Simon Vorontsov and the Ochakov Crisis of 1791

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By his own admission, Simon Vorontsov (Woronzow or Woronzoff, 1744–1832) was ill-suited and unprepared for diplomatic service, yet for over twenty years (1784–1806) he served as Russia’s Minister to the Court of St. James’s. He is now widely considered to be one of Catherine II’s greatest and most innovative diplomats. Because of his determined and independent spirit, he averted a war between Britain and Russia during the Ochakov crisis of 1791 by adapting the methods of the so-called ‘new diplomacy’. Rather than seeking mediation and mutual understanding, he collaborated with the opposition and initiated a vigorous public opinion campaign in the press and through the publication of pamphlets and anonymous articles. He thereby supported Charles Fox, challenged William Pitt and, in the end, emerged victorious.

The streets of major European capitals do not as a rule bear the names of Russian diplomats. Yet the map of the City of Westminster, England, an inner borough of central London, includes Woronzow Road, named after Count Simon Vorontsov (Woronzow or Woronzoff, 1744–1832), Russia’s Minister to the Court of St. James’s. Although he considered himself ill-suited for service in the diplomatic corps, he held the ambassadorship for over twenty years (1784–1806) and is one of the most highly respected and influential figures in the history of eighteenth-century Anglo-Russian relations. Seemingly a man of many contradictions, he has been portrayed as “noble, proud, cultured, steadfast, patriotic, arrogant, domineering, irascible”. Vorontsov, by his own admission, was a hothead and his fiery temperament impeded his career both at the Court of Catherine the Great and in the military.

Born into wealth and privilege, he always considered himself to be an outsider. Early on, he was expected to direct the family’s business interests in Russia, but chose to live mostly abroad. From childhood he dreamed of military glory, but was disillusioned. To all appearances his career had come

1 Cross 1992, 709–710.
to an end when he retired early and found himself alone and forgotten, a discarded soldier living on his estate. Yet Catherine did not want this proud and inflexible enemy of her reign to be near at hand, and accordingly, sent him abroad to serve in honorific exile as her ambassador. Vorontsov confessed his insecurity and unpreparedness when he embarked on a career he knew nothing about. He characterized himself as “a former soldier, a person, against his will and very late in life, at an advanced age without any preparatory training, cast into a career completely alien to his tastes and habits. In short, a political novice serving his apprenticeship in the forty-third year of his life.” Indeed, his undiplomatic character seemed to argue against his appointments to the missions in Venice and later London. Ironically, it was his lack of diplomacy, as well as his forceful and unbending attitude, that provides us with an early case study of the ‘new diplomacy’. This diplomacy was emphatically demonstrated during the Ochakov crisis when he supported Charles Fox and the opposition, with the Russian mission in London working overtime to sway public opinion.

In his study, A History of Diplomacy, Jeremy Black traces the transition after the French Revolution to a more aggressive and confrontational diplomacy. The emphasis on the creation of a sense of mutual understanding during the ancien régime was gradually replaced by attempts to influence policy through a reaching out to people rather than governments. As an early example, he cites Simon Vorontsov’s press campaign against the British government’s policy, when he stirred up “a popular outcry that would block ministerial schemes” to intimidate Russia during the Ochakov crisis of 1791. The diplomatic conflict, often referred to as the Ochakov crisis, was brought about by Russia’s categorical rejection of the Triple Alliance's stipulations of April 1790. These would have ended the Second Turkish War and returned to the Turks the Danubian city and fort of Ochakov, captured in December 1788, a number of additional forts, as well as the territory between the rivers Bug and Dniester. Russia refused to come to an agreement on the basis of a status quo ante bellum. It was in Catherine’s interests to pursue a consistently hostile and bellicose policy towards Turkey. There was no reason for her to make peace, since the more territory she occupied the more advantageous her hand would be when it came to presenting her terms for peace in the future.

