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# *The Emperor-Martyr Paul I of Russia*

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An essay on his life and reign for American readers, amplified from an original talk on the same theme prepared for the Orthodox Conference in Ipswich, Massachusetts, under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and its Parish of Saint John the Russian.

*Author*

The Reverend Father Constantine Desrosiers

(Richard V. Desrosiers, Ph.D.)

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## i. ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Richard Victor Desrosiers (the future Father Constantine) was born at Saint Joseph's Hospital in Nashua, New Hampshire on July 6, 1938 (June 23 on the Orthodox Church calendar, the Feast of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God). He was reared in a modest two-story rowhouse in the small town of Greenville, New Hampshire, located on the high waterfall of the Souhegan River. Although Greenville is less than seven square miles, the waterfall powered mills and the town became a prosperous manufacturing center of cotton and wool textiles. The factories are now closed, but the quaint town is still dotted with beautiful Queen Anne style houses and finely crafted brick buildings that are a testimony to its past.

Richard's father, Joseph Arsène Desrosiers, was of French-Canadian background. He served as a police officer until every adult in the town of Greenville took the U.S. Government Civil Service

Test and he earned the highest score. This enabled him to assume the job of Postmaster of Greenville. His mother, Louise, was born in the Bavarian Forest town of Grafenau, in Germany. Richard was the eldest child and had a brother, Thomas. His devout Catholic parents instilled a deep religious piety in their children.

His mother had a disciplined German nature and was strict with the boys, insisting they practice self-discipline, obedience, exercise and study. On one of their frequent long walks, it is she that told Richard his personality was well suited to be a professor.

Richard attended high school in Berthierville, Quebec, Canada, at the renowned school "College Saint Joseph", an all-boys academy run by Catholic brothers and clerics of the Order of Saint Viateur. Although his father wanted this fine education for his son, he once said that the \$60 a month fee (which covered room, board and tuition) was very expensive.

It is significant that the circumstances of his upbringing enabled Richard, by the time he completed high school, to speak fluent French, German and Latin in addition to his native English.

After graduating high school, he went to Boston College where the expense became even greater -- \$1,000 a year. Although he had a scholarship that provided \$250 a year, this was still a burden on his father, who said it was time that Richard help support himself. And so, obtained a job at a bookstore in Boston where he worked for four years, until he graduated in June of 1960. At

graduation, he was presented with the Theology Award for his term paper on the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, for which he was presented with \$100, which he gave to his father.

At Saint Joseph's, he attended daily Mass, High Mass on Sundays, vespers on Sunday evening, and other occasional prayer services. In Boston, however, he found that the majority of Irish Catholics did not have this level of observance. Also, at this time he followed closely the proceedings of Vatican II. Disappointed with the churches and the direction of liberalism the Roman Church was taking, a friend mentioned that Cardinal Cushing had just opened Our Lady of Kazan Russian Catholic Church, that it was different and more traditional, and suggested that he attend a service.

Upon entering the Kazan Church for the first time, he was struck by its beauty and the mosaic icons on the iconostas. Offering a frequent number of services throughout the week, it quickly became his home parish, and he joined the choir. No Russians attended, but the priest, Father John Mowatt, insisted that the choir learn Slavonic as he believed it would lead Orthodox Christians to attend and result in their becoming Catholic. They somewhat surreptitiously commemorated the Pope of Rome as the Western Orthodox Patriarch. For some time, Richard truly believed that the Russians would become Catholic, but as Vatican II progressed, his spiritual world began to fall apart and the Church that he knew began to deteriorate: the Latin Mass ended, monks left their vows, nuns married, guitar Masses prevailed, there was disorder and liberalism everywhere, a revolution in the Church. He recalls: "I began thinking, how is it these Russians that are under persecution, many of them escaping from being turned back over to Stalin's armies by the allies, maintain such a piety and yet the Catholics living in freedom are becoming so impious?"

During this time in Boston, as he studied Slavonic, more and more he was drawn to Russia. He met Countess Nina Georgivna Uradioff, who took under her wing the pious young man. Every Thursday he visited her home for tea, and she taught him Russian language, culture, and many things about Russian history. They studied one emperor every Thursday.

In the meantime, he graduated from Boston College, majoring in Latin and Philosophy with minors in Greek and Theology, and moved on to graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. There, he took a course offered by the renowned scholar of ancient Macedonian epigraphy, Professor Charles Epton. The course was a year-long study of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great. He read (in Latin) the works of the early Christian author Lactantius, known as the "Christian Cicero", and who was a close advisor to Constantine, helping guide the Emperor's development of religious policy. Then they studied Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and his Panegyric on the Emperor Constantine written shortly after the Emperor's death. To Richard, a deep-thinking man, these works were like a doorway, helping him to see and confront the problems he was facing in his own spiritual development.

"In reading *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius called it 'the Great Church', and that meant it was not some sect," recalls Father Constantine. "I realized that Rome was the first in rank not because of Peter, but because that was where the emperor lived. I began to think, 'Where is that church today? Is it the Orthodox, or the Catholic Church? I began to be convinced that it was the Orthodox Church.'"

Richard graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1961 with a Master's Degree in Classics. His time at the University of Wisconsin was beneficial in many ways, as he was finally convinced of the truth of Orthodoxy, and at age 27, on the Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple in 1967, he was baptized Orthodox, taking the name Constantine. His godfather was the Very Reverend Father Roman Lukianov (of blessed memory). At last, he had found the spiritual peace and fulness of the Christian Faith that he had so long sought.

Within a short while he proceeded to his next educational venue, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. There he obtained various professional employments during this time, serving as a University of New Hampshire lecturer, as a teaching assistant both at the University of Wisconsin and at Chapel Hill, and a part-time instructor for the Classical Association of New England at Dartmouth College. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Classics from the University of North Carolina in 1969.

Following graduation, he quickly was accepted as Professor at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, where he co-founded the Classics Department and taught Roman and Greek law, language, literature, religion and culture for 40 years. The University also appointed him an advisor for pre-law students.

Professor Desrosiers was always trying to creatively instruct people in the long history of Russia being America's ally. In 1983, he planned a conference on the world's monarchies to be held at the University, which was to cover a variety of kingdoms. According to (then) Professor Desrosiers, "Everyone was excited because it was something new, and I oversaw the planning of the event. As things began to come together, the conference took a different direction. Since it was the 2,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Ludi Saeculares*• games reinstituted by Rome's first emperor, Caesar Augustus in 17 B.C., perhaps this first year of this conference should be a celebration of the Emperor Caesar Augustus and the Emperor Nicholas II of Russia. An article about the conference then appeared with a big headline in the Boston Globe, and, much to my delight, it somehow turned into a celebration of monarchy in Russia."

- The games marked the end of a saeculum, considered the longest possible length of human life, either 100 or 110 years, and the beginning of the next, and involved three days of sacrifices to Roman gods, entertainments and feasting.

After his retirement in the year 2000, he devoted more time to his church, eventually accepting ordination as a deacon. In time, the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, told him he had been retired long enough and it was time for him to start a new career, and ordained him to the holy priesthood on September 26, 2010 (Sept. 13 on the Church calendar), the feast of the Commemoration of the Founding of the Church of the Resurrection (the Holy Sepulchre) at Jerusalem in 335.



In 2018, he was the honoree of the New Hampshire Classical Association, for having served as president and then secretary for 30 years. The keynote speaker of this event was one of his former students, New Hampshire's Secretary of State, Bill Gardner, who said that he

esteemed Professor Desrosiers' deep knowledge of history and government. Professor Desrosiers had also served as president of the Classical Association of New England. To encourage the study of Latin in high schools in New Hampshire, he energetically went to many schools and gave presentations to the students about the value of learning Latin. Some of these youth went on to become his students in University.

In 1990, he was inducted as a Knight of the Order of Saint Michael. He was knighted by the Grand Duke Wladimir Kyrillovich (reposed in 1991), who became heir-apparent to the throne of Russia in 1938, as he was the great-grandson of the Emperor Alexander II and also of Queen Victoria, and first-cousin of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas.

After Father Constantine's father passed away at age 62, he became even closer to his mother, Louise, helping support and take care of her. Prior to her repose in 1982, she converted to Orthodox Christianity, taking the name Elizabeth for the New-martyr of Russia, St. Elizabeth Feodorovna.

Now Father Constantine, in 2020, is assigned as second priest at Saint Xenia's Orthodox Church in Methuen, Massachusetts, and as second priest at the Holy Protection of the Mother of God Russian Orthodox Mission in North Port, Florida.

Those who know him appreciate his unique way of thinking: his sharp and insightful mind is able to thread a needle through the eye of history, connecting ancient dates with present events. And those who have the great blessing of availing themselves of his priesthood acclaim his attributes of being a tireless and conscientious Orthodox priest. He always has time for everyone, and even at age 81, maintains a great flexibility to go with God's will, which he can discern due to his purity of life, zealous spirit, and life of deep prayer.

*Written by Mother Andrea*



## ii. FOREWORD

Some twelve years ago, when Father Constantine in his usual ebullient fashion spoke to me of the Emperor Paul I, he instilled in me a desire to learn more about this interesting character of history who has been so misunderstood over the centuries (history is written by the victors). Father related to me that he attributed his deliverance from a persecution he was facing to the intercessions of the Emperor Paul. My desire to learn more about the Emperor was satiated when a few weeks later, he sent me this book that he had written.

One of the details in the book is of the Emperor's "personal mailbox" outside of his palace, to which he possessed the only key. In that box, any citizen could place a letter to their sovereign. Oftentimes, people who were being persecuted by the boyars and nobility or had family members who were wrongly imprisoned and the like, would write him. The Emperor personally investigated each of these cases and brought justice. A pious man, he believed that the Russian people had been placed under his care by God, and he strove to live up to his lofty calling to care for each and every one of his subjects.

My devotion to Emperor Paul began shortly after completing this book. I was involved in a difficult legal situation for four years, and it was wearing me down. As I left the courthouse one day, the words of the judge weighed heavy on my heart: "This case will continue for at least another year." I was distressed. I remembered the Emperor Paul and his mailbox. I happened to have a beautiful Faberge-style imperial box that had been given me and that I didn't know what to do with, so I pulled it out. To stand behind it, I printed out a portrait of the Emperor. Then I tearfully wrote him a note begging his assistance and placed it in the box. Within a week, and with no effort on my part and no forewarning, I received a letter from the judge saying the legal situation had come to an end, and to my Monastery's favor!

There is no other explanation for this relief than the holy Emperor heard my cry and was permitted by God to help resolve the situation. In gratitude, I told the Emperor that if there were ever a time in the future that I could thank him appropriately for his attention, I would do so.

By making this essay available to you, and to the entire world with the permission of the author, I believe that I am fulfilling this promise.

I pray that you, too, will come to have the same affection for this godly Russian ruler.

*Mother Andrea*

### iii. INTRODUCTION

Of all the surprises which we in the West have had break thrillingly upon us at the turn of religious events in Russia today, none should amaze us more than the fact that after more than six decades of atheistic Communist brutality Orthodox Christians living at the very heart of Soviet society venerate the Tzar Paul I as Martyr and Blessed Intercessor for the small, the poor and the deprived. Just as the impetus for the canonization of the Emperor-Martyr Nicholas II, at the head of his August Family and the innumerable host of New Russian Martyrs, came from the courageous writings and defiant sermons of Father Dimitri Dudko, Father Gleb Yakunin and others, both of the clergy and faithful, threatened, confined and persecuted by Soviet tyranny, so once again, we are called by the sufferers for the True Faith in the shadow of the Gulag to consider the sanctity of an earlier Tzar, again a victim of revolutionary violence, again a pious and convinced autocrat, no less, and possibly even more misunderstood, about whom the fury of two century old controversy has almost completely burned itself out in near total neglect among us in post-Christian democratic America.

And yet, the Emperor Paul has not been totally neglected in contemporary America. You will be amazed to learn that as recently as 1976 the America Association for the advancement of Slavic Studies sponsored a panel devoted exclusively to his life and reign. Of the nine papers delivered in Saint Louis, Missouri, the six that were subsequently published<sup>1</sup> stand as wonderful examples of pure and dispassionate historical scholarship, resembling in their quality and tenor the recent efforts of American and British classical scholars determined to rehabilitate early Roman emperors such as Tiberius, Claudius and other Julio-Claudians. Rich in information, these writings are generally balanced, mildly sympathetic and thus very effective in dispelling the built-up prejudice against the Emperor Paul. They also provide a real treasure, a complete bibliographical study of all major biographies and monographs in all languages devoted to the Emperor since his death. While this is neither the place nor the time to discuss the Pauline bibliography, let me note for you some basic points. Most early accounts of the Emperor Paul are hostile to his memory precisely because they are based on the memoirs and diaries of his murderers. From the reign of Alexander II to that of Nicholas II, there appeared in the Russian language exclusively a series of sympathetic treatments of Paul I. Most noteworthy among these is the five-volume study of A.D. Miliutin published in 1852-1853. It is a fervently patriotic account with a strong emphasis on the military history, foreign policy and diplomatic achievements of the reign. The last biographies of Paul I written before the Revolution, that of E.S. Shumigorskii published in 1907 and that of M.V. Klochkov published in 1916, reveal great admiration for Paul's imperial administrative system and policy of concern for whole population of the Russian Empire. By contrast Soviet historians have shown very little interest in the personality, outlook and policy of the Emperor Paul. August M. Stanislovskaja in her 1962 treatment attempts superficially to refute Miliutin, pressing the view of Paul I as an agent and victim of economic determinism and class warfare.

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<sup>1</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment of His Life and Reign*, edited by Hugh Ragsdale, Series in Russian and East European Studies, No. 2, University Center for International Studies, Publications Section, University of Pittsburg, G-6 Mervis Hall, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania 15260, 1979, hereafter to be cited as *Paul I: A Reassessment*.



English language treatments of Paul I have been far less sympathetic than the Russian. The only English biography, *Paul I of Russia* by Kazimierz Waliszewski, (London, 1913), presents the Emperor's short reign as an uninterrupted chronicle, to quote Ragsdale, "of madness, petulance and trivia".<sup>1</sup> The work of Norman E. Saul, entitled *Russia and the Mediterranean 1797-1807* (Chicago, 1970), is more balanced, although sharing the approach of Comradess Stanislavskiaia. Probably the most available English account of the life of the Emperor Paul I is the highly fictionalized work of Martha Edith Almedingen.<sup>2</sup> The picture first painted of Paul as heir apparent under the Empress Catherine is very sympathetic, of a strictly virtuous and intensely honorable man in very difficult circumstances. The colors, however, grow suddenly dark and ominous after Paul ascends the throne to become a tyrant mad in his obsessive militarism and arbitrary cruelty.

*Father Constantine Desrosiers*

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<sup>1</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> *So Dark A Stream: A Study of the Emperor Paul I of Russia 1754-1801*, Hutchinson of London, 1959. The English reader of Russophile sentiment and Orthodox Christian conviction ought especially to be warned that, although the same Anglophile author published a rather favorable biography of the great New Martyr of Russia, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna (*An Unbroken Unity: A Memoir of Grand Duchess Serge of Russia 1964-1918*, the Bodley Head, London, 1964), her treatment of the Emperor Paul is replete with aristocratic boudoir-gossip and in its preface cites as a principal source the Memoirs of Count Beningsen, one of the leading assassins of the Martyred Emperor.

## I. THE GRAND DUKE PAUL AS HEIR APPARENT

The Emperor Paul I was born on September 20, 1754 the son of the hapless Emperor Peter III (1762) and the Empress Catherine the Great (1762-1796). At the time of his birth the Empress Elizabeth (1741-1762), the daughter of Peter the Great, ruled Russia. A deeply pious woman whose Orthodoxy inspired a personal pilgrimage on foot from Saint Petersburg to Kiev.<sup>1</sup> The great Empress Elizabeth reposed on Christmas day of 1762, when the newly canonized Blessed Xenia of Saint Petersburg called on everyone to pray for her.<sup>2</sup> This Empress of true Russian spirit immediately upon his birth took charge of Grand Duke Paul, removing him completely from his parents and giving him over to be raised by babushki (grandmothers, old women of the people) chosen for this task because of their deep and simple Russian piety. When the boy had reached the age of six, his education was entrusted to Oberhofmeister Nikita Ivanovich Panin, a Baltic nobleman who now imposed on the future Emperor Paul a German style military and French style literary education. Paul's mother, the future Empress Catherine, was allowed to see him only with the special permission of the Empress Elizabeth. After her death, Peter III made no effort to designate his son as heir. Catherine II did name Paul as her successor, although early she seems to have developed a strong antipathy toward him, visiting upon him all the contempt she had felt for his unfortunate father.<sup>3</sup>

At first the future Emperor Paul resented the regime of discipline and formal study imposed on him by Panin. Later, however, he learned to love this faithful preceptor and was much influenced by him. Paul was trained in the Classics and read such major European authors as Racine, Fénelon, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Leibnitz, Diderot, Blackstone and Hume. He came to speak a perfect French with an unusual sense of nuance and style. He found the time in his busy schedule to annotate the one hundred great books of his day.<sup>4</sup> His three boyhood heroes were Peter the Great, Louis XIV of France and Frederick the Great of Prussia. Paul's admiration for Peter the Great was probably acquired in large part from Panin, whose family had risen to prominence during that pivotal reign. There is, in fact, in the Memoirs of the Baroness Henrietta-Louise Oberkirch and account of a vision in which Peter the Great, appearing to Paul in the style of Cicero's "Dream of Scipio", offered his great grandson advice on his future course as Tzar.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout his life Paul was a strong believer in autocracy which unites in itself the force of the laws and the efficiency (skorost) of the power of one person. For this reason, he fixed the Russian

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<sup>1</sup> Suzanne Massie, *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1980, 113-114 "Elizabeth made many pilgrimages to monasteries and holy places. She liked to do this on foot, in the holy Russian tradition..."

<sup>2</sup> *The Life and Miracles of Blessed Xenia of Saint Petersburg*, compiled and translated by Deacon Lev Puhalo and Vasili Novakshonoff, Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Monastery, Jordanville, New York, 1973, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> V.G. Glinin, "The Emperor Paul I Petrovich", *Kadetskaya Pereklichka* (Cadets' Rollcall), XXX, February, 1982, pp. 11-35, selections translated into English for the purpose of this paper by the Hiero-Deacon Andre Herron of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, Massachusetts, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Massie, p. 152

<sup>5</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 13.

imperial succession with laws that put an end to the chaotic eighteenth-century practice of accession through palace revolution. Thus, Paul admired Louis XIV because this great French king exemplified absolute monarchy and a court life moulded into a living icon of the autocratic ideal. Probably from the example of his father Peter III, the young Grand Duke Paul came to admire Frederick the Great whose armies were the envy of Europe and whose philosophy of military discipline had managed to integrate all classes in Prussia, especially the nobility, under the ideal of selfless devotion to the crown, the nation and the people as a whole, regardless of rank or condition. It was precisely Paul's devotion to this Prussian military and social ideal of service that led to some disagreement between himself and the great Russian General Alexander Vasilievich Suvorov. The latter preferred the more traditional Russian military ideal based on personal relationships and devotion to the person of the commander.

