the Russian emperor [2, p. 81].

The obligations stipulated in this agreement apply not only to us, directly to Joseph and Catherine II, but to our descendants as well [2, p. 82].

A change in this agreement may be required by some political circumstances. Therefore, we decided to conclude this secret agreement for a period of eight years, which, depending on the situation, will be extended until the expiration of its validity period [2, p. 82].

Catherine II

* * *

Joseph II

Conclusion

Our reconstructed version of the two aforementioned secret agreements between Russia and Austria actually contains Russia's point of view regarding the strategy and foreign policy. As foreign researchers of the Greek Project Edgar Hosch [15, pp. 170-178], David Griffiths [10, Pp. 9-18] and Izabela Madariaga [34, pp. 22-138] indicate, this plan of Catherine II was not an accidental deviation from her foreign policy course. Its relevance was not limited to the 80-ies of XVIII century. The Greek Project was a concept of the Russian Imperial policy that has not lost its relevance as of today, this relevance was perceived rather evidently during the second stage of the reign of Catherine the Second, when most European states asked her to solve the Ottoman problem.

The Greek Project is formed behind the scenes, where the probable variations of these plans are determined, making the political processes of that time extremely interesting.

Thus, the very fact that the Imperial Court of Russia, Empress Catherine II, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, the French enlightener Voltaire, the Austrian diplomats Wenzel Kaunitz and Ludwig von Cobenzl discuss the need for the redistribution of Europe and breaking up the Ottoman Empire clearly indicates that it is not an illusion, but a well-thought-out and well-designed political concept and both Russia and Austria had sufficient reserves to implement it.

The most important thing for the Georgian diplomatic filed during 70-90-ies of the XVIII century is that Catherine II made an important amendment to the traditional foreign policy doctrine of Russia - the direct conquest of Constantinople is out of the question, Catherine II agrees with Joseph II to create two buffer zones - the Kingdom of Dacia and the Greek Empire. Moreover, this zone should be independent and inviolable. Thus, the Caucasus - the land space existing between Russia and the Ottomans, can be used for the same security purposes for Europe and enjoy a similar status as defined for the Dacian and Greek empires.

This is a completely new and real prospect for the Royal Court of Bagrationi to become part of an international system that has no alternative in terms of strengthening statehood and creating a systemic security model.

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