William Pitt, on the other hand, was bound by the existing commitments of a diplomatic alliance. He feared that Russian expansion in the south, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the fall of Constantinople to the Russians would dangerously alter the balance of power in the East. If Russia

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2 Bartenev 1870–1897, 2. Hereafter abbreviated as AKV and cited parenthetically in the text. All translations are my own.
3 Black 2010, 137.
5 Ayling 1966, 358.
became too powerful in the eastern Mediterranean, this could do great harm to British commercial interests in the area and have an adverse effect on existing trade routes. He felt that Ochakov represented the British Empire's valuable interests. The Ochakov crisis can therefore be seen as the primary event that focused Britain's attention on the 'Eastern Question', broadened its diplomatic horizon beyond Eastern Europe and raised fears of Russian expansionism. Moreover, it nearly led to a full-scale armed conflict, whilst Vorontsov's vigorous response, encouragement of parliamentary opposition and manipulation of public opinion would establish his reputation as one of the greatest and most innovative diplomats of the eighteenth century.

In December 1790, the Anglo-Prussian alliance reiterated its demands for the restitution of all losses to Turkey, but once again Catherine refused to capitulate. In order to force Russia to make peace with the Porte, in March 1791, Pitt sent Catherine his final ultimatum, which was however to be withdrawn in less than a month. Resolved to arm the fleet for action against Russia in the Baltic and in the Black Sea, he ordered the preparation of a naval force more formidable than Nelson's at Trafalgar. According to Vorontsov, it consisted of 36 ships of the line, of which 8 were three-deckers, 12 frigates and just as many brigs and cutters. The British Cabinet, however, was divided. From the start, Lord Grenville, the Home Secretary and soon to be Foreign Secretary, opposed the armament of the special fleet and any commitments to intervention in the region. He was joined by Lord Stafford and the Duke of Richmond, who felt that nothing could be gained from going to war over a town on the Black Sea that few had heard of.

As he witnessed the likely end of his efforts to normalize Anglo-Russian relations, Vorontsov could not believe that Pitt would engage in such an extreme policy and jeopardize Britain's lucrative trade with Russia for such an insignificant cause. After all, Pitt had avowed Britain's 'perfect neutrality', but instead of acting on this assurance, he was now preparing the fleet to fight Russia. On March 7/1812 Vorontsov wrote, “In a word, I am completely convinced that with his wisdom and sense of justice the King of England would never allow such measures to be undertaken”. Four days later he reacted in utter disbelief. “How can the Ministry take such unprofitable and indefensible measures in full view of the people?” Pitt’s policy ran contrary to

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8 AKV, VIII, 19; Sokolov 2002, 12.
10 AKV, IX, 184.
11 Cunningham 1965, 212–213.
12 Here and hereafter the first date is in the 'Old style', used then in Russia, the second is in the 'New' one, used in Europe.
13 AKV, IX, 184, 186.
British interests, endangered his Ministry and had an adverse effect on his popularity. Vorontsov was deeply disappointed with the man he had once praised so highly as a shrewd and skillful politician. On several occasions Vorontsov met Pitt urging him to reconsider what he deemed to be a war that would be equally ruinous for both sides. But, as Vorontsov recounts in his autobiography, Pitt was evasive, replied with empty phrases and, despite his debating skills, could not give a good reason for his course of action.

Vorontsov then turned to the Duke of Leeds, the Foreign Secretary, only to find that he sided with Pitt and advocated a firm attitude toward Russia.\(^\text{14}\) Vorontsov’s reply was characteristically unequivocal and pointed,

> Since, as I see it, the Ministry is blindly ready to persist — under the pretext of saving Ochakov for the Turks, which is of no consequence to England — in the continuation of an unjust war, damaging to both countries, it is my duty to bring this evil to an end. You can of course expect to carry the majority in both houses. But I have come to know this country well enough to understand that the Ministry and the Parliament itself are powerless to govern without the support of the lords and independent, propertied individuals. Therefore, I announce to you, monsieur le duc, that I will make every effort possible to inform the nation of your intentions that are so incompatible with its interests. I admire too highly the good sense of the English people not to rely on the outcry of public opinion that will compel you to abandon this unjust enterprise.\(^\text{15}\)

Vorontsov would make good on his promise and would continue to maintain an uncompromising attitude. He later learned that his adamant opposition was contrary to Potemkin’s views and corresponded to Catherine’s, who purportedly stated that only Vorontsov and she were of one mind.\(^\text{16}\)

On March 29, an extensive debate ensued in both houses, with many members condemning the cabinet outright for its lack of information and obstinate silence on a matter of such gravity. While the Ministry’s resolution passed, the strength and extent of the opposition astounded Pitt. Even William Wilberforce could not support his good friend and abstained. Vorontsov wrote that Pitt was surprised that despite carrying a majority in Parliament, the opposition to his Ministry suddenly was strengthened by a hundred votes when compared to a previous count, and he was subjected to the vigorous attacks of many speakers. He noticed that several of his friends exited the chamber in order not to vote and speak against