From the first the future Emperor Paul I revealed in himself a strong devotion to Christ and Holy Orthodoxy. As I have indicated earlier, he had from babyhood been trained by pious Russian babushki at the direction of Empress Elizabeth, herself a very religious woman. As a young man, he is described by contemporaries as God-loving, just and kind. His religious education had been entrusted by Panin to the later Metropolitan Platon Levshin, a monk who had been educated both in the Classics and in the European literature of the eighteenth century. Under his direction, the Grand Duke Paul developed an unusually tolerant and yet deeply religious outlook which echoes both in his writings as Grand Duke and his legislation as Tzar.<sup>1</sup> In a political testament written for his son in 1788, Paul describes the proper ordering of society and defines the clergy as the second class of the Empire,<sup>2</sup> directly after the nobility. He describes their duties as holy and very demanding, the teaching of a proper understanding of God, free from superstition. Later in May of 1800, in order to preserve the integrity of the clergy, the Emperor Paul forbade their children to enter the civil service without express imperial permission.<sup>3</sup> During his reign, the Emperor Paul also halted administrative harassment of the Orthodox Church and returned to her much of the property which had been in various ways stolen and appropriated from her during earlier reigns.<sup>4</sup> The Emperor always sought to improve the material situation of the clergy, as well as to raise its authority among the people. Earlier, after his European tour in 1781, when the Empress Catherine exiled him to his estates at Gatchina, the Grand Duke Paul spent much time in his private chapel. Up to the time of the Revolution one could see a rug there that he had well-worn with prostrations.<sup>5</sup>

Like his great-great-grandson, the Emperor-Martyr Nicholas II, Paul I in 1773 wed as his first wife a Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, the Princess Wilhelmina who was solemnly received into the Russian Orthodox Church as the Grand Duchess Natalia Alexeevna. One year after her death in childbirth in 1776, Catherine the Great again sought a German princess for Paul's second wife, Sophia Dorothea of Württemberg, who became the Grand Duchess and later the Empress Maria Feodorovna, the mother of the future Emperors Alexander I and Nicholas I. Paul wrote this new wife a formal letter of instructions in an effort to help her adjust both to life in Russia and to his

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<sup>1</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Glinin, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Glinin, p. 14

own uniqueness of character and behavior. In this work Paul urges Maria Feodorovna "to take Russian Orthodoxy very seriously and to practice it very piously".<sup>1</sup>

It is an amazing and yet telling phenomenon of history that the Emperor-Martyr Nicholas II and King Louis XVI of France, as well as the other meek and gentle sovereigns murdered by revolutions in the modern era, were devoted family men, deeply attached to their spouses and consorts. In like manner the Emperor Paul I was sustained throughout his trouble-filled life by the loyalty and love of his wife. Even the immoral court of Catherine II found but a minimum of tidbits for gossip about Paul and Maria Feodorovna. Only one other woman is mentioned as being close to the Grand Duke Paul prior to his coming to the throne, a certain lady-in-waiting to the Empress Maria Feodorovna, named Catherine Nelidov. While it was rumored that she was Paul's mistress, more recent studies tend to the view that the friendship was purely Platonic.<sup>2</sup> Madame Nelidov not only looked the part of a philosophical lover, being both fat and physically quite unattractive, but also played the role with conviction, constantly reminding her beloved Paul of his duties not only to Russia but also to the Grand Duchess. By the year 1795, Paul had easily been able to reconcile whatever small rivalries separated his wife and his lover, thus crushing all occasion for court gossip. During Paul's subsequent reign, Catherine Nelidov remained the sister-like friend and close confidant of the Empress. Late in the reign, Paul is rumored to have had an affair with a much younger and more attractive woman, the Princess Anna Petrovna Lopukhin.<sup>3</sup> Details here again are clouded with gossip which is particularly suspect because of the fact that the relationship with Anna Lopukhin was deliberately fostered and pressed upon the Emperor by those same courtiers who later successfully carried out the regicide itself. Whatever its nature, the relationship was fleeting, originating not earlier than the birth of the Grand Duke Michael Pavlovich in 1798, the last of the nine children born to the Emperor Paul and his wife. Maria Feodorovna was shaken to the very depths of her being by the assassination of her beloved husband, the Emperor Paul, and always held her eldest son, the Emperor Alexander I, in part responsible for the regicide. Whenever the latter visited her at the Palace of Pavlovsk, he was forced to speak with his mother across a table on which lay open a small casket displaying the bloody nightshirt of the martyred Emperor.<sup>4</sup>

We have a very fine description of the Emperor Paul as a young man in 1773 from the Prussian ambassador:

"Though he is not tall he is very handsome, very well proportioned; his manners and conversation are pleasant, he is modest and extremely polite and of a cheerful disposition. This beautiful exterior hides a most excellent soul, most honorable and

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<sup>1</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 20

<sup>2</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. X-XI. Even the gossip-laden account of Almedingen (p. 112) portrays the "liaison" as being Platonic, lacking the usual origins and sequence of an extra-marital affair and without the typical factors of secrecy and jealousy.

<sup>3</sup> For the medical background and political intrigue which occasioned this superficial relationship, cf. Hugh Ragsdale, *Tsar Paul and the Question of Madness, An Essay in History and Psychology*, Greenwood Press, New York 1988, pp. 76-79.

<sup>4</sup> Massie, p. 164.

exalted and, with this, most pure and innocent, which knows evil only externally  
... In general, it is impossible to say enough in praise of the Grand Duke."<sup>1</sup>

The future Emperor was still this young man when in 1781 he made his grand tour of Europe. Although he was forbidden by his mother to visit Prussia, for which he had always a very deep sympathy, he spent much time in southern Europe, especially France. The openness and candor of his comments about politics and political philosophy greatly upset the Empress Catherine who punished him with exile to the palace of Pavlovsk and his estates at Gatchina. Although faced now with the threatening eventuality of any day being excluded from the succession, Paul neither despaired nor wasted his time. Apart from his long hours spent at prayer and on the drill field, training his small forces in the example of Frederick the Great, he set out to make Gatchina a model of administration and a reflection of his political ideas. "In fact he managed his small domain so well that his administrators had difficulty stemming the tide of peasants from nearby areas who were anxious to settle there."<sup>2</sup> The regime at Gatchina was characterized by religious tolerance,<sup>3</sup> comprehensive welfare facilities, a progressive educational system for the peasants and an efficient system of factory and cottage labor.

"Paul I was", according to the historian Roderick E. McGrew, "a profoundly ideological man who judged the world by moral absolutes."<sup>4</sup> The nature and quality of his thought can be determined from his own writings which, prior to his accession to the throne, took the form of memoranda. One written to his mother, the Empress Catherine, is dated from the summer of 1774. In this work Paul stresses three principles, the need for autocracy in Russia, the essential role of the Tzar as protector of the people and the danger of imperialism which by means of continuous warfare would exhaust the nation. This last view clashed violently with the policy of Catherine the Great whose entire reign was spent at war, advancing triumphantly the frontiers of Russia. Paul's aim, however, was the welfare of the nation and the people, which could best be assured through a policy of peace. In this early work the Grand Duke Paul draws an interesting analogy between the body politic and the human body:

"The kingdom should be considered like a body; the sovereign is the head; the laws are the soul; morals are the heart; wealth and abundance are health; the military forces are the arms and all the members that serve for protection and religion is the law under which all is comprised."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Glinin, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> A good example of the Emperor Paul's attitude of religious toleration is found in his generous policy towards his Jewish subjects, who ever since the partition of Poland during his mother's reign formed a significant demographic part of the Empire. To the Jews of Courland the Emperor Paul gave municipal rights. He also opposed their arbitrary banishment from Kamenetz-Podolsk and Kiev. On one occasion he reprimanded a judge who in a murder case refused to accept a Jewish witness. The strict sect of the Hassidim was also afforded the special protection of the Emperor. Cf. Alexandre Tarsaidzé, *Czars and Presidents, The Story of a Forgotten Friendship*, McDowell, Obolensky (New York, 1958), 320-321.

<sup>4</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 17.

Ragsdale is not impressed with this thought. He says it proves that the Emperor Paul "had a penchant for loose argument that relied heavily on analogy and clumsy figures of speech. His thought was not thoroughly logical and clear".<sup>1</sup> Ivan Proshin who had taught the future Emperor mathematics, history and literature, writes of Paul as a young boy: "When ... he is not lazy, it is a pure delight to teach him, so quick and intelligent he is ... Had he been born a commoner, able to devote himself wholly to mathematical studies, he might have become a Russian Pascal."

As for the analogy itself between the body of the state and that of a man, let us not forget that the entire structure of what is considered in modern times Plato's most important dialogue, namely *The Republic*, is based on an analogy between the soul of the state and the human soul. In all likelihood, furthermore, the Emperor's analogy involving the roles of the parts of the body was most likely inspired by his great Patron-Saint, Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, who draws almost the same comparison between the Body of Christ's Church and that of man in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (12:12-27). Are we to consider Saint Paul and Plato also given to weak analogies and illogical arguments?

The Empress Catherine was not pleased with Paul's writings, especially since she severely criticized her foreign policy of bellicose imperialism. The most obvious and menacing sign of her displeasure was Paul's continued exile at Gatchina. These years must have been for Paul full of dread and temptations to despair. He had been old enough as a child in 1762 to remember the palace revolution which, engineered by the partisans of his mother, had resulted in the dethronement and subsequent murder of his father, Peter III. In 1764 the mutiny of Mirovich had also ended in the tragic stabbing of the unfortunate Emperor Ivan VI, once again to assure the safety of Catherine's hold on the Russian throne. To make the situation worse, attempts were continually being made on the part of disaffected elements at the court to induce Paul to seize the crown in a palace revolution which would end the rule but preserve the life of the Empress.<sup>2</sup> As the Emperor Alexander I would later learn to his sorrow, nothing can be guaranteed in the heat and violence of revolution, least of all the life of the legitimate sovereign. Paul understood this perfectly but his pious loyalty to the basic principle of Christian Orthodox Monarchy sounded in time of crisis but faint echo both in his son and in his mother. The Empress Catherine was now determined to proclaim officially her grandson Alexander as her heir in Paul's place. The passing over of Paul in the succession was to be announced in January 1797, but such was not the will of God, for on November 5, 1796, the great Empress Catherine died of a sudden stroke. At last, Paul ascended the throne that a much more worldly and ambitious man would have considered his own by right already for many years.

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<sup>1</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Glinin, p. 21.



## II. THE CORONATION OF THE EMPEROR PAUL I

The description of the coronation of the Emperor Paul in 1797 tells us much of his simple, honest and deeply Russian outlook:

The ringing of the bells of all the forty times forty churches of Moscow could be heard. The Sovereign sat alone ... completely unguarded, in the midst of an indescribable crowd of people. Simple people of every kind from the bakers of Moscow to the Imperial serfs. The Tzar found for each one a kind word, a word of encouragement and a heartfelt wish for a better life. 'Rodnieye moye' (*родные мое*, which literally means 'my kin', a term of deepest affection), cried Paul, 'With God as my help, I wish, in any way I can, to help you and lighten your lot.' Many crossed themselves and suddenly a loud voice from the crowd cries from the heart: 'Now there is a Tzar.'<sup>1</sup>

Since it was the first thought of the new Emperor to bring about a complete end to the political turmoils which had shaken the realm so cruelly for almost an entire century, Paul decided, directly in conjunction with his coronation in April, 1797, during the glorious Paschal joy of Bright Week, to establish a firm order of succession based on genealogical seniority. The Blessed Emperor Paul also recognized that the office of the Emperor, like that of the Priest, stands as a living Icon of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, His Divine Kingship, and, therefore, suitable in normal circumstances only for male tenure. This essentially Christian view was presumed not only in the Orthodox Roman Empire but also in medieval Europe generally where the number of women who ruled in their own right prior to the Protestant Reformation was very small. From the time of Augustus, the office of the Roman Emperor, like the magistracies of the Roman Republic, was held only by men. Although as early as the reigns of the later Severi at the beginning of the third century empresses at times wielded the imperial power *de facto*, their rule *de jure* was always in the name of an emperor, either a minor or one in some way incapable of himself exercising his full prerogatives. During the whole history of the Christian Roman Empire in Constantinople only three empresses ruled *de jure*: the Empress-Saint Irene (797-802) and the Empresses Zoe and Theodora who ruled jointly in 1042. Not only were their reigns brief, a total of less than six years, but also the practice itself was clearly considered to be something of an *economia* or exception for the purpose of preserving internal peace and dynastic continuity.

In stark contrast with this long and ancient tradition stood the recent history of Russia between the reign of Peter the Great and that of Paul I, when four women occupied the imperial office, independent of any emperor in the exercise of their power. This great and potentially dangerous innovation had resulted from Peter the Great's act of succession of 1722, making it the legitimate right of every reigning sovereign to designate his own successor. Thus, Catherine I (1725-1727) ruled as the widow of Peter I. Since no possible male succession could take place on the death of Peter II in 1730, Anna Ivanovna (1730-1740) became Empress. In 1741 the Empress Elizabeth (1741-1762) seized the throne as the truly Russian daughter of Peter the Great, deposing Ivan VI (1740-1741), the child Emperor whose German parents wielded power in a regency inimical to the true interest of Russia. Finally, Paul's mother Catherine II had ruled after the deposition of

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<sup>1</sup> Glinin, p. 21.

Peter III in 1762. The Blessed Emperor Paul, consequently, restored the Orthodox understanding of Christian monarchy by legislating for the future that no female line of succession has right to the throne until all legitimate male heirs and their lines had become extinct.

For his coronation all the imperial regalia were prepared anew. The crown of Catherine was refitted, and the pearls were exchanged for larger ones. A new scepter was made in the form of a baton and it contained the nearly 200-carat Orlov diamond. A new orb was made of gold, its bands in the form of diamond-encrusted leaves. It was topped with a diamond cross mounted on a spinal ruby. This Pauline regalia was used at the coronation of all subsequent Russian Emperors. The order of the coronation service in its full spiritual intensity proclaimed the great Orthodox dogma of autocratic royalty for all future time. After the reading of the Holy Gospel, the dalmatic, a spiritual vestment, was brought to the new Tzar. This was not a personal invention of Paul but actually the re-establishment of an ancient Russian tradition borrowed by the Moscovite Third Rome from the ritual of Constantinople. The Emperor Paul restored the use of the dalmatic by the sovereign since it was a form of saccos, a garment worn by Emperors and Bishops, thus, by liturgical definition, forbidden to the female sex. For the first time, the coronation of the Tzaritza took place simultaneously with that of the Tzar. Peter the Great had earlier expressed his personal power as autocrat by crowning his wife himself. The Blessed Emperor Paul maintained the essence of the Petrine thought but expressed it differently. He returned to the ritual of Constantinople, holding his own crown over his wife's head for several minutes and then placing a smaller crown on her head.

After reading the new order of succession which became the basis of Russian State Law and even today governs the legitimacy of all claims to the Russian Imperial Throne, the Emperor Paul placed the document in the Holy Altar, on the table of the prothesis. He further strengthened the rule of the use of the dalmatic as an essential and indispensable part of the coronation regalia. On the Feast of the Transfiguration, 1797, he reviewed the troops, dressed in the crown and the dalmatic. The Metropolitan was also present in saccos to sprinkle the Emperor, the colors and the soldiers with Holy Water. At the end of his coronation, the Emperor Paul again followed ancient Moscovite tradition by visiting the Holy Trinity Lavra of Saint Sergius at Radonezh, where he met his old tutor and spiritual father Metropolitan Platon, attired in the phelonion and staff of Saint Sergius. The Emperor, greatly moved, prostrated himself to kiss the vestments of the great ascetic whose spiritual power had renewed the Russian land, dramatically leading to her liberation from the Tatars.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Illustrated History of the Russian Empire*, edited by the Rev. Nikita Chakirov, with English text compiled by Father George Larin and Miss Natalia Lukianoff et al., New York, 1971, p. 156.

### III. THE DOMESTIC POLICIES OF THE EMPEROR PAUL I, REGARDING THE SERFS AND PEASANTS

Amongst the "mercy-decrees" issued by the new Tzar at his coronation was the famous Barshina, according to which serfs were found to work for their lords only three days a week and never on Sundays or the days of great feasts. Thus, for the first time since the reign of Boris Godunov (1598-1605) the power of landlords over serfs was limited. Paul also opened state bakeries, lowering drastically the price of bread. All tax on bread was abolished. The new Emperor had an open eye to the troubles of the nation. Later, in order to cut through bureaucratic red tape and to give a free voice to the peasants and city proletariat, he had a box placed outside the Winter Palace to which he alone held the key. Anyone could put a petition there, realizing that only the Emperor would read it.<sup>1</sup> Paul I was always venerated by the serfs and the peasants as their Tzar and Protector, for he always regarded these classes as the mainstay of the Empire. He commanded that the serfs be required to take the oath of allegiance to the Emperor, thereby showing that he considered them no less his subjects than the nobility and upper classes.<sup>2</sup> In an ukaz to the governors of provinces the Emperor required immediate information on any and all abuses committed by landowners against their serfs.

During Paul I's reign, 16.5% of the nation's civil servants were drawn from the ranks of former serfs and the peasantry. This figure fell to 11.5% for the reigns of his two sons, Alexander I and Nicholas I.<sup>3</sup> One incident, in particular, illustrates the Emperor Paul's impatience with official malfeasance at the expense of his individual subjects. In Saratov a doctor had been detained in prison for two days for no real reason by a pair of locally elected magistrates who were drunk. Learning of this travesty, the Emperor personally apologized to the physician and ordered the two officials held in their own jail on a diet of bread and water for several days.

The Emperor Paul was a simple and straightforward man in dealing with others. He rose early and was already at work by 5:00 a.m. He received the military reports of the day at 6:00 a.m. and held daily meetings of the entire Senate at 8:00 a.m. Although his reign was very short, Paul I made great strides in systematizing the laws and restoring imperial finances. In order to avoid general taxes on the poorer classes, he instituted heavy luxury taxes which fell primarily upon the nobility. He founded a new bank with the precise aim of forcing the members of the nobility to lessen what he sincerely and impatiently believed was their fiscally irresponsible extravagance, as well as their inveterate sloth and corruption.<sup>4</sup> The bank failed and its failure was due primarily to the Emperor's concentration on the moral issues involved. Unfortunately, he took little thought to the economic conditions of the rapidly expanding Russian Empire which, especially during the reign of Catherine the Great, had forced so many noble families into debt. As he was indignant with the aristocratic lifestyle of luxury and laziness, the Emperor Paul also was doubly severe with usurers and pushy capitalists striving all too often and too successfully to penetrate the ranks of the nobility.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Glinin, p. 23

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 172 and the article "Paul I and the Bank of Assistance for the Nobility" by Roderick E. McGrew, pp. 104-124, especially pp. 108-109.

While Paul I never deviated from the firmly held belief that the Orthodox autocracy represented the best possible regime for the vastness and diversity of the Russian lands, he did, in his deep concern for individuals and their rights, propose something of a republican style separation of the judicial powers of the Imperial Senate from the executive and legislative absolutism of the Emperor. This plan, formulated in 1783 in a memorandum to his mentor Nikita Panin, envisions the Senate as a body of final judicial appeal, headed by a chancellor serving as chief justice and relying upon branch courts in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kazan and Glukhov.<sup>1</sup> When he finally came to the throne Paul never effected this reform, probably because his reign was short, because he felt Russia faced far more pressing problems and, most significantly, because the Terror of the French Revolution had made him wary of any move to divest anointed sovereigns of their ancestral prerogatives.

This very brief survey of the domestic policies and initiatives undertaken by the Emperor Paul after his accession reveals not only a generally benevolent concern for the Russian people but even something of a "clairvoyant" insight aiming "to reconcile the great social disparities and conflicts that eventually did destroy the Empire".<sup>2</sup> His legislation provided a final and necessary solution to the problem of the Russian imperial succession up to the present day. His concern for the serfs and the peasants made more than a small beginning to the necessary task of liberating these classes from the financial burdens and social restrictions that rendered them susceptible to revolutionary demagoguery. Finally, his vision of a united and cohesive Russia stood as the very antithesis of classical communist ideology which presumes the state of class irreconcilability and forges a key to power with the fires of class hatred.

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<sup>1</sup> David L. Ransel, "An Ambivalent Legacy: the Education of the Grand Duke Paul", *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 12: "Paul's papers stand alone in the annals of Russian autocracy as a personal written commitment to grant his subjects a constitution based on separation of powers and elected representation at the national level."

<sup>2</sup> H. Ragsdale, *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. v.

#### IV. THE MENTAL CONDITION OF PAUL I AND THE MYTH OF HIS SUPPOSED MADNESS

When all these positive initiatives of the Emperor Paul's very short reign are considered carefully, it becomes very difficult to reconcile their reality with the stock picture of him, found both in the memoirs of his contemporaries and in general histories of Russia, as a despotic madman whose rule threatened the stability of the Empire. Any effort to set in perspective and to examine fairly the supposed madness of Paul I requires a preliminary separation of fact from rumor. Ragsdale himself, in a study on the Emperor's mental condition, states that much of what passed for manifestations of madness resulted from deliberate distortion, exaggeration, and slander on the part of a court atmosphere which ultimately provided the context for the Emperor's assassination.<sup>1</sup> We know that Count Peter Pahlen, the military governor of Saint Petersburg and the leader of the conspirators, as a prelude to the regicide, in order to create a climate of public opinion both hostile to the Emperor and favorable to the assassins, on many occasions deliberately distorted Paul's orders. It is true that the Emperor Paul did order the suppression of what he considered exaggerated styles of clothing, Pahlen, however, deftly chose to enforce these regulations in the most unreasonable and abrasive manner, indiscriminately tearing off hats and cutting the overly long coats of Saint Petersburg's unfortunate citizenry.

On one occasion, the Emperor in a rage ordered the banishment from the capital of a government contractor named Sablukov because he had not supplied the army with uniform cloth of the proper shade of dye. Pahlen then insisted on carrying out the order immediately, on a cold winter's day when Sablukov was confined to bed with a high fever. After the Emperor had been informed of Pahlen's irresponsibility in this matter, he apologized personally to Sablukov. Unfortunately, both for himself and for Russia, he did not remove Pahlen from office.<sup>2</sup> Another official named Archarov, was impeached by the Emperor for having stupidly ordered the houses of his district to be painted black and white under the pretext of pleasing Paul who was known to have liked these colors.<sup>3</sup> Precisely because of his simplicity and directness Paul could easily be manipulated by his subordinates. His mordant sense of humor and his generous capacity to laugh at himself<sup>4</sup> also exposed the Emperor Paul to being deliberately misrepresented. On one occasion he remarked to his entourage in a casual manner that he had just noticed a thoroughly drunk citizen of the capital

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Ragsdale, "The Mental Condition of Paul," *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 17. cf. also p. XIV, where, as an example of hyperbole used by contemporaries to describe Emperor Paul, the Danish Ambassador is quoted as saying that the number of persons returning to the capital from exile in the wake of Paul's death was so great that the price of food and lodging rose astronomically.

<sup>2</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Illustrated History of the Russian Empire*, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. XIV. The following incident will serve nicely to illustrate the Emperor Paul's capacity to laugh at himself. General N.A. Sablukov, the son of the just mentioned contractor, served for some time close to the Emperor as a member of the Horse Guards. Since this Sablukov was something of an amateur artist, Paul one day asked him if he had ever attempted to draw a sketch of the Emperor. When, without fear, Sablukov answered that he had often done so, Paul looking into the mirror, retorted: "What a face for a portrait!" He then laughed heartily and slapped Sablukov on the back in a friendly manner.

who, as he swayed clumsily by the palace gate, failed to remove his hat out of respect for the Emperor. To his shock Paul soon realized that his offhand observation had been stupidly interpreted as a directive and that, consequently, arbitrarily selected citizens were being forced to stand in the vicinity of the palace, bareheaded in the depths of winter, in supposed deference to the Emperor's pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

Such incidents not only provoked popular resentment against the Emperor Paul. They also had a psychologically adverse effect on him personally, frustrating his already very nervous and highly irritable temperament, as well as making him feel unduly suspicious of and misunderstood by those nearest to him, from whom he would be expected to draw strength and to receive faithful service. For, when due consideration is taken of the willful distortions of his conduct by his enemies and the exaggerated creations of malicious gossip, there still remains a good deal of evidence to show that the Emperor Paul suffered from severe and quick irascibility which caused him to fly into a rage at only the slightest provocation. Count Feodor V. Rostopchin, who served the Emperor faithfully to the end as head of the College of Foreign Affairs and who after the coup d'état of March 11, 1801 is quoted as having said that the most honorable among Paul's assassins deserved to be executed without trial, himself admits that the Emperor's shortness of temper all too often caused him to be misunderstood and hated.<sup>2</sup>

N.K. Shilder in his monumental monograph at the turn of the last century proposes the following thesis to explain Paul's proneness to sudden fits of rage: About the year 1778 the Grand Duke was suddenly taken ill and his doctors concluded from the symptoms that he had been poisoned. Although they were able to arrest the working of the mysterious toxin, Paul was never completely cured of its effects upon his already weakened nervous system. Thus, his notorious fits of temper were nothing other than attacks of frayed nerves.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the validity of Shilder's explanation, the fact of this weakness in the Emperor cannot be denied. He himself was well aware of it. As a very devout Orthodox Christian and in that manner so typically Russian, the Emperor Paul always begged the forgiveness of those whom he had injured. His humility and faithfulness in doing this is recorded even in the hostile memoirs of his detractors who fail, however, to see any virtue in his conduct. Following the scriptural injunction of his Patron Saint, the Emperor Paul was quick in making amends and smoothing over the emotional pain caused by his outbursts. This desire to seek forgiveness honestly led him, furthermore, to pardon many who were quite deserving of this antipathy and mistrust, men like Pahlen, Bennigsen and the Zubov brothers who repaid the sincerity and meekness of the martyred Emperor with remorseless treason and pitiless murder.

In a recent article, Hugh Ragsdale specifically examines the question of the Emperor Paul's mental condition.<sup>4</sup> Not only does he conclude that the Emperor was stable mentally<sup>5</sup> but also testifies to the strong ethical and Christian outlook which characterized his actions throughout his life and reign. Ragsdale refutes the charges that Paul I suffered from either hysteria or paranoia<sup>6</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> *Illustrated History of the Russian Empire*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>2</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Glinin, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Ragsdale, "The Mental Condition of Paul", *Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. 17-30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29, note 15.



concludes that his behavior is best described as "obsessive-compulsive". According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, "this behavior pattern is characterized by excessive concern with conformity and adherence to standards of conscience. Consequently, individuals in this group may be rigid, over-inhibited, over-conscientious, over-dutiful and unable to relax easily".<sup>1</sup> Ragsdale goes on to say that one of the hallmarks of the obsessive-compulsive personality is a basic distrust of self, one's own feelings and attitudes, and the determination to act in accordance with objective and external standards of conduct. In order to illustrate obsessive-compulsive tendencies in Paul's character, Ragsdale cites examples from his student notebooks when he was only eighteen years of age. The young Grand Duke is quoted at length describing the superiority of spiritual pleasure over its physical counterpart, the danger of mental sloth and the essence of satisfaction (dovolstvo, довољство), "the sweet feeling of joy that we experience upon fulfilling our obligations, both in respect to others, and in respect to ourselves."<sup>2</sup> No lengthy explanation is here required from my pen to underline the harmony of the youthful Paul's joy-filled dedication to duty and the traditional outlook of Christian morality. I need not also make many arguments to distinguish the disparity of attitudes separating modern American psychiatry from the Orthodox Church on the desirability of behavior that the former stigmatizes as "obsessive-compulsive".

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 24. Quoted from Ragsdale.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 18

## V. THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE EMPEROR PAUL I AND HIS REACTION TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

For too long the foreign policy of the Emperor Paul has been dismissed as a tissue of inconsistency, the product of a deeply diseased mind. Now that we have adequately responded to the slanderous charges of insanity let us look at the foreign policy itself. Was it, in fact, so inconsistent? It is charged that Paul, while still Grand Duke, whether from genuine conviction or simply petulance toward his mother, irritatingly championed the principle of pacifism against the Catherinian policy of imperialistic expansionism. For all this lip service to the cause of peace, however, the bulk of his days at Gatchina was spent in army drill which turned his tiny estates into a Prussian miniature. Throwing pacifism to the wind as soon as he mounted the throne, Paul quickly managed to entangle Russia in European politics to a far greater degree than during the reign of Catherine II, necessitating the dispatch of armies to fight the French in Austria and Italy. Just as this policy was beginning to bear generous fruits of victory, Paul again reversed himself, adopting a pro-French posture of armed neutrality against his erstwhile allies, England and Austria. Open overtures were made to Napoleon, as Louis XVIII, the legitimate King of France whom Paul had formerly sheltered so generously, was abruptly ordered to leave his Russian estates, in the midst of a snowstorm. At the point of his assassination Paul had changed his attitudes so drastically that there was even talk of the partitioning of the Turkish Empire along lines that would have delighted Catherine the Great.

Such is the superficial summary of the Emperor Paul's foreign policy which is routinely trotted out as a corollary to his madness. Again, it is Hugh Ragsdale who provides us with ample material for a refutation. His article on the Emperor Paul's diplomacy is provocatively entitled, "Was Paul Bonaparte's Fool?" and concludes with the following categorical statement: "He (the Emperor Paul) clung stubbornly to the foreign policy principles that he had so idealistically enunciated at the beginning of his reign."<sup>1</sup>

If we look at the first charge, we are constrained to acknowledge that there really exists no inconsistency in Paul's early espousal of a pacifist foreign policy while at the same time immersing himself at Gatchina in a regime of Prussian style military drilling. In our own day the sport of fencing is pursued mostly by the least belligerent students on campus. Saint Paul himself, the Emperor's own patron, while hardly an advocate of war or athletics, very often employs imagery drawn from both. In Europe today very small countries such as the Vatican and Liechtenstein, without any real capacity of going to war, still maintain crack units of men intensely trained in the art of military drilling. What the youthful Paul admired so much in the Prussian martial style was not an effective war machine. In fact, the Prussian armies during his reign were proving themselves hopelessly archaic and unable to face the forces of Napoleon. Rather, Paul correctly realized that the Prussian system of exercising and drilling instilled internal discipline in the individual and served as something of an icon of society as a whole, for all its diversity, functioning as a harmonious unit.

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Ragsdale, "Was Paul Bonaparte's Fool?: The Evidence, of Neglected Archives", *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 76-90, quoted statement on p. 88.

Since 1756 Russian armies had been fighting in Europe and against Turkey. This last-named power, the hereditary foe of the Orthodox Empire, had been driven back to the Black Sea, while Russia's traditional European antagonists the Poles and Swedes, had been either completely conquered or beaten into insignificance. Thus, the innate gentleness and fatherly wisdom of the Emperor Paul had always prompted him to pursue a policy of peace on all frontiers. He stopped the war with Persia at almost the moment that he came to the throne. Alas, in his ambition for peace, as in so many other things, the deeply Christian impulses of the Emperor Paul were frustrated, checked by the expansion of the French Revolution and its attendant ideological madness. While the terror of the early nineties had somewhat abated by the time of Paul's accession, its imperialism grew ever more threatening, menacing the Christian monarchies of Europe. Under the effective leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte, the arms of the French Republic were steadily breaking down the eighteenth-century balance of power.

As we look more closely at the last years of the eighteenth century from the prospective of Russia, we are drawn to the amazing conclusion, a conclusion seldom recognized in general historical surveys, that it was neither Edmund Burke nor Prince Klemens von Metternich, but rather the Blessed Emperor Paul I of Russia who "built up what may have been the first systematic conservative response to the Revolutionary era,..."<sup>1</sup> Although he had watched with a wary eye the advancing revolutionary peril ever since his accession to the throne, early in 1798 the Emperor Paul became more deeply and actively involved in European affairs. He first offered asylum to France's exiled King Louis XVIII and the royalist corps of Louis-Joseph, Prince de Condé. When a century and two decades later the Russian émigrés found themselves in their flight from Bolshevik terror seeking refuge in France and other western countries, they were indeed already owed a debt of hospitality in Europe, a debt to Russia emerging out of the Christian monarchist and far-sighted policy of the Blessed Emperor Paul I. Too often this debt was either ungratefully ignored or else drew but the most meagre return.

On the diplomatic front the Emperor Paul made friendly overtures to the Ottoman Empire in order to secure its cooperation in his plan to shield the Adriatic coasts, along with the seething peoples of the Balkans, from French revolutionary influences, and to prevent any strengthening of the French position in Constantinople. In December 1798, the Emperor Paul organized the Second Coalition, an alliance of the Russian Empire and Great Britain, to which the lesser powers of Austria, Naples, Portugal and Turkey also adhered.<sup>2</sup> The aims of this alliance were to have an Anglo-Russian army under the Duke of York drive the French from the Netherlands, to support the Austrian army of the Archduke Charles in liberating Germany and Switzerland, and to have an Austro-Russian Army force the French out of Italy. Paul himself, to the great astonishment of the Holy Roman Emperor Francis II, was primarily concerned with the Italian campaign. Above all he was determined that their legitimate Christian Majesties of Naples and Sardinia be restored to their thrones with all their territories returned to them. To help the Austrians in northern Italy, the Emperor Paul dispatched the great Suvorov, who on April 27, 1799, together with General Melas, liberated Milan and crushed the Cisalpine Republic. Turin and Mantua then also fell to the great

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<sup>1</sup> Roderick E. McGrew, "Paul I and the Knights of Malta," *O*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *An Encyclopedia of World History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, compiled and edited by W.L. Langer, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1960, p. 586: "This Second Coalition against France was the work primarily of Paul I of Russia, ..."

Russian general. At the battle of Trebia in June, Suvorov defeated the French under MacDonald, with the result that the Parthenopean Republic was broken and King Ferdinand I was able to return in triumph to Naples. In August, General Jobert, at the head of a new army, faced Suvorov and Melas at Novi, where the royalist allies won so complete a victory that Jobert committed suicide in its wake. At this point, with the forces of the French Republic thoroughly trounced in Italy, General Suvorov crowned his string of Italian triumphs with his spectacular crossing of the Alps, a truly history-making feat that raised the glory of Russian martial virtue to rival that of Alexander and Hannibal. Although his wearied forces now numbered less than twenty thousand men, Suvorov still was able to best a French army numbering more than sixty thousand, thereby rescuing the threatened heartland of the Austrian monarchy.

By this time, however, the Blessed Emperor Paul was growing ever more disillusioned with the excessively selfish outlook of his allies and their lack of spirit. In October 1799, the campaign in the Netherlands ended ignominiously with a negotiated British retreat. Instead of genuinely echoing Paul's altruistic policy of restoration of the Italian monarchies, the Austrians were busily aggrandizing their own holding on the peninsula. The last straw for the Emperor was the unilateral occupation of Malta by Britain. With the formation of the Second Coalition, it had been agreed that the island would, after the expulsion of the French, be garrisoned jointly by the British, the Russians and the Neapolitans. The British had given Russia the most explicit assurances in this matter until the very last moment. Upon the French surrender, however, the Union Jack was raised alone over Malta.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever one might think of the Emperor's policies, particularly in Italy and with regard to Malta, his decisions first to form the Second Coalition with Great Britain and then to abandon it two years later in no way reflect fickleness or vacillation over principles and objectives. Theoretically the Coalition could have succeeded, for the Russian Emperor eagerly proved with arms his sincere commitment to his allies and to the platform of restoration of Christian monarchies with the extirpation of French revolutionary influence. Paul however, had the political clear-headedness to discern that this noble goal was only receiving lip service from his allies while, in reality, being sacrificed before greedy Austrian expansionism and the ever narrow self-serving behavior of England. The question also poses itself, a question nowhere answered: Why did Great Britain, knowing full well the character of the Emperor Paul and the importance he attached to his new Maltese connection, risk her vital alliance with Russia and endanger the entire Second Coalition for the insignificant real estate that is the Island of Malta?

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Ragsdale, "Was Paul Bonaparte's Fool: The Evidence of Neglected Archives," *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 81.

## VI. THE EMPEROR PAUL I OF RUSSIA, GRAND MASTER OF THE KNIGHTS OF MALTA

The very mention of Malta, however, requires much deeper treatment, both politically and theologically, for its importance to the Emperor Paul transcended purely military and territorial considerations, forming at the same time the most interesting facet of his foreign policy. On November 29/December 10, 1798, His Most Orthodox and Autocratic Majesty Paul I, Emperor and Tzar of All the Russias, was formally installed and, according to a ceremony almost seven centuries old, invested as Grand Master of the Roman Catholic Order of the Knights of Malta. This move, as we shall see, might well have been the prime cause of his violent end. It has surely led to a myriad of theories and caused far too much misunderstanding of the Emperor. For example, I was recently told by an ill-informed and indignant Orthodox Christian of Greek national background that the Emperor Paul could hardly be considered a Martyr and a Saint since he had belonged to the Knights of Malta and was, therefore, a Freemason. Others object that the acceptance of the Grand Mastership of the Maltese Order represented in itself an association with the Pope which compromised the purity of the Emperor Paul's Orthodoxy. A third charge is raised, to the effect that Paul's protection of the Maltese Knights warped his entire foreign policy, sacrificing the political interests of Russia to the Emperor's own personal vanity and ambition. In order to clear the deck of such criticism and misinformation, we must first study the history of Masonry and the Knights of Malta, so that then the meaning of the Emperor Paul's relationship to both can be determined in the light of events military, political and religious during the last years of the eighteenth century.

According to the official *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*,<sup>1</sup> its history in Russia began in 1731, during the reign of the Empress Anna Ivanovna (1730-1740), when Captain John Philips was appointed by Lord Lovel, the Grand Master of England, to become Provincial Grand Master of Russia. For the first time in 1750, we learn that Masons in Russia were assembling openly at a lodge in Saint Petersburg, very significantly named "of silence". That same year, a second lodge, named "North Star", was established in the city of Riga. According to the French Masonic historian Claude Antoine Thory<sup>2</sup>, Masonry made very little progress in Russia under the very pious and deeply Orthodox Empress Elizabeth (1741-1762). In 1763, only one year after her seizure of the imperial Russian throne, Paul's mother, the Empress Catherine II, declared herself the Protectress of the nascent Order of Freemasons. Two years later the Rite of Melesino, a rite unknown in any other country, was introduced into Russia by a Greek of that name. There were at the time the York, Swedish and Strict Observance Rites practiced by other lodges in Russia. In 1783 twelve of these lodges united to form the National Grand Lodge which rejected all rites save the Swedish.

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<sup>1</sup> Albert G. Mackey, "Russia", *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, originally published in 1873, with the New Revised Edition, in two volumes published in 1884 by Masonic History Company, hereafter to be cited as E.F. (Chicago, New York, London, 1912), II, p. 655.

<sup>2</sup> "Thory", E.F., II, pp. 783-784. Claude Antoine Thory (1759-1827) published in 1813 his *Annales Originis Magni Galliarum Orientis* and in 1815 his *Chronologie De L'histoire De LA Franche-Masonnerie, Francaise et Etrangerè*.