\(^{14}\) AKV, VIII, 19–20.
\(^{15}\) AKV, VIII, 20.
\(^{16}\) AKV, VIII, 22.
him. He was quite disturbed and the next day he was further disconcerted when he saw that the number of opponents had grown and despite maintaining a majority in Parliament for now, he may possibly lose it.\textsuperscript{17}

In fact, Earl Fitzwilliam had argued in the House of Lords that the underlining motivation for the resolution was unclear, since Russia’s actions did not present an obvious danger to England, even if the Empress did maintain control of Ochakov and the fort of Akkerman. Lord Porchester warned of the financial consequences, pledging to oppose the resolution in whatever form it might come before the House, and Lord Carlyle emphasized diplomatic and historical factors in the initiation of hostile actions against a natural ally. Wryly peering into the future, Lord Loughborough wondered about military objectives. After the entry of the British fleet into the Baltic, would the Prussian army then march into St. Petersburg, and after that into Moscow?\textsuperscript{18}

Debate in the House of Commons mirrored many of the concerns and arguments expressed in the upper house. Pitt opened the session by calling for the passing of the resolution, since all efforts to achieve a peaceful accord between Russia and Turkey had failed. In order to maintain a balance of power in the East and to protect vital British interests in the area, armament of the fleet was essential. Members of the House, however, were critical of Pitt’s measures. Lord Wycombe emphasized the destructive effects war would have on Great Britain. In the opinion of Mr. Coke of Norfolk, the Prime Minister had not presented arguments or documents in support of claims that would now add to the heavy tax burden of his constituents. Indeed, Mr. Lambton argued that Russia had not offended or provoked Britain in anyway. “But what insult had we received from Russia? Has she attempted to fix a stain upon our honour? Had she invaded the territories of the British crown, or committed degradations upon the trade and property of its subjects? Nothing of this had she done; and yet we were going to make war upon her.”\textsuperscript{19} Edmund Burke also rose in disapproval “to make a few observations upon what he considered to be the most extraordinary event that had passed that House since he had the honour to sit in it”. Turkey, in his opinion, was irrelevant to the European balance of power and he wholly condemned the resolution.\textsuperscript{20}

The most eloquent speaker for the opposition was Charles Fox. Capable of producing stirring rhetoric, his oratorical skills and wit, as well as his expertise in political and economic matters, were on full display. Undeniably, he would have an advantage in the debates thanks to information

\textsuperscript{17} AKV, VIII, 21.
\textsuperscript{18} Cobbett 1817, cols. 34–43. <www2.odl.ox.ac.uk/gsdl/cgi-bin/library>. References to online sources are accurate as of 24 October 2011; Sokolov 2002, 15.
\textsuperscript{19} Cobbett 1817, cols. 52–57. <www2.odl.ox.ac.uk/gsdl/cgi-bin/library>. Sokolov 2002, 16.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., cols. 75–76.
supplied by Vorontsov. By way of an introduction he stated straightaway that “the present measure, if possible, exceeded his disapprobation” and that Pitt’s address reminded him of a play that had been pronounced well done, for it was “finely confused and very alarming”. He then criticized the Ministry at length for over-extending itself and for its intrusion into a far-away area of the world that it did not have the military resources to sustain. He argued that it would be reckless to risk war over a single, distant town of insignificant strategic importance, and pointed out that Russia had clashed with Turkey for at least twenty years without alarming the British government regarding any advantages Russia was gaining in the Black Sea. Fox made a point of it to stress that intervention without justification and without well-defined threats to British interests was ill-advised. In his concluding remarks he explained that “in the system of alliance which he had devised, he had always reckoned upon Russia. . . . If such an alliance was practicable, it would indeed secure the peace of this country, without making that power our enemy whose friendship it is our interest in the most particular manner to cultivate”.

The same day in a letter to his brother Aleksandr, Vorontsov expressed his great pleasure with Fox’s performance.