From that year until 1794 Masonry in Russia "flourished with unalloyed prosperity and popularity".<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising that in this period of the first flowering of Masonic lodges in Russia Count Nikita I. Panin, Paul's tutor, as well as other nobles in the Grand Duke's entourage, became Masons and used their considerable influence to enlist their Protectress' heir apparent into their lodge. Such propagandizing in itself involved no risk and could be done openly. In 1784 the Grand Duke Paul was finally at the age of thirty convinced to enter the Elagina Lodge. At the time he had little understanding of the true aims of Masonry, considering it simply a philanthropic brotherhood with no revolutionary or political overtones or religious tenets incongruous with Holy Orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> After the outbreak of the regicide revolution in France, the Empress Catherine herself became alarmed at the growing evidence of not only ideological but even overt and political links between institutional Freemasonry and the Terror.<sup>3</sup> About the year 1794 she withdrew her protection from the Order. Although she did not direct the lodges to be closed, most of them, in wise deference to the sovereign's wishes, cased to meet. The few which continued to function were placed under the surveillance of the police and soon languished, holding their communications but at distant intervals.<sup>4</sup>

Paul likewise became now fully aware of the political and religious threat from the Freemasons. Not only did he break with them,<sup>5</sup> he also as Emperor went so far as to forbid the entire practice of Masonry and all related secret societies within the confines of the Russian Empire. The Masons themselves are the first to deny that the Blessed Emperor Paul belonged to their order. Rather, they regard him as one of their historical enemies, who for a brief time halted their efforts to win over the Russian nobility and intelligentsia.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Russia", *E.F.*, II, p. 655.

<sup>2</sup> Glinin, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed treatment of the role of Freemasonry and its radical cousin, Illuminism (a secret society which was founded on May Day, 1776 by Adam Weishaupt, an ex-Jesuit and professor of canon law at Ingolstadt) in fomenting the French Revolution, cf. Nesta H. Webster, *The French Revolution, A Study in Democracy*, first published in 1919 and reprinted in 1969, pp. 19-24, *et passim*.

<sup>4</sup> "Russia", *E.F.*, II, p. 655.

<sup>5</sup> Glinin, p. 17: "As soon as the Grand Duke Paul understood the true nature of Masonry, he rejected it completely and refused even to discuss the subject." Translation of Hiero-Deacon Andrew Herron.

<sup>6</sup> "Paul I", *E.F.*, II, pp. 547-548: "This emperor of Russia was induced by the machinations of the Jesuits to prohibit in his domains all secret societies, and especially the Freemasons. This prohibition lasted from 1797-1803, when it was repealed by his successor." cf. also articles "Alexander I" (I, pp. 45-46) and "Russia" (II, p. 655). Induced by Johann Boeber, a Royal Councilor of State and Director of the School of Cadets at Saint Petersburg, Alexander I rescinded all the decrees of Paul I against the Freemasons and was himself initiated into the Grand Orient Lodge of All the Russians. Again, Masonry flourished in Russia until suddenly, on August 12, 1822, the Emperor Alexander I repented and ordered all lodges to be closed.



Having traced the history of Freemasonry in Russia and the role of the Blessed Emperor Paul as its resolute antagonist, we can now turn to the ludicrously absurd charge, born of a lamentable ignorance of history, to the effect that, because he was Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, the Emperor Paul I must have been a Mason. Rather than the result of ignorance, this oft repeated canard, heard among American Orthodox Christians and even from some Russians, is born of a benighted zealotry wedded to that little learning against which the great British poet Alexander Pope both correctly and elegantly warns us. The absurdity of this contention requires us to go back to the time of the First Crusade at the end of the eleventh century when the Knights of Malta were founded. Quickly they became the antagonists of that more famous and controversial of knightly monastics, the Templars, from whom the Freemasons proudly claim to have descended.

The Knights of Malta, also known at different times in their history as the Hospitallers, the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem and the Knights of Rhodes, are one of the most ancient and important orders of medieval chivalry. Originally the Hospitallers of Jerusalem were simply a religious and charitable order which had been established in 1048 by pious merchants of Amalfi, in order to help poor and distressed pilgrims making their way to the Holy Sepulcher. The society of Hospitallers was founded about eighty years before the establishment of the Knights Templar, when Jerusalem was still in the hands of the Moslems. In 1099 came the great victory by which the Holy City was taken by Christian Knights and the Latin Kingdom was set up under the leadership of Godfrey de Bouillon who rewarded the Hospitallers for their valuable service. Gerard, the Rector of the Hospital, induced his brethren to take upon themselves the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. In 1099 at an open and public ceremony the Patriarch of Jerusalem clothed the novices in a habit unique to their order, a plain black robe bearing on the left breast a white cross pattée, the limbs of which were deeply notched so as to make eight points.<sup>1</sup> The fact that this initiation was open and public cannot be emphasized too much, since therein lies one of the greatest differences between the Knights of Malta and the medieval Templars, as well as the successors of the latter, the modern Freemasons, whose rites of initiation always require secrecy.<sup>2</sup>

During the rectorship of Gerard the Hospitallers were characterized by a style of life that was both peaceful and monastic. In 1118, however, Gerard was succeeded by Raymond Du Puy who brought about the complete metamorphosis of the Hospitallers into a military order devoted mainly to warfare with the Moslems. Baldwin II of Jerusalem gladly accepted this unexpected source of aid. Now known as the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem, they submitted to a new oath before the Patriarch of Jerusalem which required them to defend the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ against the infidel to the last drop of their blood but for no other reason whatsoever to bear arms. This restriction was, of course, quite consistent with the fact that many of these Knights of Saint John had taken Holy Orders.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Cross, Maltese," E.F., I, p. 187, The eight points of the Maltese Cross are believed to symbolize the eight Beatitudes.

<sup>2</sup> "Knights of Malta, Masonic" E.F., p. 396: "Another reason why the degree of Knight of Malta should be rejected from the Masonic system is that the ancient Order (of Malta) never was a secret association. Its rites of reception were open and public, wholly unlike anything in Masonry."

<sup>3</sup> "Knights Templar", E.F., I, p. 405: "The Order of the Temple, unlike that of the Hospitallers, consisted at first only of laymen."

From that day when the Knights of Saint John entered the lists of knightly warfare, their history has been characterized by unrelenting bravery and a stubbornly slow retreat before the superior forces of Islam, Masonry and modern Atheism. When Saladin captured Jerusalem in 1187, the Knights of Saint John retired to Margat in Palestine. In 1191 they established themselves at Acre where they remained for exactly a century until this last Christian stronghold in Palestine fell to the Moslems. Their third emigration then led them to the Island of Cyprus, a much-needed refuge for their attenuated and impoverished condition. At this point the vigorous Grand Master Jean de Villiers summoned large reinforcements of men and money from the Order's Grand Priorities in Europe, so that the Knights of Saint John were soon able once again to open their Hospital in Cyprus and to resume something of their monastic life. Since the opportunity for land battle with the Moslems no longer presented itself, they became sailors and marines dedicated to the protection of both Christian commerce in the eastern Mediterranean and the still large numbers of pilgrims bound for the Holy Places. In this new setting they continued to prove themselves the same inexorable and fierce foes of the infidels, whose captured vessels soon filled their harbor in Cyprus.<sup>1</sup>

During the final years of their occupation of Cyprus, the Knights of Saint John, together with the rest of Latin Christendom, were shaken by the horrible scandal evoked by revelations of gross immorality and satanic idolatry among the Knights Templar. In 1118, the very same year that Raymond Du Puy reformed the Hospitallers and organized them into a military order, Hugh de Payens and Godfrey de Saint Aldemar founded the Templars along similar lines as a military confraternity to fight the Moslems and to protect Christian pilgrims.<sup>2</sup> Although with great humility they were called the Pauperes Commilites Christi et Templi Salomonis (The Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon), they came to be known by the latter part of their name because King Baldwin assigned for their residence part of the royal palace which stood near the site of the Temple of Solomon and Herod. Baldwin also dispatched Hugh de Payens to Europe to organize a new crusade. After he had presented himself to Pope Honorius II and the Council of Troyes, Hugh's organization of the new order was approved. Bernard of Clairvaux composed the official rule for the Knights Templar consisting of seventy-two chapters and characterized by great asceticism, severe fasting, self mortification, long devotional exercises and prayers. Bernard also prescribed for the professed Knights a white habit, the symbol of a pure life, to which Pope Eugenius III (1145-1153) added, as a sign of martyrdom, the famous Templar Red Cross, also like the Cross of the Hospitallers, sown over the left breast.<sup>3</sup> The Templar Cross, like the Maltese Cross, is also a cross pattée, but without the characteristic Maltese notches at the middle of each of its four limbs.

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<sup>1</sup> "Knights of Malta", E.F., I., p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> *An Encyclopedia of World History*, p. 280, states that the Knights of Saint John were "militarized (c. 1130) on the model of the Knights Templar."

<sup>3</sup> "Knights Templar", E.F., I, p. 405. cf. also pp. 405-409: "The general direction of Saint Bernard as to clothing was afterward expanded, so that the dress of a Templar consisted of a long white tunic, nearly resembling that of a (Roman Catholic) priest in shape, with a red cross on the left breast."

Since they were by their rule required to live only by alms, the Templars managed by the end of the twelfth century to amass donations so enormous that all thought of monastic poverty was abandoned. Pories were founded by the Templars in every part of Europe and the order grew very powerful, as its leaders became the de facto bankers of Europe.<sup>1</sup> The Crusades had become for the Templars an ideal opportunity for booty and aggrandizement, so that the original religious goals of these campaigns were soon lost in worldly concerns that bred pride and ostentation. In 1152 the Templars also began their long and very suspect dealings with the infamous sect of Shiite Moslems, known as the Assassins, a name which means literally "Eater of Haschisch".<sup>2</sup> The fact of what their name has, in turn, come to mean in common parlance gives us more than a slight clue about the nature of this clandestine society dedicated to the seizure of power through the secret and scientific use of murder. Headed by a Grand Master, known as the Old Man of the Mountain, the Assassins' secret organization featured Apprentices, Fellows, Masters and Pories, all of which is reminiscent of latter-day masonry.<sup>3</sup> The Assassins paid an annual tribute of twelve thousand gold pieces to the Templars.

After the fall of Acre in 1291, the Knights Templar, like the Hospitallers, established themselves on Cyprus. Instead, however, of joining the latter in a new life of unrelenting naval warfare against the Moslems, the Templars soon retired to Europe where they lived luxuriously and indulged in an already inveterate arrogance which caused them to be hated and feared.<sup>4</sup> Their haughty insolence and their drinking habits became proverbial, for the saying "to drink like a Templar" was often heard and the old German word Tempelhaus indicated a house of ill repute.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, The Temple and The Lodge, Arcade Publishing, Little, Brown & Co. New York, 1989, p. 47. "At the peak of their power, the Templars handled much, if not most, of the available capital in Western Europe", p. 48 "In theory, canon law forbade Christians to engage in usury, the collecting of interest on loans. You might expect this interdict to have been applied even more stringently to an institution as ostensibly pious as the Temple. Nevertheless, the Temple lent money, and collected interest, on a massive scale. In one proven case, the agreed rate of interest on late payment of debt was 60 per cent per year —, 17 per cent more than Jewish money lenders were allowed to claim. The strictures of canon law against usury were evaded by nothing more elaborate than semantics, euphemism and circumlocution", p. 49 "Not only did they collect papal taxes, tithes and donations; they collected taxes and revenue for the Crown as well — and seem to have been even more fearsome in that capacity than today's Inland Revenue".

<sup>2</sup> *An Encyclopedia of World History*, p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> "Assassins", *E.F.*, I. p. 82: "The Assassins were a secret society, that is to say, they had a secret esoteric doctrine, which was imparted only to the initiated. Vow Hammer (*History of the Assassins*) says that they had a graduated series of institutions, the names of which he gives as Apprentices, Fellows, and Masters; they had, too, an oath of passive obedience, and resembled, he asserts, in many respects, the secret societies that subsequently existed in Europe ... Higgins was not very far in error in calling them the Freemasons of the East."

<sup>4</sup> "Knights Templar", *E.F.*, I, p. 409: "During these last years of their existence little can be said in defense of the Order."

The Templars were first attacked by Philip IV Le Bel, King of France (1285-1314), who on October 13<sup>1</sup>, 1307 ordered the arrest of all the Templars in his Kingdom. After some initial hesitation Pope Clement V (1305-1314) was convinced of the guilt of the Templars. Their last Grand Master Jacques de Molay (1297-1314), at the request of the Pope, had returned to Europe from Cyprus with sixty knights. They were promptly arrested by King Philip IV who charged that the secret rites of the Templars, especially during initiation and investiture, were characterized by blasphemy against the Cross, the denial of Christ's Divinity, gross sexual obscenities and the worship of an idol of frightful and demonic features. For five years de Molay was interned in that historically significant fortress, La Bastille. When at last he was induced to admit his guilt, de Molay was sentenced to life imprisonment. On the same day he repudiated his confession, for which he was burnt publicly before the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris on March 18, 1314, according to the Julian Calendar, March 11, the very same date on which in 1801 the Emperor Paul I of Russia was murdered.<sup>2</sup> To be sure, Masonic sources are absolutely and passionately committed to the proposition of de Molay's innocence and most modern historical accounts tend to agree, describing the trial and execution as a travesty of justice perpetuated by the rapacity of the French King and the supine complicity of the Pope.<sup>3</sup>

Although officially abolished in 1312, the Knights Templar did not disappear entirely but rather survived secretly in several distinct organizations, from which in the eighteenth century the Order of Freemasons and their related secret societies appear to emerge. A number of very distinguished Masonic authors such as Andrew Michael, the Chevalier Ramsay, and Sir David Brewster, the real

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<sup>1</sup> Baigent and Leigh, p. 52 and 54: "Indeed the superstition which holds Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> to be a day of misfortune is believed to stem from Philippe's initial raids on Friday, 13 October 1307."

<sup>2</sup> "James de Molay", *E.F.*, II, p. 489, where the date of March 11 is recorded. In honor of the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, the Order of de Molay was founded in 1919 by Frank S. Land of Kansas City, Missouri. A nonsectarian secret organization for young men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, the Order of de Molay is governed by a grand council of Freemasons, while its chapters are sponsored by Masonic bodies or groups of Masons. Cf. by Baigent and Leigh, pp. 266-267 and *The New Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia* ed. By J.L. Morse, Unicorn Publishers, Inc., New York, 1950, Vol. X., p. 3595.

<sup>3</sup> "Knights Templar", *E.F.*, I. p. 409: "The act of cruelty and injustice by which the Templar Order was dissolved in the fourteenth century has bequeathed an inglorious memory on the name of the infamous king, and no less infamous pope who accomplished it." Cf. also "Order of the Temple", II, p. 770: "...the Order was soon compelled to succumb to the combined animosity of a spiritual and temporal sovereign, neither of whom was capable of being controlled by the spirit of honor or a dictate of conscience." Cf. also "Philip IV," II, p. 561: "He died in 1315, execrated by his subjects, whose hearts he had alienated by the cruelty, avarice and despotism of his administration." Cf. also "James de Molay", II, p. 489: "But the Pope and the King were guilty of the most infamous deceit." For a general historical account, cf. *An Encyclopedia of World History*, p. 232: "The country was stirred up against the Order by a vigorous propaganda campaign...the Inquisition was made use of in the trial, the entire affair being conducted with unparalleled ruthlessness and horror." For a defense of King Philip IV and Pope Clement V, cf. Nesta H. Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, 9<sup>th</sup> Ed. Christian Book Club of America, Hawthorne, California, 1969, pp. 51-73.0

author of Lawrie's *The History of Freemasonry*, attempt with pride to prove that the modern Masonic Lodges are the direct heirs of the Templar Priors.<sup>1</sup> Continental Masons especially insist that the Judaic mystical elements of Temple lore and the grand legend of Hiram were transmitted to their lodges by their having been incorporated into the ritual of the Nights Templar. The Blazing Star and Tau Cross, as well as the Eye and Crescent Moon, the Three Stars and the Five Step Ladder are Masonic symbols with Templar origins. One group of Templars continued to function freely in Portugal where, as the order of the Knights of Christ and under the leadership of de Molay's nephew, Count Beaujeu, they enjoyed royal protection.<sup>2</sup> It is also reported that Count Beaujeu later spread secret Templarism to Sweden and even interred the ashes of Jacques de Molay in Stockholm. Swedish Masonry, which we have seen had such a strong influence on the infant Masonry in Russia, claims descent from the Templar, Count Beaujeu.

During the very trial of de Molay, a second group of Templars under the leadership of Pierre d'Aumont are reported to have escaped to Scotland, where they quickly received the protection of King Robert I the Bruce (1274-1329). Later in 1314, on the Feast of Saint John the Baptist, they participated in his decisive victory over the English at Bannockburn.<sup>3</sup> King Robert himself then instituted the Royal Order of Scotland, consisting of the two degrees of Herredon and the Rosy Cross. The Templar tradition of Scottish Rite Masonry was later transmitted back to France by the Jacobite nobility who followed James II (VII) into exile in 1688. It was none other than the Chevalier Ramsay, the tutor of "The Young Pretender", Prince Charles Edward Stuart, who in his scholarly oration as Grand Master before the Lodge of Paris traced Scottish Rite Masonry back to Pierre d'Aumont and his small band of exiled Templars.<sup>4</sup>

A third French group of Templars claim descent from Jean Marc Larmenius who on the eve of de Molay's execution is said to have obtained from him a charter for the perpetuation of the Order. Just as there were twenty-two grand Masters of the Knights Templar from Hugh de Payens in 1118 to Jacques de Molay in 1313, so there were twenty-two more from Larmenius to Bernard Raymond Fabré in 1804. In 1682, during the reign of King Louis XIV, a licentious society of several young noblemen was set up in France under the name of "La Petite Resurrection Des Templiers" (The Little Resurrection of the Templars). They wore concealed under their shirts a decoration in the form of a cross, on which was embossed the figure of a man trampling on a woman. King Louis XIV, having been informed of the disgraceful proceedings of these neo-Templars, dissolved their Society just in time to prevent the initiation on the next day of the Dauphin. After the death of Louis XIV in 1715, Philippe II, Duc d'Orléans and Regent for the infant Louis XV, secretly restored the Templar society, becoming himself its eighteenth Grand Master.<sup>5</sup> His great grandson Louis Philippe Joseph V Duc d'Orléans, later self-styled to his perpetual shame Louis Égalité, did more than anyone in France to instigate the Revolution. The Terror born of it, however, not only

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<sup>1</sup> "Ramsay", Andrew Michael, *E.F.*, II, pp. 607-609; "Lawrie, Alexander", *E.F.*, I, pp. 427-428; "Knights Templar", *E.F.*, I, p. 410. Cf. also Baigent and Leigh, pp. 2-9, 103 et passim.00

<sup>2</sup> "Knights Templar", *E.F.*, pp. 410-411.

<sup>3</sup> Baigent and Leigh, pp. 33-42, 64-102, et passim.

<sup>4</sup> "Ramsay, Andrew Michael", *E.F.*, II, pp. 608-609.