Mr. Fox spoke like an angel. He affirmed that the odious Armed Neutrality which has been held against Russia for so long was the work of the Court of Berlin. . . . He demonstrated the justice of the Empress’s cause in this war, the importance of our [Russia’s] ties with England, and in the end, he convinced many of Pitt’s friends to speak in support of Mr. Fox’s ideas. The Ministry carried the majority, but the galleries, for the most part consisting of the public, were opposed to the government’s measures. This affair is vastly unpopular; Mr. Pitt was obliged to say that it would not lead to war, and he did not breath a word about the Baltic.

Vorontsov had assured Leeds that he would alert the nation to this unjust enterprise, and he was true to his word. “I visited the leaders of the opposition”, he wrote in his autobiography, “and even more effectively, a few members of the lower house, whose independent and honest character was respected by the Ministry and the opposition and who enjoyed the universal esteem of the nation to such a degree that their votes would determine the rightness and usefulness of many issues. I explained to them the injustice of the proposed measures, the enormous expenditures

21 Ibid., col. 62.
22 Ibid., col. 67.
23 AKV, IX, 190.
they would incur, and the harm of terminating trade with Russia, which is so essential for England. They promised me their support”.

During his confrontation with Pitt and the Ministry, Vorontsov made full use of his contacts in Parliament, among the opposition and in the press. He convinced many of his friends and newfound allies to recruit other members of Parliament and to explain to them the foolhardiness of the Ministry’s resolution. Although he had avoided Fox in the past, Vorontsov now consulted him on several occasions. Fox assured him that the war was unpopular and that Pitt would rather retreat from his position than lose power. By now, public meetings were being held and petitions written up in Norwich, Manchester, Yorkshire, Leeds and Wakefield, and in other cities that were sure to follow.

Among his most ardent supporters, Vorontsov singled out three of his agents: Nathaniel Dimsdale, Mr. Jackson and John Paradise. The first, Nathaniel Dimsdale, was the son of Thomas Dimsdale, the physician who had inoculated the Empress against smallpox. Like his father, he too travelled to Russia and inoculated Catherine’s grandsons Alexander and Constantine. In 1790, he was elected to Parliament for the borough of Hertford. Devoted to Pitt, during the Ochakov crisis he nevertheless sided with Vorontsov, influenced others to do the same and sounded the alarm concerning the loss of trade and the imposition of new taxes. The second, Mr. Jackson, was an English merchant who helped rouse commercial interests against Pitt’s policies. Vorontsov was deeply indebted to his wholehearted allegiance.

I cannot thank this man [Jackson] enough for taking up our interests with such zeal that it was he who goaded the indolent Russian Company to go and discuss this matter with the Duke of Leeds and Mr. Pitt. It is he who stirred up the stock exchange, who disseminated new articles in the newspaper, and every day attracted new proselytes to our cause.

The third, Vorontsov’s friend John Paradise, a naturalized American who had married an heiress from Williamsburg, Virginia, was perhaps the most uncommon and colourful agent in Vorontsov’s eclectic circle of subordinates at the embassy. He prized him for his ‘vigorous’ writing

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24 AKV, XVIII, 20–21.
25 AKV, XXXIV, 466–467.
26 AKV, IX, 192; VIII, 22.
28 AKV, XXXIV, 468.
29 AKV, XXXIV, 468.
style and his motley array of friends and acquaintances in the world of arts, letters, politics and the social swirl.\textsuperscript{30} Vorontsov would make full use of his talents and connections.

Not content to sit back and rely solely on the active efforts of others, from March to June, Vorontsov forcefully took his campaign directly to the people outside the walls of Parliament. The Russian Company was enlisted to participate in the campaign and to promulgate the idea that war would be ruinous to English commercial interests. In London, anti-war graffiti appeared on the walls of buildings and may have been the handiwork of the Russian Embassy.\textsuperscript{31} Vorontsov ordered his staff to prepare press releases emphasizing the folly of Pitt’s policies and to publish pamphlets exposing the politics of the Ministry. He and his staff worked tirelessly round the clock writing and distributing pamphlets and anonymous articles that daily appeared in over twenty newspapers.\textsuperscript{32}

The most interesting and persuasive materials advancing the Embassy’s views were presented in the pamphlet \textit{Serious Enquiries into the Motives and Consequences of our present Armament against Russia}. Monsieur Joly, Vorontsov’s private secretary, composed the essay in French based on writings and resources prepared by Vorontsov, and John Paradise ably translated it into English. The pamphlet cost approximately £140–£150, a sum deposited in a secret account so as not to compromise Vorontsov.\textsuperscript{33}