<sup>5</sup> "Order of the Temple", *E.F.*, II, pp. 770-771.



accomplished the regicide of his fourth cousin, Louis XVI, but also rewarded his own treachery to his King with the blade of Madame La Guillotine.<sup>1</sup>

From the very beginning of their existence as military orders in the early twelfth century the Knights Templar and the Knights of Malta always maintained a bitter rivalry towards each other which at times burst forth into open hostility. Instead of confining themselves to contests of friendly emulation in their ware against a common foe, the Templars and Hospitallers were too often more intent in thwarting and frustrating one another than defeating the Mohammedan. In 1179 Pope Alexander III, alarmed by the counter-productive effects of their bootless quarreling, constrained both orders to make a short-lived peace. This history of knightly rivalry turned to deep enmity and unforgiving hatred after the suppression of the Templars in 1312, when their property was confiscated and whatever did not fall to the Kings of France and Spain was awarded by the Synod of Vienne to the Hospitallers. When the Knights of Saint John accepted this appropriation, they were cursed by the underground remnants of de Molay's followers who vowed never to recognize them as friends. This warfare of revenge by the Templars against the Knights of Malta has continued through the centuries, having been carried on since the middle of the eighteenth century by their most famous and powerful heirs, the Freemasons whose members can never be numbered among the genuine Knights of Malta.<sup>2</sup>

Before passing on to trace the later history of the Knights of Malta and the nature of the involvement of the Blessed Emperor Paul of Russia in their Order, there remain two points which, if examined superficially, might create the false impression that some ties do link the Maltese Knights to the Freemasons. The first of these is the supposed veneration of Saint John by both Orders. The second is the fact that in America there does exist an order of Masons which spuriously titles itself the Knights of Malta.

We have already noted the importance of the veneration of Saint John the Baptist in the history of the Scottish Rite Masons, that of the feast of Saint John in 1307 the refugee Templars of Pièrre d'Aumont held their first chapter meeting in Scotland and that again on the same feast seven years later King Robert the Bruce won his great victory over Edward II at Bannockburn. No less an authority than the Scottish Grand Master, the Chevalier Ramsay, notes the veneration of Saint John by both the Templars and the Hospitallers as part of his attempt to prove that Scottish Rite Masonry was handed down pure and free of the anti-Christian elements which tainted other Templar traditions particularly that of the French Order of the Temple. Indeed, Saint John the Baptist has been claimed as the primary and, for a long time, the exclusive patron of Freemasonry. Only after the sixteenth century is there documentary evidence that the veneration of Saint John the Evangelist was joined to that of the Baptist in what the Masonic scholar George Oliver (1782-1867) styles Johannite Masonry.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Webster, *The French Revolution*, pp. 9-19, 31-45; "Duke of Orleans", *E.F.*, II, pp. 538-539.

<sup>2</sup> "Knights of Malta, Masonic", *E.F.*, I, pp. 395-396.

<sup>3</sup> "Oliver, George," *E.F.*, II, p. 529: "Johannite Masonry", *E.F.*, I, p. 370. In his work, *A Mirror for Johannite Masonry*, Oliver discusses the question of the dedication of Lodges to the two Saints John. According to his definition the system of Masonry practiced in the United States is Johannite Masonry. cf. also "Saint John the Baptist" and "Saint John the Evangelist," *E.F.*, II, pp. 659-660.



Any attempt, however, to use this Masonic veneration of Saint John the Baptist to tie them to the Knights of Saint John of Malta cannot stand, since neither the Baptist nor the Evangelist was the Patron Saint of the Hospitallers. Rather, they and their Hospital were originally dedicated to Saint John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria, whose feast is celebrated on November 12/25.<sup>1</sup> One must recall also that both among the medieval Templars and the modern Masons there has been a strong preference for the Gospel of Saint John to those of the other Evangelists. This "Gospel of Saint John", however, is not the standard text from the New Testament but rather a spurious version derived from Gnostic and Cabalistic sources. A commentary on it known as the *Levitikon* claims to have been composed on Mount Athos by the Bogomil Monk Nicephorus. In 1814 Fabré-Palaprat published a Johannite liturgy, based on the Pseudo John and the *Levitikon*, which had been celebrated in the Lodges of the Order of the Temple in Paris.<sup>2</sup>

As we have already stated, there is in the United States today an appendant Order in the Masonic Commandery of Knights Templar known as the Knights of Malta. *The Encyclopaedia of Masonry* itself recognizes the absurdity of this development, given the historical antagonism between the Templars and the Hospitallers.<sup>3</sup> This bogus Masonic order of Knights of Malta was created early in the history of American Masonry and is mentioned in the Constitution of the United States Grand Encampment adopted in 1805. In 1856 the Knights Templar of the United States had become convinced that the incorporation of the Order of Malta, so as to make the same person a possessor of both orders, was so absurd a violation of all historical truth that the Maltese Degree was stricken at the session of the General Grand Encampment at Hartford, Connecticut. At the session, however, of 1862 in Columbus, Ohio, the Masonic order of Malta was restored and to this day stands among the Commanderies of the Knights Templar. Its ritual is entirely a Masonic creation of modern times, having been largely adopted from Canada where also the Freemasons have given the Maltese title to the principal degree of their priories.

If we may generalize a bit on this question, there ought hardly to be any surprise at the Masons' coopting the name of their hereditary Maltese enemies and after their triumph adding it to their own pantheon of orders. The Masonic *Weltanschauung* sees almost every ideological, mystical and heraldic phenomenon in history as positive and somehow contributing, or at least somehow under their interpretation capable of contributing, to the expression of their universal message. A perfect example of this ecumenism which has special significance to Orthodox Christians is the Masonic use of the Double-Headed Eagle, the most venerable of heraldic devices in western civilization after the Holy and Life-Giving Cross. Originally the Roman Eagle, it came to have two heads when the Orthodox Christian Empire began to be ruled by two Emperors, one in Rome

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<sup>1</sup> *Saint Herman Calendar 1982*, The Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California, 96076, p. 58. cf. also "Saint John the Almoner", *E.F.*, II, p. 659 and the "Hospitallers of Jerusalem," *E.F.I*, p. 337 Saint John the Merciful is known in the West as Saint John the Almoner whose feast the Roman Catholic Church celebrates on January 23. The Hospital of Jerusalem was also under the protection of Saint Mary Magdalene.

<sup>2</sup> "Levitikon," *E.F.*, I, p. 443.

<sup>3</sup> "Knight of Malta, Masonic," *E.F.*, I, pp. 395-396. "The degree (of Malta) has no historical or traditional connection with Masonry; holds no proper place in Commandery of Templars and ought to be wiped out of the catalogue of Masonic degrees." (p. 396).

and one in Constantinople. The heir of the former was the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation which on its dissolution in 1806 at the hands of Napoleon was reconstituted as the Hapsburg Empire of Austria and, from 1867 to 1918, the Empire of Austria-Hungary. The latter continued as the True Orthodox Christian Roman Empire. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when in 1472 Moscow became the Third Rome at the marriage of Tzar Ivan III and Sophia, the niece of Emperor Constantine XI (XII) Paleologos, the Double-Headed Eagle naturally assumed its place as the Russian Imperial Standard even to our own day.<sup>1</sup>

This venerable Christian and Roman Imperial tradition did not deter Freemasonry from coopting the Double-Headed Eagle into its system of heraldry as early as 1758. In that year the Masonic body calling itself the Council of the Emperors of the East and West was established in Paris. Its ritual of twenty-five degrees is now contained in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, whose thirty-third Degree or Sovereign Grand Inspector-General displays the Double-Headed Eagle on his jewel. Originally black like the late Roman and Russian Imperial Eagles, the Masonic Double-Headed Eagle is now silver with only one golden crown resting on both heads, instead of the three found on the Austrian Imperial Double-Headed Eagle. The Masonic Double-Headed Eagle also does not display the Icon of Saint George on its breast. What is most striking about the Masonic Double-Headed Eagle is its conspicuous golden talons, grasping horizontally the wavy sword which symbolizes cherubic fire. Even when this sword is not depicted, the talons of the Masonic Eagle are massive and thrust forward. This contrasts with both the Russian and the Austrian Double-Headed Eagles whose talons are not menacingly large but rather small and withdrawn, holding the Imperial Orb and Scepter of the Universal Roman and Christian Sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

Just as it is today quite possible to come upon the Double-Headed Eagle on an American Masonic Monument or headstone, which has nothing to do with Orthodox Russia and the Christian Roman Imperial Tradition, so likewise one might encounter American Masons who flash what they claim to be the insignia and titles of the Knights of Malta. These Masons, however, have really nothing in common with the historical Hospitaller-Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem and their last sovereign Grand Master, the Blessed Orthodox Emperor Paul I of Russia.

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Alexis Polaski, "History of the Double Eagle Design in the Coats of Arms of the Russian Rulers," published by the author, New York, January 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> "Double-Headed Eagle", *E.F.*, I, p. 226. The Austrian Imperial Double-Headed Eagle likewise does not have the Icon of Saint George on its breast, since the Great Trophy-Bearer is the ancient patron of Moscow. Rather, the Hapsburg Double-Headed Eagle features on its breast a tripartite shield, surrounded by the Order of the Golden Fleece of Burgundy and displaying on its left the lion of Bohemia, on its right the three aleria (small eagles without beak or claw, alluding, incidentally, to a miraculous bow-shot by the Crusader Ruler of Jerusalem Godfrey de Bouillon which pierced the three birds with a single arrow), and at its center the colors red, white, red, which from the same Crusader days of the pre-Hapsburg, Babenberg Dynasty even to our own republican times still stand as Austria's flag. The Austrian Double-Headed Eagle holds also upraised in its right talon the broad sword of the Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790), alongside the Imperial Scepter. cf. *Heraldry of the Royal Families of Europe*, Tables by Juri Louda, Text by Michael MacLagan, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc. New York, 1981, Tables 81-82 and pp. 163 and 166 (Austria): p. 167 and Tables 85-96 (Bohemia): Table 110 and p. 218 (Lorraine).

Even before the suppression of the Templars in 1312, the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem removed their headquarters to Rhodes. Two years earlier, on the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, under the vigorous leadership of the Grand Master Fulk de Villaret, they captured the Island from the Turks. Subsequently known as the Knights of Rhodes for their two-hundred-and-ten-year residence there, they maintained it faithfully as an outpost of Christian Europe and a defense against the expanding Ottoman power. In 1320, at a General Chapter held at Montpellier under Grand Master Villanova, the Order was divided in Langues or Languages, a division unknown among the Hospitallers during their Palestinian Period. There were originally seven Langues: Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Spain, Germany and England.

In 1522, the Turkish Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent conquered Rhodes but generously permitted the peaceful departure of the Knights of Saint John who had fought bravely to hold their island base. After seven years of uncertainty at Candia in Crete, the Hospitallers made their seventh and final emigration to Malta which in 1530 was granted to them in perpetual sovereignty by Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain. For two hundred and sixty-eight years the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem held Malta. For most of their history the Hospitallers had maintained close ties with France and these were emphasized during the glorious reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715). After 1722-1723, when Louis XV arranged a truce with the Sublime Porte, the Knights of Malta effectively gave up their warfare with the Turks which had been the centerpiece of their foreign policy since their Rhodian period. They continued, however, to fight Moslems according to their original vows of Crusader days and their campaigns against the Barbary Pirates rendered Christian shipping safer in the Western Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup>

Relations between the Knights of Malta and the Court of Russia began, for purposes of our study, in 1772. Earlier in 1618 the Ostrog family had established a priory in Volhynia for the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem. In 1772 the Kingdom of Poland suffered its first partition and Volhynia, together with the Ostrog Priory, fell under Russian sovereignty. Michael Marquis de Sagrarnoso was sent as Ambassador of the Order to Russia. He knew Russian well and had visited the court of the Empress Elizabeth in 1748. Catherine the Great received him graciously but, as usual, concluded an agreement primarily favorable to Russian interests. The lands of the Priory in Volhynia were to be ceded to the Russian Empress, who, in turn, brought irresistible pressure upon the King of Poland, Stanislas Poniatowski, to provide new lands and found a comparable priory in what was left of his already reduced realm. The Grand Priory of Poland was established in 1775.

The response of the Knights of Malta was grateful, but their gratitude did not induce them in 1769 to break their traditional policy of pro-French neutrality in the Eastern Mediterranean to join Russia in a war against Turkey. In May of that year a Russian squadron had appeared at Valletta, the capital of Malta, to bring the Empress Catherine's appeal for an alliance.

As the flames of the Great Revolution ignited into the Terror of the early nineties, the aristocratic Order of Saint John of Jerusalem lost forever their alliance with France and with it the international

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<sup>1</sup> The history of the Knights of Malta from 1310 to 1530 has largely been drawn from the *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* ("Knights of Malta", I, pp. 393-394. The chronology of subsequent events has and will be drawn from the article, entitled "Paul I and the Knights of Malta" by Roderick E. McGrew) (*Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. 44-75).

security to preserve their sovereignty over the Island of Malta. This former friend, furthermore, was growing daily into the Hospitallers' most formidable foe, as Napoleon attained greater power and his military genius conceived of strategies involving Italy, Germany and the Mediterranean. The traditional enemies of the Hospitallers were also gaining greater power. Freemasonry was now firmly entrenched in the governing circles of Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries and most Protestant lands.<sup>1</sup> We have already noted their ascendancy in Russia. They had also made great progress at the court of Vienna during most of the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790) who strongly supported them and for a time might well have been a Mason.<sup>2</sup>

In 1793 Poland suffered its second partition and the newly established Grand Priory of the Knights of Saint John was once more under Russian rule. The Maltese Grand Master Francois Marie des Neiges Emmanuel de Rohan dispatched Count Giulio Litta to Saint Petersburg to negotiate the political status of the Polish Priory. Litta knew Russian well and was a friend of Count Platon Zubov, the last of Catherine's many intimate favorites. Now, however, the Empress shrewdly recognized the political weakness of the Maltese Knights and granted them no concessions. She was even uncooperative on the religious level, refusing to receive at Court Litta's brother Lorenzo, the Archbishop of Thebes, who had been sent by Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) to resolve the status of Catherine's new Polish subjects, most of whom were Roman Catholics.

As we might expect, in contrast to his mother's hostility, Grand Duke Paul was very friendly to Giulio Litta, having been his guest during his grand tour of Italy in 1782. When the Empress died in November 1796, Count Litta realized to his joy that the change of sovereigns in Russia would prove an unalloyed boon to the Knights of Malta. Before the end of 1796, the new Emperor had discharged the Order's debts. Instead of the restoration of the Polish Priory, Paul insisted that a Grand Priory be founded in Saint Petersburg itself. Litta was delighted and, writing back to Grand Master de Rohan, declared that the Russian Emperor had given other Christian monarchs an example to be emulated. According to Litta the Emperor Paul realized that the Knights of Malta stood by their ideals and traditions as "the best support for thrones and monarchies".<sup>3</sup>

When, however, Litta proposed that the Grand Priory of Saint Petersburg be subordinated to the Anglo-Bavarian Langue, the Emperor Paul flew into a rage, deeply indignant at what he conceived clearly as an insult to the greatness of the Russian Empire. He would be satisfied with nothing less than a Russian Langue, equal in status to all the others representing the Catholic kingdoms of Europe. When Litta, in turn, balked, the Emperor remained adamant, so that the exiled Italian clerical diplomat realized that the best course was to leave the issue open for the time being. Since only Roman Catholics can be members of the Russian Priory, the vast majority of the nobility of

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<sup>1</sup> Baigent and Leigh, pp. xii-xiv, 171-192, 263-267, et passim.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph II, *E.F.*, I, p. 372. Joseph II in 1785 issued a strong decree permitting the meetings of lodges under certain restrictions as to number. Like Catherine the Great, he became suspicious of the seditious quality of German Freemasonry in 1789 after the outbreak of the French Revolution and rescinded the decree of 1785. His brother, the Emperor Leopold II (1790-1792) and his nephew, the Emperor Francis II (1792-1835), were ardent foes of Freemasonry. In 1794 and 1801 Francis II issued a decree against the Masons, the Illuminati and other secret societies. cf. "Francis II", *E.F.*, I, p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 49.

the Russian Empire, being Orthodox Christians, were barred by statute from participating actively in its deliberations. Despite this, however, the Emperor Paul insisted that the head of the Saint Petersburg Commandery be a Russian subject. Thus, it becomes obvious that the Emperor Paul's interest in the Knights of Malta was neither a matter of personal vanity nor entirely a simple part of his restorationist foreign policy. Whatever merit he had seen in their ancient heraldic traditions, he was determined to use for the welfare of Russia and as part of his program for the regeneration of the Russian nobility. Thus, Russian control had to be assured and Russian dignity had to be emphasized.

On July 14, 1797, Grand Master de Rohan died, and the Bavarian Ferdinand Hompesch was elected as his successor. On August 7, the new Grand Master, as well as the Order's Sacred Council, not only approved Paul's wishes but also formally proclaimed the Orthodox Emperor Protector of the Knights of Malta. In a grand ceremony on November 29/December 10, 1797, the Emperor Paul formally accepted this honor. The Knights of Malta fully realized that, whatever his intentions, the Russian Emperor was the only sovereign in Europe both willing and capable of preserving their six-hundred-year-old order in a hostile and rapidly changing political environment.

On July 12, 1798 Napoleon seized the Island of Malta. Grand Master Hompesch had surrendered without a struggle. All Europe was amazed at this violation of the Knights' neutrality but only Russia responded with resolution and defiance. It was at this time, as we have seen, that the Emperor Paul turned his attention with renewed vigor to the politics of Europe, becoming the soul of the Second Coalition. On August 26/September 6, the Grand Priory of Saint Petersburg, under the direction of Count Litta, accused Hompesch of "improvidence, cowardice and treachery", and demanded that he be deposed from the Grand Mastership. Until the election of a worthy successor, the Russian Knights of Malta stated their intention to throw themselves "into the arms of our August and Sovereign Protector Paul I".<sup>1</sup> Not waiting for the reaction of Pope Pius VI or the Roman Catholic languages of Europe, the Emperor Paul on September 10/21 published a formal ukaz accepting the action of the Russian Priory and declaring Hompesch deposed. This ukaz also stated the Emperor's intention to maintain the constitution of the Order, to keep it under his protection and to make his capital of Saint Petersburg the headquarters for the entire Order, pending the reconquest of Malta.

On October 6/17, Pope Pius VI replied with great caution and great deference to the Tzar's ukaz. Paul was thanked warmly for his protection of the Hospitallers. The Pope declared Hompesch suspended from office and Saint Petersburg the Order's temporary headquarters. While the Pope gently insisted that a Grand Master could not be ousted legally by the unilateral action of the Russian Priory and without the approval of the other languages, he did propose that the case against Hompesch be investigated, that a trial be held and that in the interim Rome would accept as acting Grand Master anyone chosen by the Grand Priory of Saint Petersburg.

Without even waiting for the Pope's letter, the Russian Priory at the direction of Count Litta offered the Grand Mastership to the Emperor Paul who at once accepted it. In this matter the

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<sup>1</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 51. Quoted from Joseph de Maisonnewe, *Annales Historiques de l'ordre de Saint Jean de Jerusalem*, p. 188.



chronology is all important.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor Paul was offered the Grand Mastership on October 27/November 7, 1798 and accepted it November 2/13.<sup>2</sup> The letter of Pius VI arrived only on November 19/30 and was read publicly into the records of the Russian Priory on November 22/December 3. On November 26/December 7 the Papal delegate to Russia simply reported to the Pope the election of the Emperor as Grand Master of the Knights of Malta. It was expressed to the Pope as a fait accompli and no effort was made to secure his approval or blessing. The Emperor Paul's investiture followed on November 29/December 10, when, as the first formal act of his Grand Mastership, the Emperor Paul created a second Russian priory open to the Russian nobility of the Orthodox Faith.