The essay defended Russia against charges of expansionism during the Russian-Turkish war and claimed that Turkey, with the encouragement of Berlin and London, was the aggressor. Pitt’s plea for the maintenance of a balance of power in Europe was dismissed as an argument without substance. In fact, throughout the eighteenth-century, Anglo-Russian relations were characterized by a spirit of cooperation based on the belief that they were natural allies. And if misunderstandings arose, they were due to the intervention and ill will of foreign powers. In his translation, Paradise endeavoured to eliminate all suspicion that the pamphlet emanated from the Russian Legation. He made it seem, Vorontsov explained to his brother, that the pamphlet was written by an Englishman, who “does not approve of Armed Neutrality, but somehow seems to justify it all the same. Russia’s commercial relations with England are set out quite clearly; the extension of trade with Poland is proved to be chimerical. As for Prussia, she is treated

\textsuperscript{30} AKV, XXXIV, 470.
\textsuperscript{31} AKV, VIII, 22.
\textsuperscript{33} AKV, XXXIV, 470, AKV, IX, 495.
according to her deserts but without sourness". The pamphlet was widely disseminated and on April, 10, 1792, Gouverneur Morris, Vorontsov’s friend, Founding Father, US diplomatic agent in London (1790–1791) and Minister to France (1792–1794), sent a copy to Thomas Jefferson. In an accompanying letter Morris appears to be referring to Vorontsov: “You will find enclosed a pamphlet which was published here on occasion of the late armament against Russia. It was written under the inspection of a person to whom the facts were all familiarly known.”

The extent of popular disapproval and dissent was such that by the end of March it was clear that Pitt would be required to moderate his position. The debates in Parliament continued, but, by the middle of April, the majority was persuaded that Fox was right and that Pitt had committed a major blunder. The ultimatum to Russia was withdrawn. Leeds gave up the seals of the Foreign Office in protest and was replaced by Grenville. In May, William Fawkener was dispatched to St. Petersburg to seek a peaceful solution. Vorontsov supplied him with a letter of recommendation to his brother, but Fawkener felt that he was badly received. Vorontsov also recommended Foxe’s friend, Robert Adair, to his brother, Bezborodko, and Potemkin. In fact, Grenville was convinced that Vorontsov had advised to employ Adair as Foxe’s envoy to the Empress. Adair was the author of a pamphlet opposed to Pitt’s policies, *Inquiries into the Prospect of a War and into the Conduct of His Majesty’s Ministers*, which Vorontsov had translated into Russian and dispatched to St. Petersburg. According to Vorontsov, Fox dictated its contents to his young friend. Catherine celebrated Adair’s arrival, and it seems likely that he conspired to undermine Fawkener’s official mission. His correspondences, in cipher, with Fox led to suspicions of his duplicity, lack of loyalty to his country and his acting as Catherine’s agent.

In an effort to intimidate Russia, Pitt prolonged the armament of the fleet until July 1791. But Vorontsov was not ready to retreat, and in his letters to his brother throughout 1791, he makes it clear that the crisis would be over only when the English fleet was ordered to disarm. By July 2/13 he could boast that “I have judged too highly the good sense and acumen of Mr. Pitt; but I believe that I have understood well the character of the English people. When imprudently and...
against the best interests of his party he strove to drag his nation into a politically unsupported and dangerous war, was he successful?”.  

Pitt survived the challenge and remained in office; nonetheless, it was perhaps the moment of his greatest political mortification. The Ochakov crisis marked the first serious check to Pitt’s foreign policy, for he had failed to make his case in a determined and convincing manner. Fox’s reputation was enhanced among his peers during this complex controversy. He had achieved one of his most satisfying victories, and the Ochakov crisis presented him with the opportunity to bring discredit upon the government and to humiliate Pitt.  

Catherine was greatly pleased with Fox and other triumphant members of the opposition who had lead it to victory over the Ministry. “I charge you,” she wrote Vorontsov, “to say to my old friends in England, in particular the Dukes of Portland and Devonshire and Mr. Fox that it is with great pleasure I observe them fight with force and vigour for the causes of reason and justice. My good feelings of the past for the English nation have been revived...!” Fox was especially flattered to learn that the Russian Empress commemorated his oratory skills by placing his bust, which Vorontsov had acquired for her from Earl Fitzwilliam, in the Cameron gallery at Tsarskoe Selo, between two of the greatest statesmen and orators of the ancient world, Demosthenes and Cicero.