In the meanwhile, pressure on behalf of Hompesch was growing at the courts of Munich, Vienna and Madrid. On March 29, 1799, Pius VI wrote to Russia refusing to ratify the election of the Emperor Paul as Grand Master. The Emperor, in turn, rejected the Pope's refusal. To be sure, the prime mover in pushing the Emperor's election had been the Saint Petersburg Priory which, in turn, was being manipulated by the Litta brothers, for reason of both self-interest and genuine conviction that only the Russian Emperor's support could save the Maltese Order.<sup>3</sup> Once he had determined to become Grand Master, the Emperor refused to back down. He realized that all the power lay in his hands and that the Pope could do little, given his besieged position in Italy under Napoleonic threat. The Emperor also blamed the Litta brothers for failing to secure the Pope's approval. Giulio was stripped of his title of lieutenant to the Grand Master and was exiled to his estates. Lorenzo was expelled from Russia as part of Paul's official reaction of freezing all relations with the Pope until he was recognized as the new Grand Master of the Knights of Malta.

In his own letter to the Pope, dated on December 14/25, 1798, and thus prior to his awareness of the Pope's refusal to ratify his election, the Emperor states two reasons for assuming the Grand Mastership, to wit: to save the Order from revolutionary aggression and to open its ranks to his own Russian Orthodox nobility. The key to understanding the Emperor's motivation is the distinction of prerogatives separating the traditional Grand Mastership and the newly created position of Protector of the Order. In the first place, in order to play a decisive role in restoring the Order financially and politically, as well as using it as a rallying point for the royalist émigrés of Europe, the Emperor had no specific need for the Grand Mastership. His influence as Protector of

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of the arguments on which this chronology is based, c.f. McGrew's article, *Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. 52-59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59: "WE (PAUL I) accept the title of Grand Master of this Order, and renew on this occasion the solemn promises which WE have made previously ... not only to preserve forever intact all the institutions and privileges of this illustrious Order both in regard to the free exercise of religion and the different relationships resulting therefrom for the Knights of the Roman faith, and for the jurisdiction of the Order whose seat WE fix in OUR Imperial Residence; but also that WE will never cease in the future to employ OUR solicitude for the Order's growth and for its re-establishment."

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed account of the Littas' activity, intrigues and motive, cf. McGrew's article, *Ibid.*, p. 54-57. Given the fact that the Emperor as Grand Master was a married man and that Count Giulio Litta had in early 1798 requested a papal dispensation from his religious vows in order to marry one of the late Prince Potemkin's nieces, we might conclude that the Emperor, as part of his reforms of the Order, would call for its laicization.



the Knights of Malta would actually have proved more efficacious for these purposes, since both the Pope and the Catholic Courts, while objecting to him as Grand Master, had shown nothing but the greatest enthusiasm for Paul's activities as protector of the Order. Secondly, were it true, as it has been alleged, that the Emperor Paul's Grand Mastership was only an elaborate excuse to assert an imperialistic Russian naval presence in the Mediterranean centred on the recaptured Island of Malta, again the office of Protector alone and without the Grand Mastership would have served more effectively, since it excited no opposition from Rome. Thirdly, we are faced with the old canard that medieval chivalric ceremony induced Paul to covet the Grand Mastership of Malta. Once again, were the Emperor so avid of honors as not to be content with the innumerable dignities attending the Orthodox Throne of All the Russias, then the Maltese Protectorate alone by itself gave him the full right to wear all the regalia of the Order. Let us not forget that the letter of Pius VI, dated October 6/17, 1798, had accepted the suspension of Hompesch and had offered to the Russian Priory the right to select an interim Grand Master. Thus, with no objections from the Pope, the Emperor Paul could have continued as Protector of the Maltese Knights and served even as interim Grand Master, flashing all the pomp of the office.

Only one reason remains why the Emperor Paul had to assume the permanent Grand Mastership and that was to accomplish what he, in fact, did as his first official act on the very day of his investiture as Grand Master, November 29/December 10, 1799, namely, the opening of the Order of Malta to his own numerous Russian Orthodox nobility.<sup>1</sup> Let us not forget that, although the Order of the Knights of Malta had added even more langues of nations to the original seven of 1320, the total number of knights in 1789 was less than fifteen hundred.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it would hardly have been difficult for the Emperor to swamp the Catholic Order with Orthodox members. The result of this strategic move would be to place the Knights of Malta in relation to the Russian Empire as they had been to the French monarchy prior to 1789. The Tzar would control the Order, with the Pope reduced to being but a figurehead, essential only to the several dwindling and diminutive Roman Catholic langues. Most of these Roman Catholic Knights were, furthermore, French, Italian and Bavarian aristocrats, whose positions and estates had already fallen victim to the French Revolution now led by Bonaparte. Many of them were in Russia and were manning the Grand Priory of Saint Petersburg. The rest were at siege, spread across Europe and cut off from the Order's new Russian center of gravity.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61: "Since the Russian Priory was limited to Roman Catholics, the nearest Paul could come to making it functional in Russian terms was to distribute honors to the members of his family and court. So long as Russia was Orthodox and the Order Catholic, it would be impossible for the Russian nobility to participate directly. Since a protector of the Order had no function in legislating the Order's rules, there was relatively little Paul could do about this. It was true that there were non-Catholic priories in the Knights of Malta, but the religious and political problems involved in legislating an Orthodox priory through normal channels would have been simply overwhelming. If Paul were the Grand Master, however, and were served by a sacred council of his own choosing, he would be in a position to rule on the eligibility question, and the problem would solve itself."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52. The original source for this is Claire-Elaine Engel, *The Knights of Malta: A Gallery of Portraits*. (New York, 1963), p. 184.

Externally the Emperor wished to help the Order and its Roman Catholic members resist the advance of the French Revolution. In this effort the Russian nobility would stand as their brothers and allies. Internally the Emperor Paul wished to use the Order of Malta to regenerate the Russian nobility and to weld thereby a new link between them and the Tzar. Paul himself had called the nobility Russia's most important class which in circumstances of anarchy or misled by a false philosophy became the most dangerous.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor's own death proved the correctness of his conviction.

It might be argued that the Orthodox nobility of Russia ought not to have required the example and traditions of a Roman Catholic Order of Knights to afford them inspiration. While this might be admitted in theory, sadly the facts tend to prove the opposite. The Russian nobility had been in flux, especially between the reigns of Peter the Great (1689-1725) and Catherine the Great (1762-1796), when so many new and different peers had been created. The fact that Freemasonry had made such strides during the reign of Catherine II reveals clearly how great a psychological appeal such an heraldic society of gentlemen bound together by oaths and common purpose had for Russian noblemen in the last decade of the eighteenth century. That the Emperor Paul realized this testifies to his prudence and clear-headed sense of human psychology. Instead of abandoning large numbers of these aristocrats to the secret assemblies of the Masons and their suspicious political designs, the Emperor offered an alternative, positive, conservative and royalist by tradition, with fidelity and obedience as its hallmark, free from a scandal-tainted history such as is the burden of the Templars. The historical veneration, furthermore, of the Knights of Saint John for chivalric chastity would surely have proved an excellent antidote to the sexually aberrant atmosphere of the Catherinian court and offered a very salubrious distraction from such clandestine practices as would have hindered the control of the Emperor or the implementation of his political vision.

Was this, however, the extent of Paul's plans for the Order of Malta or did he have a greater design to unify the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches? Much is made of the Emperor's sympathy for Roman Catholicism but only after his assassination and exclusively in Roman Catholic sources.<sup>2</sup> The most extravagant of these assertions is supposed to have come from Benedict XV (1914-1922), a Pope contemporary with the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution and the Martyrdom of Paul's great-great-grandson, Tzar Nicholas II. No purported Vatican document has ever been brought forward to substantiate Pope Benedict's statement or Paul's supposed crypto-Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> It is true that after it became evident to the Vatican that the Emperor was adamant in his intention to be Grand Master of the Maltese Order, subtle influences were exerted to broaden his pro-Catholic sympathies, especially on the part of the Jesuit Father Gabriel Gruber and the Neapolitan minister Antonio Maresca Donnorso, the Duke of Serra Capriola. The result of all of this remains, of necessity, speculation from suspect sources, motivated primarily to vindicate the impotent conduct of Popes Pius VI and Pius VII vis-à-vis the Emperor Paul.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61 and 73, note #98.

<sup>2</sup> Accounts of the supposed Roman Catholicism of the Emperor came for the most part from pen of Father M.J. Rouët de Journal. For a treatment of this question in greater detail, cf. McGrew's article (*Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. 63-65.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63 and p. 74, note 12.

To be sure the Emperor Paul was not anti-Catholic. As part of his political philosophy of systematic reaction to the French Revolution, he sought to guarantee the stability of Italy and the integrity of the Papal states, as a part thereof. In dealing, however, with the Roman Catholic Church, Paul I, as we have seen, behaved always as an Orthodox Emperor, never submitting to papal directive and always assertive of his own imperial prerogatives. In matters directly affecting his Roman Catholic subjects, the Emperor did stand between them and the Vatican, subjecting papal bulls to imperial censorship and taking complete control of questions of marriage, divorce and other such things. In the context of this question, please forgive my quoting McGrew's somewhat disingenuous comment: "If Paul were indeed a Catholic in 1801, ...he would have been a strong Gallican Catholic...He was, after all, the autocrat and Tzar of all the Russias. There is not the slightest indication that he intended to retrench on that position."<sup>1</sup>

In our analysis of the Emperor Paul's relationship with the Papacy, we must be on our guard not to view his actions and policies through the glasses of our own times in the shadow of the Soviet domination of Russia [*editor's note: this was written in 1984, while Russia was still under Soviet control*] and the creeping threat of Ecumenism. What precisely makes modernist Ecumenism so dangerous to the purity of Holy Orthodoxy today is its authority buttressed by the political, financial, social and ideological might of the West, to which in the last decade has been added the alliance of its erstwhile foe, the slave masters of the Soviet state. True Orthodoxy today stands widowed of the traditional power of the Orthodox Emperor, to worldly eyes, alone and impotent before the diverse powers of Her enemies. The fact that Her treason to Her Divine Mission would be sweeter to Her foes than Her complete extirpation doubtlessly accounts in large measure for the absence of greater violence being brought to bear against Her.

Quite correctly has our modern situation been compared to the late history of the Roman Empire in Constantinople, when at the Councils of Lyon in 1274 and Florence in 1439 the Paleologos Emperors Michael VIII (1259-1282) and John VIII (1425-1448) persecuted their Greek Orthodox subjects in order to achieve a union with the powers of Europe controlled theologically and ecclesiastically by the Papacy. Just as it is today, so under these Paleologos Emperors, the Orthodox side was weak and almost completely dependent upon the hope of military aid from the West to rescue what was left of the Orthodox Roman Empire from the advancing Turks. The fact remains, finally, that at no time in the last thousand years were Orthodox Christians, as a society and civilization, ever tempted by any type of ecumenical scheme for religious unification with the Vatican – or any other heretical force in the West – in the absence of very serious political and military threat to the very existence of their Empire and their freedom.

The situation of the late eighteenth century was totally different from that of the Paleologos Period and today. It was the Pope and the Catholic monarchies of Europe that were being threatened by the power of the French Revolution. Holy Orthodox Russia stood as the one rock of stability amid these disorders, possessing the world's most extensive land empire and alone capable of protecting Catholic kings and the Pope himself. We can in a small way sense the thrill of this happy situation, so different from our own times, as we read the account of Joseph de Maisonneuve, the émigré chronicler for the Knights of Malta in Russia:

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

"But there is still on earth one place where misfortune finds a certain refuge, where honor can be expressed with pride, where its language is understood, where it meets with constant and unchanging support; it is the Empire of Russia. There, a good people, religious, submissive to the laws, hard-working, toughened by useful labor and the rigor of the seasons; a numerous and invincible army; victorious fleets battling over the two seas...; an enlightened nobility, valorous, hospitable, and faithful to its Prince; Councils full of wisdom and enlightenment, compose a state unshakable on its foundations."<sup>1</sup>

It is almost impossible for us today to appreciate the full extent of the impotence of the Papacy during the reign of Paul I. The Emperor was even able to offer asylum in Russia to Pius VI who had not the opportunity to avail himself of it but was carried off in 1798 by Napoleon as a prisoner.<sup>2</sup> He died the following year in exile at Valence in France. Thus, in the context of his French captivity, the reluctance of Pius VI to yield to the Emperor Paul on the issue of the Maltese Grand Mastership precisely proves the degree to which the Pope regarded the design of the Orthodox Emperor as dangerous and potentially compromising to the integrity of the traditional papal claims to ecclesiastical primacy. When the death of Pius VI required the election of a successor, the Russian armies of the great Suvorov had cleared Italy of the French revolutionary menace and there were rumors across Catholic Europe that the Russian forces which controlled Milan and Naples would converge on Rome to "protect" the election of a new pope.<sup>3</sup> While this Roman Catholic dread and suspicion of the Orthodox Emperor's altruism proved as groundless as it was ungrateful, it does serve to illustrate the power of the Russian Orthodox Third Rome and the impotence of the Popes of Old Rome.

The Emperor Paul I, in the end, had nothing to gain either selfishly for himself or imperialistically for Russia by becoming involved with the Knights of Malta.<sup>4</sup> Had he indeed dreamt of schemes for the union of the Churches the situation would, for want of a more historical parallel, require our going back long before the Councils of Lyon and Florence, long before the Great Latin Schism of 1054 to the eighth century when Pope Constantine I (708-715) was summoned to Constantinople by the Emperor Justinian II. At this time, as well as earlier when Pope Vigilius I (537-555) and Pope Martin I (649-655) were forced to present themselves before the Emperor-Saint Justinian the Great (527-565) and the Emperor Constans II (641-668), respectively, the Pope was completely under the control of the Emperor and obliged to yield before the enactment of his

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51. The successor of Pius VI, Pius VII (1800-1823), suffered the same fate. After Napoleon had once again seized the Papal States, he was excommunicated by Pius VII, who, in turn, was carried off to France as a prisoner, July 6, 1809.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64. The murder of the Emperor Paul I, March 11, 1801, put an end to the joint tenure of the offices of the Maltese Grand Master and Russian Emperor. Alexander I showed no interest in continuing his father's policy, although he maintained something of a diplomatic concern for the Island of Malta itself. We must not forget that the Emperor Alexander I became a Freemason in 1803 and supported their lodges until suddenly on August 12, 1822, he ordered the closed. ("Alexander I," E.F., I, p. 45 and "Russia," E.F., II, p. 655.) The Russian Imperial Family continued to maintain the Grand Priory of Saint Petersburg until the Revolution. Thus, even today panikhidas or memorial services are known to have been held for Knights of Malta at the Synodal Cathedral in New York and in other Russian Orthodox Churches.

religious policies. We are thus constrained to McGrew's conclusion the "if a reunification of the Churches has actually occurred, it would have been on Russian rather than on Roman principles".<sup>1</sup>

On the diplomatic front and at the level of practical politics the power of the Russian Emperor easily overcame the resistance of the Pope and the Catholic sovereigns. By the end of 1799 even Bavaria (the native language of Hompesch himself), had accepted the Orthodox Emperor as Grand Master of the exiled Knights of Malta. The Holy Roman Emperor Francis II had both forced Hompesch to resign and expelled him from Trieste. The unfortunate man then retired to Montpellier where he lived in the strictest seclusion and in such poverty that, when he died on May 12, 1805, he could not pay for his doctors or his burial. Throughout this entire period the Emperor Paul completely disregarded the Pope, taking no account of his opposition and not even condescending to address the most basic questions of his religious differences with Rome and his marital status which left Pius VII little option short of ultimately laicizing the Knights of Saint John.

Thus, for one blithely to persist with the characterization of the Emperor Paul's Maltese policy as some kind of dark ecumenistic design two centuries before its time or as simply the rash casting of Holy Orthodoxy into the breach for the sheer reckless pursuit of political aims not only betrays an arrogant ignorance of actual conditions at the end of the eighteenth century but also insults the pious and martyred Emperor by suspecting his deep and loyal devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church. It cannot be denied that unfortunately during the Constantinopolitan phase of the Orthodox Roman Empire several Emperors embraced and fostered heresies, and that these attempts to subvert Holy Orthodoxy drew away for brief periods the great body of the clergy and laity of the Greek Church, which also accepted the theological errors of their sovereigns. Constantius II (337-361) and Valens (364-378) vigorously fostered Arianism. Zeno (473-491) and, to a lesser extent, Anastasius I (491-518) favored Monophysitism, while the later compromise of Monotheletism had the support of Heraclius the Great (610-641) and Constans II (641-668). The Isaurian and Amorion Emperors championed Iconoclasm in two phases from early in the eighth to the middle of the ninth century. We have just named the Emperors of the Paleologos Dynasty who pressed a Uniat policy to save Constantinople from the Turks.

By contrast no Kievan Grand Prince or Russian Tzar ever proved himself formally false to Holy Orthodoxy by either espousing a heresy or pushing a Uniat policy. Even the notorious Polish agent and usurper known contemptuously as the False Dimitri, whose rule in Moscow was very brief (1605-1606), made no formal initiative to subjugate the Russian Church to the Pope. The Russian Church thus for a thousand years from its founding under Saint Vladimir, Equal-of-the-Apostles, often in the face of the greatest adversity from the Mongols, the Tatars, the Poles and the Swedes, never, not even for the briefest period, lost her Orthodoxy. Holy Russia with uncompromising conviction rebuffed the shameless Uniatism of the Council of Florence, while the Union of Brest-Litovsk, engineered in 1595-1596 by the Papacy, spread its religious influence no further than those unfortunate areas of western Russia politically subject to the Kings of Poland. With the reign of Peter the Great (1689-1725), Russia began her long and in many ways very sad period of westernization, during which were laid not a few of the noisome seeds from which in our times sprang the monstrous growth of Bolshevism, watered so long by so much Russian blood. While Moscow's Patriarchate was abolished, while the practical management of many church-related

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

affairs was subjected to the imperial bureaucracy, while a distinctly European outlook began to color the religious awareness of many Russians, particularly of the higher classes, the Russian Church always kept her Orthodox faithfully. Among her other sorrows, furthermore, she was never forced to acknowledge an Emperor or Empress who had either renounced or, albeit with at times gravely attenuated ecclesiastical insights, failed to defend Holy Orthodoxy.

Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the Russian Orthodox Church faced no direct threat from the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. It is now almost impossible for us who live in the shadow of Lenin's triumph to realize the former strength of Holy Russia and the unshakable aspect of her Orthodoxy as it must have appeared to the exiled Catholic nobles and Knights of Malta during the reign of the Emperor Paul. The suggestions that this pious Emperor would propose anything hostile to the unbroken religious loyalty of the Russian State, that he would be the first Tzar to sell his Orthodoxy by submission to a captive Pope, that the centuries-old foundations of Russia's religious life would simply melt before his bold and ingenious Maltese policy – such suggestions border on the ludicrous. The Blessed Emperor Paul meant to rescue the Knights of Malta and to use them to strengthen the conservative nobility of both Europe and Russia.<sup>1</sup> His ultimate design indeed was to save the best of what remained of Europe's Christian, royal and heraldic past, but never at the expense of the Orthodox Soul of Holy Russia.

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the Sovereign Order of the Knights of Saint John has nobly responded to the opportunity in the wake of World War II to repay the Russian Monarchy for the protection and benefits it was afforded by the Emperor Paul I in its hour of exile and need. His Imperial Highness the Grand Duke Wladimir Kyrillovich, Heir to the Throne of Russia, who has in exile courageously refused to compromise his lawful standing as the legitimate ruler of the Russian Empire by taking up citizenship in France or Spain where he resides, has been generously given for his convenience a passport by the Knights of Malta who today are based within the one square mile Nation of Vatican City.



## VII. THE EMPEROR PAUL I AS THE CHAMPION OF PEACE AND FOE OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM

Strangely enough, it would appear, the only check sustained by the Emperor Paul's Maltese policy came neither from the Pope nor from a Roman Catholic power but rather from Protestant England. As we have already noted, although the British had provided "the most explicit assurances" that upon its capture the Island of Malta was to be occupied jointly by the allied navies of England, Naples and Russia, when it finally yielded to the forces of Lord Horatio Nelson in 1800, the Russians and the Neapolitans were excluded.<sup>1</sup> While England was keenly aware of the Emperor's interest in Malta and the importance that he attached to his Grand Mastership of its Knights, she, nonetheless, remained stubbornly intransigent and in the end won full sovereignty over the Island.<sup>2</sup>

After all is said and done, the question persists as to why the British were so strangely unyielding on the issue of Malta and thus risked a complete break with the Russian Empire. To be sure, traditional British greed, jealousy, and underhandedness played a role, together with a tendency always to be suspicious of Russia and to fear her assuming a place among the naval powers of the Mediterranean. There may well have been another factor, secret and camouflaged behind the flurry of more political considerations. Since the founding in 1717 of the Grand Lodge of all England at York,<sup>3</sup> Freemasonry had attained great prominence in that country and extensive power in its government. Given Masonry's identification with the cause of the Templars, we will hardly expect much sorrow to have filled the Lodges over the displacement of the Knights of Malta, which went far in 1798 to settle the old score of 1312. A telltale clue, however, lies as a neglected detail in the biography of Napoleon. Between July 12 and 19, 1798, immediately following the surrender of Hompesch to the naval forces of the French Republic, Napoleon, on the very Island of Malta itself, was initiated into the Masonic Lodge.<sup>4</sup>

The Scandinavian countries provided the Emperor Paul with the ideally suited device for launching an offensive against the British without falling into an alliance with France. In a desire to protect their traditional neutrality, Sweden and Denmark had appealed to the Emperor Paul for protection and leadership. The Russian Emperor now responded by turning the Northern Convention into an anti-British coalition of armed neutrality. Its activity was primarily economic and worked through the imposition of an embargo on British trade. Denmark and Sweden blockaded the Baltic and Hamburg was closed to English shipping. In October 1800, Prussia joined the Emperor Paul and occupied the British protectorate of Hanover. The Elbe and Weser were closed to English trade. The Swedish Minister Count von Stedingk personally remarked to the Russian Emperor that "the most damaging war for the English was one made against their stock exchange".<sup>5</sup> Thus again, and

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Ragsdale, "Was Paul Bonaparte's Fool? The Evidence of Neglected Archives", *Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. 80-81. cf. also James J. Kenney, Jr., *The Politics of Assassination*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> After the Emperor Paul's death, Alexander I ceased to press the issue of Malta with the British. According to the First Treaty of Paris, signed May 30, 1814, Malta was transformed into a royal Crown Colony which only in our own time has become an independent nation. cf. *An Encyclopedia of World History*, p. 601.

<sup>3</sup> *Grand Lodges in England, E.F.*, I, p. 243. The Grand Lodge of England was founded on June 24, 1717, the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. cf. Baigent and Leigh pp. 174-175, ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Napoleon I, E.F.*, II, p. 507. At the time of the capture of Malta in 1798, Napoleon had already a distinguished military career. His political rise to power began the next year when he became First Consul and culminated on May 18, 1804, when he was proclaimed Emperor by the Senate and the Tribunate.

<sup>5</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 81.

from a really unimpeachable source, the clear-headed and logical political vision of the Emperor Paul is revealed.

It has become sadly fashionable in general histories to consider this last salient of the Emperor Paul's foreign policy as the raving result of his final madness. The reversal of his positions regarding France and England is emphasized without proper regard for the changes which these shifting and always potentially anti-Russian powers were themselves undergoing. In the course of our long digression on Malta and her Order of Knights, we have come to see the meaning and importance which the Emperor Paul attached to his Maltese initiative both for Russia and Europe. Frustrated by British opposition and disgusted with the Austrian conduct in Italy, Paul had still good reason to be heartened, for France also was changing. With the end of the Terror the threat of the Revolution was moderating even as its armies, sustained by even greater stability at home, threatened more of Europe. It is again a tribute to the acutely perceptive political vision of the Emperor Paul that he recognized the highly individual, ambitious and charismatic personality of Napoleon as the key, or rather the pliers, for defanging the revolutionary serpent. While the earlier efforts of the Second Coalition had yielded dramatic military results, the contest with France had been too evenly matched and the cooperation of the allies too limited to yield that necessary security for the kings of Europe, which alone had been the selfless objective of the Russian Emperor.

By the turn of the nineteenth century the Emperor Paul realized that this goal could be achieved without the costly military defeat of France, if only Napoleon could emerge as the French monarch who would himself put an end to the cancer of revolution and republicanism. Of course, Paul was correct, for within less than five years Napoleon did emerge as a rough but altogether capable autocrat. What Paul sacrificed by this new and brilliant approach was the principle of royal legitimacy crystallized in the person of the exiled Bourbon King Louis XVIII. While we might not readily agree with his recourse to expediency in this matter, we are constrained to admit that the Emperor Paul had not become either the unwitting tool of Napoleon or the insane victim of a petulance-inspired foreign policy.<sup>1</sup>

This new strategy in foreign affairs, furthermore, focused the Emperor's eyes on the Orthodox East and made him aware of that much wider sway which, in fact, the Russian Empire did in large part attain later in the nineteenth century. By November 1800, the acting head of the College of Foreign Affairs, Count Feodor Vasilievich Rostopchin, had formulated his controversial memorandum which proposed, as part of Russia's rapprochement with the French, the joint partition of the Turkish Empire. The result of the implementation of the Rostopchin Memorandum would have been the realization of that long-cherished dream which Russia as the Third Rome could not forget but, even under the westernizing regimes of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, presumed as her Orthodox imperial destiny and the cornerstone of her foreign policy. With the Holy Cross restored in Constantinople, the triumph of Russian arms would have secured the religious freedom of those long-suffering Orthodox Christians, both Greek and Slavic, whom the Moslem Turks had persecuted for more than three and a half centuries in the Balkans and Anatolia.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion that sustains this assertion, cf. Hugh Ragsdale, "Was Paul Bonaparte's Fool? The Evidence of Neglected Archives", *Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. 77-90.

By embracing the Rostopchin Memorandum the Emperor Paul returned Russia to the Turkish policy, which had been fostered by his mother and her hated favorite, Prince Potemkin, and which Paul himself had with impolitic outspokenness deplored during the quiet years when he was heir apparent. The situation now, however, had changed. With England and France ever more locked in a life and death struggle that precluded either from helping Turkey, the opportunity for Russia was golden. Had it been seized as the Emperor Paul intended, and had the tragedy of the fast approaching regicide been averted, Paul's third son, the Emperor Nicholas I (1825-1855), would not have had to face the reversal of the Crimean War a half century later when precisely an Anglo-French alliance effectively frustrated and forestalled the achievement of Russia's Orthodox Christian destiny.

The Emperor Paul's determination to set this new Anglophobic course did not await the outcome of Rostopchin's negotiations with the French. He ordered General V.P. Orlov, the hetman of the Don Cossacks, to strike even at the distant and yet vital presence of the British in India. While the viability of this move has since that time provoked the doubt, debate and division of historians, the British took very seriously the threat posed by the Emperor Paul's new position of armed neutrality. In March of 1801, a British fleet entered the Baltic and began a fearsome bombardment of Copenhagen which promised to be the prelude of what awaited the as yet inadequately defended harbor of Saint Petersburg.

## VIII. THE ANATOMY OF REGICIDE

Like the thread of an intensely exciting novel, this ingenious Pauline design of international politics breaks off at its most dramatic and suspenseful moment. On March 11, 1801, the Emperor Paul I of Russia was assassinated in his bedchamber at his newly built Mikhailovsky Palace. This regicide, the third to jar the shocked conscience of Europe in less than a decade,<sup>1</sup> was the result of several causes. In its most obvious aspect, the assassination of the Emperor Paul was a palace revolution, the last ever to take place in Russian history. It was perpetrated by a fairly numerous band of conspirators. The Emperor Paul himself had said that he preferred to be hated for a right thing than to be loved for an evil thing.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the Emperor achieved his desire, for his attitude of internal reform, in particular, proved distasteful to a large portion of the nobility. While they had been indulged and pampered by the psychologically astute Empress Catherine the Great, under Paul I they faced the consistently stringent demand that they respond selflessly for the welfare of the nation and the amelioration of the lives of the lower classes, especially the peasants and the serfs.

We are able to identify as many as sixty-eight of the conspirators, ranging in age from sixteen to fifty-six.<sup>3</sup> While together they comprise a fairly complete microcosm of the eighteenth century Russian aristocracy, there is no reason to think that their views were representative of the dворянство or nobility as a whole.<sup>4</sup> The older conspirators were in large part men who remembered the more lax days of the court under Catherine II. Several were military men, especially from the Horse and Cavalier guards who resented both the Emperor Paul's tendency to rely on diplomacy in crystallizing foreign policy and his old ties of friendship to men like General Alexei Andreevich Arakcheev who had served with him in the exile and the drill fields of Gatchina. Some of the younger conspirators were coevals of the Grand Duke Alexander who, being in sundry degrees of intimacy with the heir presumptive, hoped for rapid advancement in the wake of a change of sovereigns. The future Alexander I was sadly and disgracefully quite appraised of the nascent plot and, far from doing anything to raise an alarm, only exacted from the conspirators the politically Pollyannish promise to forbear from spilling his father's blood.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Exactly nine years earlier in March of 1792, Gustavus III of Sweden (1771-1792) had been fatally shot by Jakob von Ankarström, a disaffected aristocrat. Louis XVI of France (1774-1792) was officially murdered by the Terror on January 21, 1793. These two regicides probably led the Emperor Paul to the conclusion that, while the people of southern Europe posed the threat to the stability of thrones and the lives of kings, in the north monarchs were threatened rather by the disloyalty of the nobility. cf. *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 73, note 98.

<sup>2</sup> *Illustrated History of the Russian Empire*, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> James J. Kenney, Jr., "The Politics of Assassination", *Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. 125-145: "The table (of conspirators) contains some of the oldest most distinguished names in Russian history. There are Rurikovichi and Gediminovichs such as Dolgorukov and Golitsyn; and those with post-Petrine titles, such as Count Tolstoi and Baron Rozen. There is also a Georgian prince, Iashvil'. Many ancient but untitled Muscovite families are represented: Khitrovo, Murav'ev, Kutozov. A number of 18<sup>th</sup> century parvenus appear: for example, Ribas, Poltoratskii and Iankovich-de-Mirievo. Finally, there are Germans, Pahlen and Bennigsen." (p. 133). For a list of the 68 conspirators, their families, careers and ties both to each other and the reigns of Paul I, Alexander I and Catherine II, cf. pp. 128-131.

<sup>4</sup> Kenney, pp. 133, 134.

<sup>5</sup> Today many Russians, both in the Soviet Union and in exile, insist that the real death of Tzar Alexander I did not take place at Taganrog on his return from the Crimea in 1825 but that a mock funeral was held there far from the Capital in order that the repentant Emperor could without official notice escape to Siberia and become a monk. The Blessed Theodore Kuzmich appears in Siberia exactly after the supposed death of Alexander I. As a monastic

The key members of the conspiracy belonged to the Zubov family.<sup>1</sup> Prince Nikolas Zubov, the first man to strike the Emperor and thereby push the issue to the ultimate imperative of murder, had the reputation of being a bully and a coward.<sup>2</sup> His brother Platon had been the last of the many lovers of the Empress Catherine. In fact, the Zubov family was popularly associated with the Empress Catherine, her policy of Asiatic expansion and the idea of class privilege for the nobility which Paul's policy of statecraft had so severely limited. Another leader of the conspiracy was Count Peter Pahlen, long the friend and supporter of the Zubov family.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the earlier days of the reign of the Empress Anna Ivanovna (1730-1740) and her favorite, Count Ernst Johann Biron, a Baltic German nobleman like Pahlen could only achieve prominence by close alliance with a powerful native Russian aristocratic family such as the Zubovs. He did, however, gain the unquestioned confidence of the Emperor to the extent that he was able to repay his debt to the Zubovs by securing their recall from banishment. Thus, his treachery stands as singularly repulsive and his participation in the conspiracy provided the one greatest guarantee of its success,<sup>4</sup> for in 1799 the Emperor had made him military governor of Saint Petersburg. The final plans for the conspiracy were hatched by Pahlen and the Zubov brothers in January and February 1801.<sup>5</sup>

The leaders of the plot were all guilty not only of treason to their oath of loyalty to the Tzar but also of the grossest ingratitude, since they had, almost to the man, been recently recalled from banishment<sup>6</sup> by the repentant Paul who in his Orthodox Christian awareness of his weakness, his sinfulness and his proneness to anger was ever eager to make amends to the innocent and forgive the guilty who appeared to have been punished excessively. In her novel, *So Dark A Stream*, E.M. Almedingen entitles the last grisly chapter, "The Ides of March", pointedly recalling to us the day in all history proverbial for assassination. And there is another great similarity in the March murders of 44 B.C. and A.D. 1801, only four days apart. Julius Caesar was renowned in Roman republican history for his clementia, his generosity to his vanquished enemies. As a matter of policy, he always forgave them once, freeing them from his power so that of many even among his murderers, he deserved well because of his earlier exercise of clemency. Like the great Roman dictator, Paul I of Russia was assassinated by men whom he had pardoned and whose gratitude he guilelessly presumed. With this in mind, the Emperor Paul's faithful minister of foreign affairs, Count Feodor Vasilievich Rostopchin, later said that the best and most sincere of the assassins deserved at best to be summarily executed without a trial.

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elder he received members of the Imperial Family and led a saintly life, for which the Church commemorates him on January 20/February 2, the feast day of Saint Leo the Great, Confessor and Emperor of the East (457-474).

<sup>1</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> James J. Kenney, Jr., "Lord Whitworth and the Conspiracy Against Tsar Paul I: New Evidence of the Kent Archive," *Slavic Review*, XXXVI (June, 1977) pp. 205 and 211.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>6</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, pp. 138 and 144, note 51. Earlier Pahlen had acknowledged his gratitude to Prince Platon Zubov and as governor general, had given a magnificent reception for him at Mitau, through which he was passing on his way to internal exile on his estates. The Emperor Paul had resented the display of partisanship on the part of Pahlen for his mother's formerly powerful lover and also dismissed him from his post in the spring of 1797. In like manner, the leading conspirator, Count Bennigsen, had also been recalled from banishment by the forgiving Emperor.

The last ringleader of the conspiracy was Levin August Gottlieb Theophil Graf von Bennigsen, a Hanoverian in the Russian service, who had been initiated into the conspiracy by Pahlen on the very eve of its denouement. His native German sagacity and sang-froid contributed also an indispensable ingredient to the plot's success. Unlike Zubov and the others he had not needed to drink deeply to find the false courage of crime. As a result, he alone proved perceptive enough to find the defenseless Emperor who at the initial sounds of approaching violence had left his bed and had concealed himself behind a screen. Bennigsen's Hanoverian provenience gives us a clue to the second cause of the regicide of March 11, 1801, namely, the Emperor's new international policy of withdrawal from the Second Coalition, rapprochement with Napoleon and armed neutrality hostile to England. Ever since the death of the last reigning Stuart, Queen Anne in 1714, the Georges of Hanover sat on the British throne while still maintaining their rules over their hereditary Electorate in Germany. Another great supporter of the conspiracy, Count Nikita Petrovich Panin, a close relative of Paul's old tutor, was known also to be an avid Anglophile. Almost a year before the regicide, Panin approached the heir presumptive, the Grand Duke Alexander, with the proposal of proclaiming Paul mentally incompetent and thus forcing his abdication.<sup>1</sup> The Grand Duke Alexander refused to consider Panin's proposal at that time.

Panin was a very close friend of Lord Charles Whitworth, the British minister to the Court of Saint Petersburg.<sup>2</sup> There can be no doubt of his deep involvement in the intrigues against the Emperor Paul. Whitworth was a close friend of Platon Zubov, a man of strong Anglophile sentiment who is even rumored to have prepared a draft of a British-style constitution for Russia.<sup>3</sup> Zubov's sister, Olga Zherebtsov, was for several years Whitworth's mistress. As early as December 1796 this love affair had become so outrageously obvious as to cause concern to the Emperor who demanded of Prince Zubov a written explanation of why his home was frequented daily by the British ambassador.<sup>4</sup>

Like the leading members of the Zubov family, Panin and Pahlen were also very close friends of Lord Whitworth. When the British minister was expelled from Russia by the direct order of the Emperor Paul in June, 1800, both men are on record in their correspondence to have been deeply distressed by the news.<sup>5</sup> Panin's private papers, as well as those of the strongly pro-British, Russian ambassador in London, Count S.R. Vorontsov, reveal their close involvement, not only with Whitworth, but also with Lord William Grenville, the British foreign secretary. Ambassador Vorontsov had, furthermore, managed to save Whitworth's position as British envoy to Russia two years earlier in 1798 when considerations for the success of the Second Coalition were deemed by Grenville to be of higher importance than the many irregularities, financial and otherwise, in Whitworth's conduct.<sup>6</sup>

Whitworth himself is described as intelligent, devious and honest when it was convenient.<sup>7</sup> Apart from his friendship with the leading conspirators, he is known to have met on several occasions

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<sup>1</sup> Kenney, pp. 213-214

<sup>2</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Kenney, p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205 and 209.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 210 and 214.

<sup>6</sup> Kenney, pp. 206-208.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.



with larger groups of dissatisfied and disgruntled people at the palace of Mme. Zherebtsov and the Zubov brothers.<sup>1</sup> That this could have been done with impunity was probably due largely to the fact, fatal to the Emperor Paul, that the conspirator Pahlen controlled the police of Saint Petersburg. In his official correspondence with Lord Grenville, Whitworth emphasized the supposed insanity of the Emperor Paul. In a letter of March 18, 1800, just a little less than a year before the regicide, Whitworth charges that "the Emperor is literally not in his senses."<sup>2</sup> It should also be recalled that the whole issue of royal insanity was very much present in the thoughts and considerations of the British Government due to the progressive mental degeneration of King George III. In 1788 the hapless English King had just managed to recover his wits in time to avert his forced abdication and the proclamation of a regency.<sup>3</sup> The same scenario was probably envisioned for Russia by Panin and Whitworth.