Catherine would have the upper hand in February 1792 at the Treaty of Jassy, which primarily reaffirmed Russian control of the Crimea and forced Turkey to cede Ochakov and the Black Sea coast between the Bug and the Dniester. Russia thereby gained a foothold on the Black Sea establishing itself as the dominant power in the region. Vorontsov played a central role in Russia’s diplomatic victory. His greatest contribution was the ability to influence public opinion and to exploit it in Russia’s favour. In so doing, he demonstrated what a representative of a foreign government could achieve by rousing the public against the domestic affairs of its country.

Catherine was delighted with her Minister’s accomplishments in London, and Zavadovskii confirmed her approval. “In a word, I will tell you that the Empress is extremely pleased with your service”. In her imperial rescript she showered him with compliments and rewarded him generously. He received the Order of St. Vladimir, 1st class, and a salary increase of 6,000 rubles annually. Yet Vorontsov firmly believed that her largess should also extend to the embassy staff:

41 Ibid., 201.
42 AKV, I, 190.
43 AKV, XXVIII, 116.
44 AKV, XVI, 236–237; XXVIII, 117.
45 Brikner 1887, October, 471–537, November, 1-65; Sokolov 2002, 4.
46 AKV, XII, 67.
47 AKV, XXVIII, 118–119.
Vasili Lizakevich, Father Yakov Smirnov, his secretary Joly and John Paradise. Minimizing his own contribution, he wrote that it was easier for him to issue orders to his staff than it was to execute them. For five months they had worked feverishly distributing and “composing various paragraphs for newspapers and journals, composing pamphlets, and translating from English into French and from French into English”.

His staff was awarded lump sums of £600 for Lizakevich and £200 for Smirnov and Joly, substantial sums for their time. For the financially strapped Paradise, whose property in Virginia was “overrun by friendly and hostile armies” during the American Revolution, Vorontsov requested an annual pension of £150 to £200 in view of his unquestionable utility to the service of Her Imperial Majesty and because the Empress “could never have either a better pen or a more zealous man”. On July 2/13, 1791, Vorontsov informed his brother that in a month’s time he intended to forward £150 to Paradise “when all possible suspicions about his part in our pamphlet will have been forgotten”. It can be assumed that Paradise received his pension until his death in 1794, for he continued to assist Vorontsov in the surveillance of French revolutionaries. Paradise was deeply thankful to Vorontsov and in his will named him, as well as Thomas Jefferson and others, among the legatees who each received £16 to purchase mourning rings.

Vorontsov dispatched official letters of gratitude to Catherine for the favours she had bestowed on him and his subordinates. Full of high sentence and prescribed sentiments, he extolled her as the most magnanimous, indulgent, gracious, extraordinarily modest, and wisely determined monarch. In the final instance, when he wrote about her determination, his feelings were seemingly heartfelt. Vorontsov was rarely glib or insincere, and in his correspondence he was mostly tough but courteous, pointed but gracious. In a letter to Bezborodko, dated August 8/19, 1791, Vorontsov explained that “determination is the primary quality in a person; reason and knowledge are meaningless without it”, and that he was genuinely impressed by Catherine’s determination and lack of cruelty.

49 AKV, IX, 487–488.
51 AKV, XXXIV, 470, 472.
52 AKV, IX, 200–201.
54 Ibid, 375; Historical and Genealogical Notes 1897, 58, <file.usgwarchives.net/va/schools/wmmary/notes0003.txt>.
56 AKV, XXVIII, 567–568, IX, 368–369.
57 AKV, IX, 486–487.
Years later, in his autobiographical letters to Rostopchin, Vorontsov was to express his deep, privately held feelings. Once again, as had been the case in the military, Vorontsov was not pleased and felt that Catherine had slighted him. He already wore the Order of St. Alexander Nevskii, which was superior and more prestigious than the Order of St Vladimir, and Ivan Simolin in Paris received an identical sum of money, even though he was wealthier, did not have a family, and life was cheaper in Paris.\textsuperscript{58} Despite his personal dissatisfaction, Vorontsov was justifiably celebrated and respected, although not necessarily liked, at the Russian and English Courts. Vorontsov had reached the apogee of his diplomatic career as he enjoyed the approbation due him for his actions in 1791. He had challenged Pitt and emerged victorious.

To a large extent Pitt placed the blame for his political reversal on Vorontsov, who was now his opponent, and he would make every effort to free himself of this meddlesome diplomat.\textsuperscript{59} Vorontsov was well aware of Pitt’s enmity and his intention to be rid of him.

Mr. Pitt has told several persons, and to a few it seems with the intention I find out about it, that he is very dissatisfied with me, because he is certain that I communicated a great deal of information to Mr. Fox and other members of the opposition. He spoke of me with great bitterness and concluded with these remarkably insolent words: “It was once possible to have this gentleman’s brother [Aleksandr, former ambassador to London] recalled from here, and we know exactly how to do the same to him”.\textsuperscript{60}

Gouverneur Morris, with whom Vorontsov often dined, considered Vorontsov to be “a sensible, well-informed man” but felt that he “will never stand well at this Court, because Pitt will not forgive him for foiling his attempts in the Russian armament”.\textsuperscript{61} In his report of April 1792 to George Washington, Morris described the Ministry’s reprisals against Vorontsov:

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  every art was used to coax Count Wranzow [Woronzow] into a conduct which might subserve Mr. Pitt’s views.  
  But the firm Russian was too wise and too honest to become either creature or dupe. They then attempted to bully him as well as his Mistress [Mary Becklebek], and he treated both with contempt. The consequence of this conduct was the complete success of his sovereign; and Mr. Pitt, finding him too well fixed at his own Court to be shaken by his intrigues, has again had recourse to a complimentary and apologetical conduct.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{58} AKV, VIII, 23.  
\textsuperscript{59} Rodina 1995, 25.  
\textsuperscript{60} AKV, XVI, 283.  
\textsuperscript{61} Morris 1888, Vol. 1, Chap. XXIII, \texttt{<oll.libertyfund.org/title/1169/82389/1943937>}; Vol. 2, Chap. XXXIII, \texttt{<oll.libertyfund.org/title/1170/82401/1944473>}.  
\textsuperscript{62} Crackel 2007, \texttt{<rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/pgwde/print-Reto4d172>}.  

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Morris’s observations were to the point, since Catherine was far too pleased with Vorontsov’s management of the Ochakov crisis to have him recalled.

Despite efforts to mask his innate petulance and intransigence, Vorontsov was furious with Pitt’s conduct. The Prime Minister’s anti-Russian stance and personal attacks permanently altered Vorontsov’s opinion of him. The admiration he had once felt for Pitt as a leader and statesmen was transformed into overt disdain for a mere politician. On July 2/13, 1791, Vorontsov explained that he had “judged too favourably Mr. Pitt’s good sense and intelligence”, and a year later he wrote, “As for the conduct of Mr. Pitt, that great balancer of equilibrium in Europe, the policy he pursued for his country is the epitome of imbecility and ignorance. There is a vast difference between a weaver of elegant phrases and a great statesman”.63 No longer just an adversary, Pitt was his enemy, and Vorontsov would do everything possible to undermine his government.

He stressed, however, that he was not opposed to the people of England, “for they have shown us clearly that they support us heart and soul . . . but the Ministers, or especially the [Prime] Minister [Pitt]”.64 Only the excesses of revolutionary France would eventually lead to Vorontsov breaking with Fox and his reconciliation with Pitt.65 But by the end of 1791 the political landscape had changed in Europe and at the Russian Court. Potemkin died and was replaced by the youthful Platon Zubov, whom Vorontsov detested. His brother would ‘retire’ from the presidency of the Commerce Collegium in response to the arrest of his protégé, Aleksandr Radishchev. Vorontsov suffered isolation and loss of influence, but, ever the outsider, at the end of his career and in retirement he would travel to Russia only once for a short visit. He died in London in 1832 and was buried in St. Marylebone Parish Church.66

References


63 AKV, IX, 201, 497.
64 AKV, IX, 226–227.
65 See also Vorontsov’s biographical sketch, “Précis historique sur la conduit politique et privée de m-r Pitt, accompagné de quelques observations sur nos rapports avec quelques-unes des principales puissances de l’Europe” (AKV, XV, 453–480).
66 In 1983, to make room for a Healing and Counselling Centre in Marylebone, his remains were transferred to an unmarked grave in Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey.


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