As Pitt's gold had been so great a factor in helping to ignite the French Revolution, that the very name of Pitt sent cold shivers down the back of Queen Marie Antoinette,<sup>4</sup> so now a decade later in Russia the gold of Albion again sweetened the bitterness of blood and treason.<sup>5</sup>

Even Paul's very dear friend, Catherine Nelidov, had in 1797 been given 30,000 rubles by Whitworth, not, of course, as part of any conspiracy but rather to influence the Emperor to resume a pro-British foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> Ivan Kutaisov, the Emperor Paul's valet, had also on two occasions experienced Whitworth's generosity, having received 20,000 rubles in 1797 in order to secure the Emperor's support for a commercial treaty favorable to English interests, and again in 1898 40,000 rubles to influence Paul to persevere in the Second Coalition against Napoleon.<sup>7</sup> Prince Lopukhin reports that Whitworth's mistress, Mme. Zherebtsov, received 2,000,000 rubles for distribution among the conspirators.<sup>8</sup> The greatest indication of the extent of Whitworth's use of English gold against the Emperor Paul is found in the exchange of letters between himself and the office of the Royal Commission of Audit after the regicide had been successfully committed and Whitworth was himself in England living in retirement.<sup>9</sup> Here there are clear indications that a great deal of money had been spent and that the ambassador himself was being deliberately vague in his explanations as to how and why this money had specifically been spent. The exchange of letters reveals that the point was reached where the royal auditors were actually threatening the government. At length, however, Grenville and the Foreign Office intervened to get Whitworth off the hook, accepting the former ambassador's claim that further probing into what had been done with these large sums would lead to revelations embarrassing to the British government.

The Emperor Paul was not unaware of the British minister's intriguing. As early as February of 1800, he ordered Zubov's sister and Whitworth's mistress, Mme. Zherebtsov to leave Saint Petersburg "in a quarter of an hour." He also canceled the passports of both Whitworth and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213 and note 43 and 44.

<sup>3</sup> *An Encyclopedia of World History*, p. 437.

<sup>4</sup> Webster, *The French Revolution*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>5</sup> Even general text book histories of Russia record the role of British gold in the plot that resulted in the murder of Paul I. cf. Jesse D. Clarkson, *A History of Russia*, Random House (New York, 1964), p. 255.

<sup>6</sup> Kenney, p. 209.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

<sup>8</sup> *Illustrated History of the Russian Empire*, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup> Kenney, pp. 216-219.

Austrian ambassador, Count Cobenzl, holding them incommunicado. Whitworth was also refused the right to have his diplomatic couriers cross the Russian frontiers.<sup>1</sup> In relation to this process of the official dismissal of Lord Whitworth, we have already noted the sorrow of the leading conspirators Panin and Pahlen. Indeed, the British minister did not accede gracefully to the Emperor's determination to be rid of him. Rather, he believed that his situation would be salvaged and British aims would be achieved through a change in Russian foreign policy. On March 21, 1800, Whitworth wrote a dispatch to Lord Grenville urging that he not be recalled to London in accordance with the Emperor's intent but rather that he be granted a leave of absence, because "the storm must soon blow over." Did this mean simply the removal of the Anglophobic Foreign Minister, Count Feodor V. Rostopchin, or is the British ambassador already hinting at the regicide that would take place a year later? It is hard not to believe that this devious English diplomat was not discounting the murder of the Emperor as one of the options which he states to Grenville "one way or another" will remove the present difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

Whitworth, now in England, rejoiced mightily when news reached him of the Emperor Paul's assassination. In a letter to Grenville, dated April 16, 1801, he writes: "I shall, as long as I live, celebrate as a festival the day on which I learned of the death of that arch-fiend Paul."<sup>3</sup> The sentiment in France, as we might imagine was quite otherwise. The words of the First Consul Napoleon himself are unequivocal on this point: "Sans la mort du Tzar, L'Angleterre était perdue."<sup>4</sup> The official gazette, *Le Moniteur* in Paris registered the following reaction to the regicide of March 11, 1801: "It is for history to declare which Cabinet in the world was most deeply interested in bringing about such a catastrophe."<sup>5</sup> It is hardly surprising that many contemporaries agreed with Napoleon and believed that the British Government, together with their Russian supporters were behind the assassination of the Emperor Paul I.<sup>6</sup>

Even in the absence of more specific evidence, we are still constrained to see the revenge of the Freemasons as a possible third cause of the regicide. Paul's original apostacy from the secret society, his severe legislation forbidding the operation of the lodges and his championing of the cause of the Maltese Knights all constitute sufficient motivation for both their hatred and their revenge. The very importance that the Emperor attached to the Island of Malta and the stubborn refusal, first of Napoleon and then of the British to yield to his insistence concerning it reveal the dimensions of a struggle which seems to transcend practical politics. We know that later in 1803 it was none other than the former minister to Russia, Lord Charles Whitworth who was found in Paris negotiating with Napoleon's government over the future of Malta. In his secret dispatches he again has recourse to bribery, for he enthusiastically recommends the spending of as much as 2,000,000 pounds to win the support of Napoleon's two brothers, Lucien and Joseph, along with the archinringer Talleyrand, in order to keep Malta under British control.<sup>7</sup> We have good reason

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212-214.

<sup>2</sup> Kenney, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215 and note 55.

<sup>4</sup> "Without the death of the Tzar, England was lost." Quoted from the *Illustrated History of the Russian Empire*, p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from Kenney, p. 205, note 2, who, in turn, quotes it from M.A. Thiers, *History of the Consulate and the Empire under Napoleon I*, 20 vols. (London 1845-62), 2:246.

<sup>6</sup> *Paul I: A Reassessment*, p. 127.

<sup>7</sup> Kenney, p. 208.

to believe that of these, Talleyrand would be deeply interested, since we know that he was a Freemason.<sup>1</sup>

While the strength of Paul's plan lay in its simplicity and its undeniably consistent ideology, its weakness derived from the essentially very large role which the Orthodox Emperor alone had to play personally in its implementation. This the enemy saw all too clearly and the regicide of 1801 struck at the very heart of the Pauline design for the conservative, monarchist and Christian restoration of Europe. With the death of the Emperor, the ideological component of his plan was lost, leaving only the purely political opposition to Napoleon and the simply reactionary policy of restoration pursued by Alexander I, Prince von Metternich and the Congress of Vienna.

Until 1905, the official account of the Russian Imperial Government concerning the Emperor Paul's death reported him to have died a natural death caused by a fit of apoplexy. The truth, however, was an open secret, since the conspirators boasted of their dastardly deed. At first the new Emperor Alexander I was powerless to punish them due both to his own complicity and their not inconsiderable power. Within a short time, however, he removed them from their posts, and many found themselves in informal banishment. Several fell into sickness and insanity which can easily be conceived of as the issue of a conscious guilt of such a crime. The Christian character of the Orthodox Emperor's martyrdom is supported in the account given by Count Bennigsen. When Paul refused to recognize the demands of the plotters for his abdication and arrest, they resorted to violence. While the outcome was hardly in doubt, given the cowardly assault of many armed men against their unarmed Sovereign, with the aid, nonetheless, of the darkness and due to the clumsiness of drunken conspirators, the Emperor was able to evade them for a time, concealing himself in the shadows and behind various pieces of furniture. His appeal in French that as Orthodox Christians the assassins at least find the pity to spare him a moment for prayer went unheeded by those whose treason and cowardice had crushed all sense of shame and religion. With a scarf and malachite paperweight, they choked him to death. In the violence, meanwhile, he had sustained wounds, so that the royal blood was left as evidence of the crime on both the furniture and the drapes.

Like the death of the Emperor-Martyr Nicholas II, the murder of the Blessed Paul I had been prophesied earlier to the very ears of the Emperor himself. The clairvoyant Starets Abel of the Lavra of Saint Alexander Nevsky in Saint Petersburg had earlier told Paul:

Your reign will be short, and you will have a violent end. You will receive a martyric death at the hands of unfaithful servants on the Feast of Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem. You will be murdered in your bedroom by malefactors whom you will have warmed at your breast. These evildoers, trying to justify their great sin of regicide, will call you mad and malign your good reputation. But the Russian people will realize the righteousness of your soul. They shall esteem you and bring their sorrows to your grave, beseeching your intercessions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Baigent and Leigh, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> Glinin, p. 34 (quoted passages as translated by Hierodeacon Andrew Herron.) For the Feast of Saint Sophronius, March 11/24, cf. The Saint Herman Calendar 1982, p. 18. That the Emperor was not completely surprised by the attack of the regicides on the Feast of Saint Sophronius is corroborated, even in the memoirs of the assassins, by evidence of his growing suspicions in March of 1801, and his insistence, just a few days before the murder, upon

Later the Elder Abel was thrown into prison by Pahlen for this prophetic utterance but was shortly thereafter released by Alexander I.

The martyrdom of the Blessed-Emperor Paul I is celebrated by the Orthodox Church on March 11/24. The Emperor Paul's son and heir, the Emperor Alexander I (1801-1825), while he was not involved materially in the plot of his father's murderers, as Emperor always shouldered a heavy burden of guilt for his awareness of this treason and his failure to act directly to thwart it. Many Russians, both in the Soviet Union and in exile, insist that the real death of Tzar Alexander I did not take place at Taganrog on his return from the Crimea in 1825 but that a mock funeral was held there far from the Capital in order that the repentant Emperor could without official notice escape to Siberia and become a monk. The Blessed Theodore Kuzmich emerges in Siberia only after the supposed death of Alexander I. As a monastic elder he received members of the Imperial Family and led a saintly life, for which the Church commemorates him on January 20/February 2, the feast day also of the Emperor-Saint Leo the Great.

In 1810, during the early reign of the Emperor Alexander I, another Saint of princely rank reposed in Our Lord, the Blessed Recluse Dosithea of Moscow. Although she has not yet been officially glorified (canonized), the Church remembers her feast on February 4/17. Seventy-one years later on March 13/26, 1881, the quiet of the Russian Empire was shaken by the assassination of the Emperor Alexander II. Like the deaths of both his grandfather Paul I and his grandson Nicholas II, the death of Alexander II can be considered a martyrdom in Orthodox Christian tradition. After a glorious reign and many achievements, of which the most significant was the abolition of serfdom on March 3, 1861, exactly twenty year and ten days later, the Emperor Alexander II fell victim to atheist nihilists, who thus repaid the Emperor's generosity and devotion to the Russian people. In our day of strong security consciousness, we are amazed by the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Alexander II. Accompanied by only six Cossack troops, the Imperial cortege of the Emperor's own coach and two sleighs, one containing the Capital's chief of police, was attacked by nihilists under the command of an ex-schoolmistress, Sophia Perovskaya. The first bomb exploded under the back axle of the Tzar's carriage but failed to put the vehicle out of action. Against the advice of the Cossacks and contrary to the automatic procedure for the security of American presidents, the Emperor Alexander II refused to leave the scene until he could personally give comfort to the wounded driver. Just as he was about to depart, the Emperor was caught in the explosion of a second bomb which had been thrown by another nihilist lurking unnoticed among the horrified onlookers. With the entire lower parts of his body torn by the blast, the Emperor was carried back to the Winter Palace, where after lingering several hours and partaking of the Holy Mysteries, he reposed in the presence of his grieving family. His death had deep spiritual meaning both as an augury and as an example of courage for the Tzar-Martyr Nicholas II thirty-seven years later. Atheistic revolutionaries were ready now to kill an Orthodox Emperor not because of his faults or his failures but because precisely because he was Orthodox and the Emperor.

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leaving the Winter Palace for the newly constructed Mikhailovsky Palace with its fortress-like architecture, moat, and five drawbridges.

## IX. THE BLESSED EMPEROR PAUL I AND RUSSIA TODAY

The martyrdom of the Emperor Paul I marks a watershed in Russian history. The earlier murders of Peter III in 1762 and Ivan VI in 1764 were purely dynastic in nature, harking back to the tragedies of the reigns of Ivan IV (1533-1584), Boris Godunov (1598-1605) and Peter the Great (1689-1725) which, although in themselves terrible, had but minimal lasting effect upon Russia, its foreign policy, its internal development and its hereditary monarchical constitution. At first glance, the murder of Paul I belongs also to this catalogue, the last of Russia's palace revolutions. In its essence, however, the regicide of 1801, roughly contemporary with the Terror in France, marks the first of those progressively more devastating assaults on Holy Russia at the Satanic hand of the dawning modern age, progressively more unchristian and anti-Christian in its hybristic self-expression. The murder of Paul I thus served as a warning, heeded in 1825 by his son Nicholas I in the crushing of the Decembrists, a precedent for the terrorists of 1881 who murdered Alexander II and, finally, an imperative for Lenin and Trotsky whose successful thrust for atheistic power required the Martyrdom of Nicholas II with his entire family and the Russian People. What began in the spring of 1801 with cowardly stealth in the Mikhailovsky Palace echoed brazenly in the cellar of Ekaterinburg in the heat of July 1918.

Hugh Ragsdale ends his cursory biographical sketch of Paul I's life and reign with the following incisive, if sardonic, judgment of the effect of the regicide on subsequent Pauline historiography: "The dvorianstvo (nobility) rejoiced, the Narod (narodъ, nation) sulked and the literary reminiscences of the reign were obviously not provided by the Narod."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the verdict of the dvorianstvo had exactly this effect but its influence in the shadow of the cataclysm of the Soviet Revolution diminishes yearly as the luminaries of the Intelligentsia in Paris and elsewhere in their emigration flicker and die out. The Narod, by contrast, although pounded relentlessly on the fiery anvil of godless communism, continues to be the primary patriotic guardian of the heritage of Holy Russia and from its ranks today emerges the veneration of the Blessed Emperor Paul. The words of the Staretz Abel have indeed been realized as simple and oppressed Soviet citizens creep to the martyred Emperor's grave, seeking his saintly intercession, especially when they have been the innocent victims of legal and bureaucratic injustice.

Slowly this veneration is spreading to the West. Here in America, this present writer can testify in his own life to an incident, quite serious and career-threatening, which, after the celebration of panikhidas or memorial services for the Blessed Emperor Paul, was quickly and favorably resolved without troublesome after-effect. Thus, it is only fitting to end my study of the life, reign and martyrdom of the Emperor Paul I with those two short prayers, composed, not in the theological Church Slavonic language, but in simple untutored contemporary Russian, which nonetheless, have come to stand as an unofficial Troparion and Kontakion in the martyred Emperor's veneration. Their authorship remains anonymous: they were smuggled out of Russia toward the end of the Communist era and circulated in America from that center of Russian Orthodox spirituality, Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York. The translation is the work of my dear pastor and godfather, The Very Reverend Archpriest Roman Lukianov of Holy Epiphany Parish in Roslindale (Boston), Massachusetts, who published them in his parish bulletin alongside the original text from Russia:

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<sup>1</sup> Paul I: A Reassessment, p. xiii.



### *Troparion*

Give rest, O Lord, to the soul of Thy murdered Slave, the Emperor Paul I, and by his prayers grant us in our present days of deception and fear wisdom in our deeds, patience in our sufferings and salvation of our souls with Thee.

### *Kontakion*

Look down, O Lord, at Thy faithful intercessor for all small, poor and deprived ones, the Emperor Paul I, and by his holy prayers grant, O Lord, speedy and true help to all who through him are begging it of Thee, O Our God.



Emperor Paul I, murdered March 11/24, 1801





## GLOSSARY

<b>aleria:</b>	originally alerion referred to an eagle, but later it came to depict baby eagles that have no beak or claws; thus, they were disarmed. Popular in heraldry.
<b>babushki</b> (бабушки) (singular: babushka/ бабушка):	grandmother; an elderly woman.
<b>barshina</b> (барщина):	<i>corvée</i> ; forced labor of serfs (peasants) on the land of the nobility where the serf resided. In 1797, Paul I issued a decree that three days a week was adequate labor for the landowner's needs.
<b>clementia:</b>	mercy, clemency; considered a good characteristic of a leader; from Latin word for humanity, forbearance.
<b>dalmatic:</b>	originated in the Roman Empire, in Dalmatia, as a tunic worn by the upper class. Carried over into the Eastern Church as an often elaborately-embroidered tunic worn by a bishop. In Orthodox icons of Jesus Christ the Great High Priest, He is depicted wearing a dalmatic. It was used by Emperor Paul I as a coronation vestment, in that the emperor was considered an emissary of God, anointed, and responsible for the salvation of the subjects entrusted to him by God.
<b>de facto:</b>	existing without lawful authority.
<b>de jure:</b>	by right; according to law.
<b>dovolstvo</b> (довольство):	contentment, satisfaction.
<b>dvorianstvo:</b>	a rank of nobility unique to Russia, appointed as servants/administrators/workers of the court of a prince. Evolved more and more into a special status, as gentry. Often members of the dvorianstvo owned serfs bound to the land belonging to the gentry and obligated to work or pay rents. Catherine II in 1785 freed the dvorianstvo from corporal punishment and made them a privileged class. They became privileged members of society, became richer, and sustained culture. But many had excessive consumption and fell into debt. In Soviet times, they were deprived of civil rights until 1936, and may either fled to Europe or America, or joined the White Army and died fighting the Bolsheviks.
<b>fait accompli:</b>	something that has already occurred.

<b>hybristic:</b>	from hubris, common to Greek tragedy, is an excess of pride and ambition that ultimately is the downfall of the possessor.
<b>kontakion:</b>	a short, thematic hymn of the Eastern Church, homiletic in nature.
<b>langue(s):</b>	the linguistic system shared by members of a community.
<b>narod (narodъ):</b>	"nation", but alluding more to the people or folk (rodъ = race), whose common culture comprises that nation.
<b>panikhida</b> (панихида):	A memorial service for those departed from this life. Penitential and solemn, it consists of psalms, litanies, hymns, various prayers and readings, as well as the offering of incense and lighting of candles. It can be held at the graveside, in a church or in a home. It serves both to comfort the living and remind them of their own mortality, as well as to ask of God that the deceased be remembered by Him eternally, in the final hymn "Memory Eternal" (Вечная память).
<b>pattée:</b>	a type of Cross pattern with four perpendicular arms, narrow at the center point and broader at the perimeter.
<b>phelonion:</b>	a large, conical sleeveless garment worn over all other garments, sort of like a cloak. Originally worn by commoners in Rome, but by 382 in a sumptuary law it became the proper attire of senators (the toga was for state occasions). Carried over into liturgical use, the equivalent of the Western chasuble. Worn by the priest when he celebrates the Divine Liturgy and some other functions.
<b>Pollyannish:</b>	as an adjective, means unreasonably or illogically optimistic, blindly optimistic.
<b>prothesis:</b>	A place behind the iconostas, usually on the north side of the Holy Table (Altar), where the Liturgy of Preparation takes place. It consists of a small table called the Table of Oblation, on which the priest prepares the bread and wine for use in the Divine Liturgy
<b>rodnieye moye:</b>	my kin; my family (close relatives).
<b>saccos:</b>	a tunic with wide sleeves that reaches below the knees, fastened on the sides with buttons or ribbons, often intricately embroidered or adorned. Originally worn by the Christian Emperor to symbolize the tunic Christ wore during his mockery. Became a privilege he bestowed upon patriarchs as a sign of his favor. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, came into general use for all bishops. Comparable to the Western dalmatic (which originates from Byzantine dress). Traditionally has bells attached to it in

accordance with the biblical directions for vestments worn by the High Priest (Ex 28:33-34; 39:25-26).

**skorost:** quickness, speed, rapidity.

**tempelhaus:** a house of ill-repute, from German, *tempel* = temple/church, and *haus* = house. The Knights Templar were supposed to be religious, but they often exhibited behaviors inappropriate to a religious calling. This play on words developed.

**troparion**  
(plural: troparia): a short thematic hymn in the Orthodox Church, also called a dismissal hymn (apolytikion) as it is a thematic hymn of the saint or feast of the day that closes the service of vespers.

**ukaz:** a proclamation or decree of the tsar, government or a religious leader that has the same effect as law.

**weltanschauung:** a broader sense of "worldview" in that it more comprehensively encompasses one's philosophic, moral, religious, societal, political and economic conclusions about the world.



*Glory to God for all things!*